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THOMAS JEFFERSON

BY

HENRY CHILDS MERWIN


Th. Jefferson

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Tout vient à bien qui prend
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THOMAS JEFFERSON

I

YOUTH AND TRAINING

Thomas Jefferson was born upon a frontier estate in Albemarle County, Virginia, April 13, 1743. His father, Peter Jefferson, was of Welsh descent, not of aristocratic birth, but of that yeoman class which constitutes the backbone of all societies. The elder Jefferson had uncommon powers both of mind and body. His strength was such that he could simultaneously "head up"—that is, raise from their sides to an upright position—two hogsheads of tobacco, weighing nearly one thousand pounds apiece. Like Washington, he was a surveyor; and there is a tradition that once, while running his lines through a vast wilderness, his assistants gave out from famine and fatigue, and Peter Jefferson pushed on [2] alone, sleeping at night in hollow trees, amidst howling beasts of prey, and subsisting on the flesh of a pack mule which he had been obliged to kill.

Thomas Jefferson inherited from his father a love of mathematics and of literature. Peter Jefferson had not received a classical education, but he was a diligent reader of a few good books, chiefly Shakespeare, The Spectator, Pope, and Swift; and

in mastering these he was forming his mind on great literature after the manner of many another Virginian,—for the houses of that colony held English books as they held English furniture. The edition of Shakespeare (and it is a handsome one) which Peter Jefferson used is still preserved among the heirlooms of his descendants.

It was probably in his capacity of surveyor that Mr. Jefferson made the acquaintance of the Randolph family, and he soon became the bosom friend of William Randolph, the young proprietor of Tuckahoe. The Randolphs had been for ages
[3] a family of consideration in the midland counties of England, claiming descent from the Scotch Earls of Murray, and connected by blood or marriage with many of the English nobility. In 1735 Peter Jefferson established himself as a planter by patenting a thousand acres of land in Goochland County, his estate lying near and partly including the outlying hills, which form a sort of picket line for the Blue Mountain range. At the same time his friend William Randolph patented an adjoining estate of twenty-four hundred acres; and inasmuch as there was no good site for a house on Jefferson's estate, Mr. Randolph conveyed to him four hundred acres for that purpose, the consideration expressed in the deed, which is still extant, being "Henry Weatherbourne's biggest bowl of Arrack punch."

Here Peter Jefferson built his house, and here, three years later, he brought his bride,—a handsome girl of nineteen, and a kinswoman of William Randolph, being Jane, oldest child of Isham Randolph, then Adjutant-General of Virginia. She was
[4] born in London, in the parish of Shadwell, and Shadwell was the name given by Peter Jefferson to his estate. This marriage was a fortunate union of the best aristocratic and yeoman strains in Virginia.

In the year 1744 the new County of Albemarle was carved out of Goochland County, and Peter Jefferson was appointed one of the three justices who constituted the county court and

were the real rulers of the shire. He was made also Surveyor, and later Colonel of the county. This last office was regarded as the chief provincial honor in Virginia, and it was especially important when he held it, for it was the time of the French war, and Albemarle was in the debatable land.

In the midst of that war, in August, 1757, Peter Jefferson died suddenly, of a disease which is not recorded, but which was probably produced by fatigue and exposure. He was a strong, just, kindly man, sought for as a protector of the widow and the orphan, and respected and loved by Indians as well as white men. Upon his deathbed he left two injunctions regarding his son Thomas: one, that he should receive a classical education; the [5] other, that he should never be permitted to neglect the physical exercises necessary for health and strength. Of these dying commands his son often spoke with gratitude; and he used to say that if he were obliged to choose between the education and the estate which his father gave him, he would choose the education. Peter Jefferson left eight children, but only one son besides Thomas, and that one died in infancy. Less is known of Jefferson's mother; but he derived from her a love of music, an extraordinary keenness of susceptibility, and a corresponding refinement of taste.

His father's death left Jefferson his own master. In one of his later letters he says: "At fourteen years of age the whole care and direction of myself were thrown on myself entirely, without a relative or a friend qualified to advise or guide me."

The first use that he made of his liberty was to change his school, and to become a pupil of the Rev. James Maury,—an excellent clergyman and scholar, of Huguenot descent, who [6] had recently settled in Albemarle County. With him young Jefferson continued for two years, studying Greek and Latin, and becoming noted, as a schoolmate afterward reported, for scholarship, industry, and shyness. He was a good runner, a keen fox-hunter, and a bold and graceful rider.

At the age of sixteen, in the spring of 1760, he set out on horseback for Williamsburg, the capital of Virginia, where he proposed to enter the college of William and Mary. Up to this time he had never seen a town, or even a village, except the hamlet of Charlottesville, which is about four miles from Shadwell. Williamsburg—described in contemporary language as "the centre of taste, fashion, and refinement"—was an unpaved village, of about one thousand inhabitants, surrounded by an expanse of dark green tobacco fields as far as the eye could reach. It was, however, well situated upon a plateau midway between the York and James rivers, and was swept by breezes
[7] which tempered the heat of the summer sun and kept the town free from mosquitoes.

Williamsburg was also well laid out, and it has the honor of having served as a model for the city of Washington. It consisted chiefly of a single street, one hundred feet broad and three quarters of a mile long, with the capitol at one end, the college at the other, and a ten-acre square with public buildings in the middle. Here in his palace lived the colonial governor. The town also contained "ten or twelve gentlemen's families, besides merchants and tradesmen." These were the permanent inhabitants; and during the "season"—the midwinter months—the planters' families came to town in their coaches, the gentlemen on horseback, and the little capital was then a scene of gayety and dissipation.

Such was Williamsburg in 1760 when Thomas Jefferson, the frontier planter's son, rode slowly into town at the close of an early spring day, surveying with the outward indifference, but keen inward curiosity of a countryman, the place which was
[8] to be his residence for seven years,—in one sense the most important, because the most formative, period of his life. He was a tall stripling, rather slightly built,—after the model of the Randolphs,—but extremely well-knit, muscular, and agile. His face was freckled, and his features were somewhat pointed. His

hair is variously described as red, reddish, and sandy, and the color of his eyes as blue, gray, and also hazel. The expression of his face was frank, cheerful, and engaging. He was not handsome in youth, but "a very good-looking man in middle age, and quite a handsome old man." At maturity he stood six feet two and a half inches. "Mr. Jefferson," said Mr. Bacon, at one time the superintendent of his estate, "was well proportioned and straight as a gun-barrel. He was like a fine horse, he had no surplus flesh. He had an iron constitution, and was very strong."

Jefferson was always the most cheerful and optimistic of men. He once said, after remarking that something must depend "on the chapter of events:" "I am in the habit of turning over the next [9] leaf with hope, and, though it often fails me, there is still another and another behind." No doubt this sanguine trait was due in part at least to his almost perfect health. He was, to use his own language, "blessed with organs of digestion which accepted and concocted, without ever murmuring, whatever the palate chose to consign to them." His habits through life were good. He never smoked, he drank wine in moderation, he went to bed early, he was regular in taking exercise, either by walking or, more commonly, by riding on horseback.

The college of William and Mary in Jefferson's day is described by Mr. Parton as "a medley of college, Indian mission, and grammar school, ill-governed, and distracted by dissensions among its ruling powers." But Jefferson had a thirst for knowledge and a capacity for acquiring it, which made him almost independent of institutions of learning. Moreover, there was one professor who had a large share in the formation of his mind. "It was my great good fortune," he wrote in his brief [10] autobiography, "and what probably fixed the destinies of my life, that Dr. William Small, of Scotland, was then professor of mathematics; a man profound in most of the useful branches of science, with a happy talent of communication and an enlarged liberal mind. He, most happily for me, soon became attached

to me, and made me his daily companion when not engaged in the school; and from his conversation I got my first views of the expansion of science, and of the system of things in which we are placed."

Jefferson, like all well-bred Virginians, was brought up as an Episcopalian; but as a young man, perhaps owing in part to the influence of Dr. Small, he ceased to believe in Christianity as a religion, though he always at home attended the Episcopal church, and though his daughters were brought up in that faith. If any theological term is to be applied to him, he should be called a Deist. Upon the subject of his religious faith, Jefferson was always extremely reticent. To one or two friends only did he
[11] disclose his creed, and that was in letters which were published after his death. When asked, even by one of his own family, for his opinion upon any religious matter, he invariably refused to express it, saying that every person was bound to look into the subject for himself, and to decide upon it conscientiously, unbiased by the opinions of others.

Dr. Small introduced Jefferson to other valuable acquaintances; and, boy though he was, he soon became the fourth in a group of friends which embraced the three most notable men in the little metropolis. These were, beside Dr. Small, Francis Fauquier, the acting governor of the province, appointed by the crown, and George Wythe. Fauquier was a courtly, honorable, highly cultivated man of the world, a disciple of Voltaire, and a confirmed gambler, who had in this respect an unfortunate influence upon the Virginia gentry,—not, however, upon Jefferson, who, though a lover of horses, and a frequenter of races, never in his life gambled or even played cards. Wythe
[12] was then just beginning a long and honorable career as lawyer, statesman, professor, and judge. He remained always a firm and intimate friend of Jefferson, who spoke of him, after his death, as "my second father." It is an interesting fact that Thomas Jefferson, John Marshall, and Henry Clay were all, in succession,

law students in the office of George Wythe.

Many of the government officials and planters who flocked to Williamsburg in the winter were related to Jefferson on his mother's side, and they opened their houses to him with Virginia hospitality. We read also of dances in the "Apollo," the ball-room of the old Raleigh tavern, and of musical parties at Gov. Fauquier's house, in which Jefferson, who was a skillful and enthusiastic fiddler, always took part. "I suppose," he remarked in his old age, "that during at least a dozen years of my life, I played no less than three hours a day."

At this period he was somewhat of a dandy, very particular about his clothes and equipage, and devoted, as indeed he remained through life, to fine horses. Virginia imported more [13] thoroughbred horses than any other colony, and to this day there is probably a greater admixture of thoroughbred blood there than in any other State. Diomed, winner of the first English Derby, was brought over to Virginia in 1799, and founded a family which, even now, is highly esteemed as a source of speed and endurance. Jefferson had some of his colts; and both for the saddle and for his carriage he always used high-bred horses.

Referring to the Williamsburg period of his life, he wrote once to a grandson: "When I recollect the various sorts of bad company with which I associated from time to time, I am astonished I did not turn off with some of them, and become as worthless to society as they were.... But I had the good fortune to become acquainted very early with some characters of very high standing, and to feel the incessant wish that I could ever become what they were. Under temptations and difficulties, I would ask myself what would Dr. Small, Mr. Wythe, Peyton Randolph do in this situation? What course in it will assure me [14] their approbation? I am certain that this mode of deciding on my conduct tended more to correctness than any reasoning powers that I possesed."

This passage throws a light upon Jefferson's character. It

does not seem to occur to him that a young man might require some stronger motive to keep his passions in check than could be furnished either by the wish to imitate a good example or by his "reasoning powers." To Jefferson's well-regulated mind the desire for approbation was a sufficient motive. He was particularly sensitive, perhaps morbidly so, to disapprobation. The respect, the good-will, the affection of his countrymen were so dear to him that the desire to retain them exercised a great, it may be at times, an undue influence upon him. "I find," he once said, "the pain of a little censure, even when it is unfounded, is more acute than the pleasure of much praise."

During his second year at college, Jefferson laid aside all frivolities. He sent home his horses, contenting himself with a
[15] mile run out and back at nightfall for exercise, and studying, if we may believe the biographer, no less than fifteen hours a day. This intense application reduced the time of his college course by one half; and after the second winter at Williamsburg he went home with a degree in his pocket, and a volume of Coke upon Lytleton in his trunk.

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II

VIRGINIA IN JEFFERSON'S DAY

To a young Virginian of Jefferson's standing but two active careers were open, law and politics, and in almost every case these two, sooner or later, merged in one. The condition of Virginia was very different from that of New England,—neither the clerical nor the medical profession was held in esteem. There were no manufactures, and there was no general commerce.

Nature has divided Virginia into two parts: the mountainous region to the west and the broad level plain between the mountains and the sea, intersected by numerous rivers, in which, far back from the ocean, the tide ebbs and flows. In this tide-water region were situated the tobacco plantations which constituted the wealth and were inhabited by the aristocracy of the colony. Almost every planter lived near a river and had his own wharf, [17] whence a schooner carried his tobacco to London, and brought back wines, silks, velvets, guns, saddles, and shoes.

The small proprietors of land were comparatively few in number, and the whole constitution of the colony, political and social, was aristocratic. Both real estate and slaves descended by force of law to the eldest son, so that the great properties were kept intact. There were no townships and no town meetings. The political unit was the parish; for the Episcopal church was the established church,—a state institution; and the parishes were of great extent, there being, as a rule, but one or two parishes in a county.

The clergy, though belonging to an establishment, were poorly paid, and not revered as a class. They held the same position

of inferiority in respect to the rich planters which the clergy of England held in respect to the country gentry at the same period. Being appointed by the crown, they were selected without much regard to fitness, and they were demoralized by want of supervision, for there were no resident bishops, and, [18] further, by the uncertain character of their incomes, which, being paid in tobacco, were subject to great fluctuations. A few were men of learning and virtue who performed their duties faithfully, and eked out their incomes by taking pupils. “It was these few,” remarks Mr. Parton, “who saved civilization in the colony.” A few others became cultivators of tobacco, and acquired wealth. But the greater part of the clergy were companions and hangers-on of the rich planters,—examples of that type which Thackeray so well describes in the character of Parson Sampson in “The Virginians.” Strange tales were told of these old Virginia parsons. One is spoken of as pocketing annually a hundred dollars, the revenue of a legacy for preaching four sermons a year against atheism, gambling, racing, and swearing,—for all of which vices, except the first, he was notorious.

This period, the middle half of the eighteenth century, was, as the reader need not be reminded, that in which the English [19] church sank to its lowest point. It was the era when the typical country parson was a convivial fox-hunter; when the Fellows of colleges sat over their wine from four o’clock, their dinner hour, till midnight or after; when the highest type of bishop was a learned man who spent more time in his private studies than in the duties of his office; when the cathedrals were neglected and dirty, and the parish churches were closed from Sunday to Sunday. In England, the reaction produced Methodism, and, later, the Tractarian movement; and we are told that even in Virginia, “swarms of Methodists, Moravians, and New-Light Presbyterians came over the border from Pennsylvania, and pervaded the colony.”

Taxation pressed with very unequal force upon the poor,

and the right of voting was confined to freeholders. There was no system of public schools, and the great mass of the people were ignorant and coarse, but morally and physically sound,—a good substructure for an aristocratic society. Wealth being concentrated mainly in the hands of a few, Virginia presented striking contrasts of luxury and destitution, whereas in [20] the neighboring colony of Pennsylvania, where wealth was more distributed and society more democratic, thrift and prosperity were far more common.

"In Pennsylvania," relates a foreign traveler, "one sees great numbers of wagons drawn by four or more fine fat horses.... In the slave States we sometimes meet a ragged black boy or girl driving a team consisting of a lean cow and a mule; and I have seen a mule, a bull, and a cow, each miserable in its appearance, composing one team, with a half-naked black slave or two riding or driving as occasion suited." And yet between Richmond and Fredericksburg, "in the afternoon, as our road lay through the woods, I was surprised to meet a family party traveling along in as elegant a coach as is usually met with in the neighborhood of London, and attended by several gayly dressed footmen."

Virginia society just before the Revolution perfectly illustrated Buckle's remark about leisure: "Without leisure, science is impossible; and when leisure has been won, most of the class [21] possessing it will waste it in the pursuit of pleasure, and a *few* will employ it in the pursuit of knowledge." Men like Jefferson, George Wythe, and Madison used their leisure for the good of their fellow-beings and for the cultivation of their minds; whereas the greater part of the planters—and the poor whites imitated them—spent their ample leisure in sports, in drinking, and in absolute idleness. "In spite of the Virginians' love for dissipation," wrote a famous French traveler, "the taste for reading is commoner among men of the first rank than in any other part of America; but the populace is perhaps more ignorant there than elsewhere." "The Virginia virtues," says Mr.

Henry Adams, “were those of the field and farm—the simple and straightforward mind, the notions of courage and truth, the absence of mercantile sharpness and quickness, the rusticity and open-handed hospitality.” Virginians of the upper class were remarkable for their high-bred courtesy,—a trait so inherent that
[22] it rarely disappeared even in the bitterness of political disputes and divisions. This, too, was the natural product of a society based not on trade or commerce, but on land. “I blush for my own people,” wrote Dr. Channing, from Virginia, in 1791, “when I compare the selfish prudence of a Yankee with the generous confidence of a Virginian. Here I find great vices, but greater virtues than I left behind me.” There was a largeness of temper and of feeling in the Virginia aristocracy, which seems to be inseparable from people living in a new country, upon the outskirts of civilization. They had the pride of birth, but they recognized other claims to consideration, and were as far as possible from estimating a man according to the amount of his wealth.

Slavery itself was probably a factor for good in the character of such a man as Jefferson,—it afforded a daily exercise in the virtues of benevolence and self-control. How he treated the blacks may be gathered from a story, told by his superintendent,
[23] of a slave named Jim who had been caught stealing nails from the nail-factory: “When Mr. Jefferson came, I sent for Jim, and I never saw any person, white or black, feel as badly as he did when he saw his master. The tears streamed down his face, and he begged for pardon over and over again. I felt very badly myself. Mr. Jefferson turned to me and said, ‘Ah, sir, we can’t punish him. He has suffered enough already.’ He then talked to him, gave him a heap of good advice, and sent him to the shop.... Jim said: ‘Well I’se been a-seeking religion a long time, but I never heard anything before that sounded so, or made me feel so, as I did when Master said, “Go, and don’t do so any more,” and now I’se determined to seek religion till I find it;’

and sure enough he afterwards came to me for a permit to go and be baptized.... He was always a good servant afterward."

Another element that contributed to the efficiency and the high standard of the early Virginia statesman was a good, old-fashioned classical education. They were familiar, to use Matthew Arnold's famous expression, "with the best that has [24] ever been said or done." This was no small advantage to men who were called upon to act as founders of a republic different indeed from the republics of Greece and Rome, but still based upon the same principles, and demanding an exercise of the same heroic virtues. The American Revolution would never have cut quite the figure in the world which history assigns to it, had it not been conducted with a kind of classic dignity and decency; and to this result nobody contributed more than Jefferson.

Such was Virginia in the eighteenth century,—at the base of society, the slaves; next, a lower class, rough, ignorant, and somewhat brutal, but still wholesome, and possessing the primitive virtues of courage and truth; and at the top, the landed gentry, luxurious, proud, idle and dissipated for the most part, and yet blossoming into a few characters of a type so high that the world has hardly seen a better. Had he been born in Europe, Jefferson would doubtless have devoted himself to music, or to architecture, or to literature, or to science,—for in all these [25] directions his taste was nearly equally strong; but these careers being closed to him by the circumstances of the colony, he became a lawyer, and then, under pressure of the Revolution, a politician and statesman.

During the four years following his graduation, Jefferson spent most of the winter months at Williamsburg, pursuing his legal and other studies, and the rest of the year upon the family plantation, the management of which had devolved upon him. Now, as always, he was the most industrious of men. He lived, as Mr. Parton remarks, "with a pen in his hand." He kept a garden book, a farm book, a weather book, a receipt book, a cash book,

and, while he practiced law, a fee book. Many of these books are still preserved, and the entries are as legible now as when they were first written down in Jefferson's small but clear and graceful hand,—the hand of an artist. Jefferson, as one of his old friends once remarked, *hated* superficial knowledge; and he dug
[26] to the roots of the common law, reading deeply in old reports written in law French and law Latin, and especially studying Magna Charta and Bracton.

He found time also for riding, for music, and dancing; and in his twentieth year he became enamored of Miss Rebecca Burwell, a Williamsburg belle more distinguished, tradition reports, for beauty than for cleverness. But Jefferson was not yet in a position to marry,—he even contemplated a foreign tour; and the girl, somewhat abruptly, married another lover. The wound seems not to have been a deep one. Jefferson, in fact, though he found his chief happiness in family affection, and though capable of strong and lasting attachments, was not the man for a romantic passion. He was a philosopher of the reasonable, eighteenth-century type. No one was more kind and just in the treatment of his slaves, but he did not free them, as George Wythe, perhaps foolishly, did; and he was even cautious about promulgating his views as
[27] to the folly and wickedness of slavery, though he did his best to promote its abolition by legislative measures. There was not in Jefferson the material for a martyr or a Don Quixote; but that was Nature's fault, not his. It may be said of every particular man that there is a certain depth to which he cannot sink, and there is a certain height to which he cannot rise. Within the intermediate zone there is ample exercise for free-will; and no man struggled harder than Jefferson to fulfill all the obligations which, as he conceived, were laid upon him.

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III

MONTICELLO AND ITS HOUSEHOLD

In April, 1764, Jefferson came of age, and his first public act was a characteristic one. For the benefit of the neighborhood, he procured the passage of a statute to authorize the dredging of the Rivanna River upon which his own estate bordered in part. He then by private subscriptions raised a sum sufficient for carrying out this purpose; and in a short time the stream, upon which before a bark canoe would hardly have floated, was made available for the transportation of farm produce to the James River, and thence to the sea.

In 1766, he made a journey to Philadelphia, in order to be inoculated for smallpox, traveling in a light gig drawn by a high-spirited horse, and narrowly escaping death by drowning in one of the numerous rivers which had to be forded between Charlottesville and Philadelphia. In the following year, about [29] the time of his twenty-fourth birthday, he was admitted to the bar, and entered almost immediately upon a large and lucrative practice. He remained at the bar only seven years, but during most of this time his professional income averaged more than £2500 a year; and he increased his paternal estate from 1900 acres to 5000 acres. He argued with force and fluency, but his voice was not suitable for public speaking, and soon became husky. Moreover, Jefferson had an intense repugnance to the arena. He shrank with a kind of nervous horror from a personal contest, and hated to be drawn into a discussion. The turmoil and confusion of a public body were hideous to him;—it was as

a writer, not as a speaker, that he won fame, first in the Virginia Assembly, and afterward in the Continental Congress.

In October, 1768, Jefferson was chosen to represent Albemarle County in the House of Burgesses of Virginia; and thus began
[30] his long political career of forty years. A resolution which he formed at the outset is stated in the following letter written in 1792 to a friend who had offered him a share in an undertaking which promised to be profitable:—

"When I first entered on the stage of public life (now twenty-four years ago) I came to a resolution never to engage, while in public office, in any kind of enterprise for the improvement of my fortune, nor to wear any other character than that of a farmer. I have never departed from it in a single instance; and I have in multiplied instances found myself happy in being able to decide and to act as a public servant, clear of all interest, in the multiform questions that have arisen, wherein I have seen others embarrassed and biased by having got themselves in a more interested situation."

During the next few years there was a lull in political affairs,—a sullen calm before the storm of the Revolution; but they were important years in Mr. Jefferson's life. In February, 1770, the house at Shadwell, where he lived with his mother and
[31] sisters, was burned to the ground, while the family were away. "Were none of my books saved?" Jefferson asked of the negro who came to him, breathless, with news of the disaster. "No, master," was the reply, "but we saved the fiddle."

In giving his friend Page an account of the fire, Jefferson wrote: "On a reasonable estimate, I calculate the cost of the books burned to have been £200. Would to God it had been the money,—then had it never cost me a sigh!" Beside the books, Jefferson lost most of his notes and papers; but no mishap, not caused by his own fault, ever troubled his peace of mind.

After the fire, his mother and the children took temporary refuge in the home of an overseer, and Jefferson repaired to

Monticello,—as he had named the elevated spot on the paternal estate where he had already begun to build the house which was his home for the remainder of his life.

Monticello is a small outlying peak, upon the outskirts of the mountainous part of Virginia, west of the tide-water region, and rising 580 feet above the plain at its foot. Upon its summit there [32] is a space of about six acres, leveled partly by nature and partly by art; and here, one hundred feet back from the brow of the hill, Jefferson built his house. It is a long, low building,—still standing,—with a Grecian portico in front, surmounted by a cupola. The road by which it is approached winds round and round, so as to make the ascent less difficult. In front of the house three long terraces, terminating in small pavilions, were constructed; and upon the northern terrace, or in its pavilion, Jefferson and his friends used to sit on summer nights gazing off toward the Blue Ridge, some eighty miles distant, or upon the nearer peaks of the Ragged Mountains. The altitude is such that neither dew nor mosquitoes can reach it.

To this beautiful but as yet uncompleted mountain home, Jefferson, in January, 1772, brought his bride. She was Martha Skelton, who had been left a widow at nineteen, and was now twenty-two, a daughter of John Wayles, a leading and opulent lawyer. Martha Skelton was a tall, beautiful, highly educated [33] young woman, of graceful carriage, with hazel eyes, literary in her tastes, a skillful performer upon the spinnet, and a notable housewife whose neatly kept account books are still preserved. They were married at “The Forest,” her father’s estate in Charles City County, and immediately set out for Monticello.

Two years later, in 1774, died Dabney Carr, a brilliant and patriotic young lawyer, Jefferson’s most intimate friend, and the husband of his sister Martha. Dabney Carr left six small children, whom, with their mother, Jefferson took under his wing, and they were brought up at Monticello as if they had been his own children. Jefferson loved children, and he had, in common with

that very different character, Aaron Burr, an instinct for teaching. While still a young man himself, he was often called upon to direct the studies of other young men,—Madison and Monroe were in this sense his pupils; and the founding of the University
[34] of Virginia was an achievement long anticipated by him and enthusiastically performed.

Jefferson was somewhat unfortunate in his own children, for, of the six that were born to him, only two, Martha and Maria, lived to grow up. Maria married but died young, leaving one child. Martha, the first-born, was a brilliant, cheerful, wholesome woman. She married Thomas Mann Randolph, afterward governor of Virginia. “She was just like her father, in this respect,” says Mr. Bacon, the superintendent,—“she was always busy. If she wasn’t reading or writing, she was always doing something. She used to sit in Mr. Jefferson’s room a great deal, and sew, or read, or talk, as he would be busy about something else.” John Randolph of Roanoke once toasted her—and it was after his quarrel with her father—as the sweetest woman in Virginia. She left ten children, and many of her descendants are still living.

To her, and to his other daughter, Maria, who is described as being more beautiful and no less amiable than her sister, but
[35] not so intellectual, Jefferson owed the chief happiness of his life. Like many another man who has won fame and a high position in the world, he counted these things but as dust and ashes in comparison with family affection.

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IV

JEFFERSON IN THE REVOLUTION

Shortly after Mr. Jefferson's marriage, the preliminary movements of the Revolution began, and though he took an active part in them it was not without reluctance. Even after the battle of Bunker Hill, namely, in November, 1775, he wrote to a kinsman that there was not a man in the British Empire who more cordially loved a union with Great Britain than he did. John Jay said after the Revolution: "During the course of my life, and until the second petition of Congress in 1775, I never did hear any American of any class or description express a wish for the independence of the colonies."

But these friendly feelings were first outraged and then extinguished by a long series of ill-considered and oppressive acts, covering, with some intermissions, a period of about twelve [37] years. Of these the most noteworthy were the Stamp Act, which amounted to taxation without representation, and the impost on tea, which was coupled with a provision that the receipts should be applied to the salaries of officers of the crown, thus placing them beyond the control of the local assemblies. The crown officers were also authorized to grant salaries and pensions at their discretion; and a board of revenue commissioners for the whole country was established at Boston, and armed with despotic powers. These proceedings amounted to a deprivation of liberty, and they were aggravated by the king's contemptuous rejection of the petitions addressed to him by the colonists. We know what followed,—the burning of the British war schooner,

Gaspee, by leading citizens of Providence, and the famous tea-party in Boston harbor.

Meanwhile Virginia had not been inactive. In March, 1772, a few young men, members of the House of Burgesses, met at the Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg. They were Patrick Henry,
[38] Richard Henry Lee and his brother, Thomas Jefferson, and a few others. They drew up several resolutions, the most important of which called for the appointment of a standing committee and for an invitation to the other colonies to appoint like committees for mutual information and assistance in the struggle against the crown. A similar resolution had been adopted in Massachusetts two years before, but without any practical result. The Virginia resolution was passed the next day by the House of Burgesses, and it gave rise to those proceedings which ushered in the Revolution.

The first Continental Congress was to meet in Philadelphia, in September, 1774; and Jefferson, in anticipation, prepared a draft of instructions for the delegates who were to be elected by Virginia. Being taken ill himself, on his way to the convention, he sent forward a copy of these instructions. They were considered too drastic to be adopted by the convention; but some of the members caused them to be published under the title of "A Summary View of the Rights of America." The pamphlet was
[39] extensively read in this country, and a copy which had been sent to London falling into the hands of Edmund Burke, he had it reprinted in England, where it ran through edition after edition. Jefferson's name thus became known throughout the colonies and in England.

The "Summary View" is in reality a political essay. Its author wasted no time in discussing the specific legal and constitutional questions which had arisen between the colonies and the crown; but he went to the root of the matter, and with one or two generalizations as bold and original as if they had been made by Rousseau, he cut the Gordian knot, and severed America

from the Parliament of Great Britain. He admitted some sort of dependence upon the crown, but his two main principles were these: (1) that the soil of this country belonged to the people who had settled and improved it, and that the crown had no right to sell or give it away; (2) that the right of self-government was a right natural to every people, and that Parliament, therefore, had no authority to make laws for America. Jefferson was always [40] about a century in advance of his time; and the "Summary View" substantially anticipated what is now the acknowledged relation of England to her colonies.

Jefferson was elected a member of the Continental Congress at its second session; and he made a rapid journey to Philadelphia in a chaise, with two led horses behind, reaching there the night before Washington set out for Cambridge. The Congress was composed mainly of young men. Franklin, the oldest member, was seventy-one, and a few others were past sixty. Washington was forty-three; John Adams, forty; Patrick Henry, a year or two younger; John Rutledge, thirty-six; his brother, twenty-six; John Langdon and William Paca, thirty-five, John Jay, thirty; Thomas Stone, thirty-two, and Jefferson, thirty-two.

Jefferson soon became intimate with John Adams, who in later years said of him: "Though a silent member of Congress, he was so prompt, frank, explicit, and decisive upon committees and in conversation—not even Samuel Adams was more so—that he [41] soon seized upon my heart."

Jefferson, as we have seen, was not fitted to shine as an orator, still less in debate. But as a writer he had that capacity for style which comes, if it comes at all, as a gift of nature; which needs to be supplemented, but which cannot be supplied, by practice and study. In some of his early letters there are slight reminders of Dr. Johnson's manner, and still more of Sterne's. Sterne indeed was one of his favorite authors. However, these early traces of imitation were absorbed very quickly; and, before he was thirty, Jefferson became master of a clear,

smooth, polished, picturesque, and individual style. To him, therefore, his associates naturally turned when they needed such a proclamation to the world as the Declaration of Independence; and that document is very characteristic of its author. It was imagination that gave distinction to Jefferson both as a man and as a writer. He never dashed off a letter which did not contain
[42] some play of fancy; and whether he was inventing a plough or forecasting the destinies of a great Democracy, imagination qualified the performance.

One of the most effective forms in which imagination displays itself in prose is by the use of a common word in such a manner and context that it conveys an uncommon meaning. There are many examples of this rhetorical art in Jefferson's writings, but the most notable one occurs in the noble first paragraph of the Declaration of Independence: "When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."

Upon this paragraph Mr. Parton eloquently observes: "The noblest utterance of the whole composition is the reason given
[43] for making the Declaration,—'*A decent respect for the opinions of mankind*.' This touches the heart. Among the best emotions that human nature knows is the veneration of man for man. This recognition of the public opinion of the world—the sum of human sense—as the final arbiter in all such controversies is the single phrase of the document which Jefferson alone, perhaps, of all the Congress, could have originated; and in point of merit it was worth all the rest."

Franklin and John Adams, who were on the committee with Jefferson, made a few verbal changes in his draught of

the Declaration, and it was then discussed and reviewed by Congress for three days. Congress made eighteen suppressions, six additions, and ten alterations; and it must be admitted that most of these were improvements. For example, Jefferson had framed a paragraph in which the king was severely censured for opposing certain measures looking to the suppression of the slave trade. This would have come with an ill grace from the Americans, since for a century New England had been enriching herself by that trade, and the southern colonies had subsisted upon the labor which it brought them. Congress wisely struck [44] out the paragraph.

The Declaration of Independence was received with rapture throughout the country. Everywhere it was read aloud to the people who gathered to hear it, amid the booming of guns, the ringing of bells, and the display of fireworks. In Philadelphia, after the reading, the late king's coat of arms was burned in Independence Square; in New York the leaden statue, in Bowling Green, of George III. was "laid prostrate in the dust," and ordered to be run into bullets. Virginia had already stricken the king's name from her prayer-book; and Rhode Island now forbade her people to pray for the king, as king, under a penalty of one hundred thousand pounds! The Declaration of Independence, both as a political and literary document, has stood the test of time. It has all the classic qualities of an oration by Demosthenes; and even that passage in it which has been criticised—that, namely, which pronounces all men to be created equal—is true in a sense, the truth of which it will take a century or two yet to develop.

[45]

V

REFORM WORK IN VIRGINIA

In September, 1776, Jefferson, having resigned his seat in Congress to engage in duties nearer home, returned to Monticello. A few weeks later, a messenger from Congress arrived to inform him that he had been elected a joint commissioner with Dr. Franklin and Silas Deane to represent at Paris the newly formed nation. His heart had long been set upon foreign travel; but he felt obliged to decline this appointment, first on account of the ill health of his wife, and secondly, because he was needed in Virginia as a legislator. Not since Lycurgus gave laws to the Spartans had there been such an opportunity as then existed in the United States. John Adams declared: "The best lawgivers of antiquity would rejoice to live at a period like this when, for the
[46] first time in the history of the world, three millions of people are deliberately *choosing* their government and institutions."

Of all the colonies, Virginia offered the best field for reform, because, as we have already seen, she had by far the most aristocratic political and social system; and it is extraordinary how quickly the reform was effected by Jefferson and his friends. In ordinary times of peace the task would have been impossible; but in throwing off the English yoke, the colonists had opened their minds to new ideas; change had become familiar to them, and in the general upheaval the rights of the people were recognized. A year later, Jefferson wrote to Franklin: "With respect to the State of Virginia, in particular, the people seem to have laid aside the monarchical and taken up the republican government with as

much ease as would have attended their throwing off an old and putting on a new set of clothes."

Jefferson's greatness lay in this, that he was the first statesman who trusted the mass of the people. He alone had divined the fact that they were competent, morally and mentally, for [47] self-government. It is almost impossible for us to appreciate Jefferson's originality in this respect, because the bold and untried theories for which he contended are now regarded as commonplace maxims. He may have derived his political ideas in part from the French philosophical writers of the eighteenth century, although there is no evidence to that effect; but he was certainly the first statesman to grasp the idea of democracy as a form of government, just as, at a later day, Walt Whitman was the first poet to grasp the idea of equality as a social system. Hamilton, John Adams, Pinckney, Gouverneur Morris, even Washington himself, all believed that popular government would be unsafe and revolutionary unless held in check by a strong executive and by an aristocratic senate.

Jefferson in his lifetime was often charged with gross inconsistency in his political views and conduct; but the inconsistency was more apparent than real. At times he strictly construed, and at times he almost set aside the Constitution; but the clue to his conduct can usually be found in the fundamental [48] principle that the only proper function of government or constitutions is to express the will of the people, and that the people are morally and mentally competent to govern. "I am sure," he wrote in 1796, "that the mass of citizens in these United States mean well, and I firmly believe that they will always act well, whenever they can obtain a right understanding of matters." And Jefferson's lifelong endeavor was to enable the people to form this "right understanding" by educating them. His ideas of the scope of public education went far beyond those which prevailed in his time, and considerably beyond those which prevail even now. For example, a free university course for the

most apt pupils graduated at the grammar schools made part of his scheme,—an idea most nearly realized in the Western States; and those States received their impetus in educational matters from the Ordinance of 1787, which was largely the product of Jefferson's foresight.

[49] Happily for Virginia, she did not become a scene of war until the year 1779, and, meanwhile, Jefferson and his friends lost no time in remodeling her constitution. There were no common schools, and the mass of the people were more ignorant and rough than their contemporaries in any other colony. Elections were scenes of bribery, intimidation, and riot, surpassing even those which Hogarth depicted in England. Elkanah Watson, of Massachusetts, describes what he saw at Hanover Court House, Patrick Henry's county, in 1778: "The whole county was assembled. The moment I alighted, a wretched, pug-nosed fellow assailed me to swap watches. I had hardly shaken him off, when I was attacked by a wild Irishman who insisted on my swapping horses with him.... With him I came near being involved in a boxing-match, the Irishman swearing, I 'did not trate him like a jintleman.' I had hardly escaped this dilemma when my attention was attracted by a fight between two very unwieldy fat men, foaming and puffing like two furies, until one
[50] succeeded in twisting a forefinger in a sidelock of the other's hair, and in the act of thrusting by this purchase his thumb into the latter's eye, he bawled out, 'King's Cruise,' equivalent in technical language to 'Enough.' "

Quakers were put in the pillory, scolding women were ducked, and it is said that a woman was burned to death in Princess Anne County for witchcraft. The English church, as we have seen, was an established church; and all taxpayers, dissenters as well as churchmen, were compelled to contribute to its support. Baptist preachers were arrested, and fined as disturbers of the peace. The law of entail, both as respects land and slaves, was so strict that their descent to the eldest son could not be prevented even by

agreement between the owner and his heir.

In his reformation of the laws, Jefferson was supported by Patrick Henry, now governor, and inhabiting what was still called the palace; by George Mason, a patriotic lawyer who drew the famous Virginia Bill of Rights; by George Wythe, his old preceptor, and by James Madison, Jefferson's friend, pupil, and [51] successor, who in this year began his political career as a member of the House of Burgesses.

Opposed to them were the conservative party led by R. C. Nicholas, head of the Virginia bar, a stanch churchman and gentleman of the old school, and Edward Pendleton, whom Jefferson described as "full of resource, never vanquished; for if he lost the main battle he returned upon you, and regained so much of it as to make it a drawn one, by dexterous manœuvres, skirmishes in detail, and the recovery of small advantages, which, little singly, were important all together. You never knew when you were clear of him."

Intense as the controversy was, fundamental as were the points at issue, the speakers never lost that courtesy for which the Virginians were remarkable; John Randolph being perhaps the only exception. Even Patrick Henry—though from his humble origin and impetuous oratory one might have expected otherwise—was never guilty of any rudeness to his opponents. [52] What Jefferson said of Madison was true of the Virginia orators in general,—"soothing always the feelings of his adversaries by civilities and softnesses of expression."

Jefferson struck first at the system of entail. After a three weeks' struggle, land and slaves were put upon the same footing as all other property,—they might be sold or bequeathed according to the will of the possessor. Then came a longer and more bitter contest. Jefferson was for abolishing all connection between church and state, and for establishing complete freedom of religion. Nine years elapsed before Virginia could be brought to that point; but at this session he procured a repeal of the law

which imposed penalties for attendance at a dissenting meeting-house, and also of the law compelling dissenters to pay tithes. The fight was, therefore, substantially won; and in 1786, Jefferson's
[53] "Act for establishing religion" became the law of Virginia.[1]

Another far-reaching law introduced by Jefferson at this memorable session of 1776 provided for the naturalization of foreigners in Virginia, after a two years' residence in the State, and upon a declaration of their intention to become American citizens. The bill provided also that the minor children of naturalized parents should be citizens of the United States when they came of age. The principles of this measure were afterward embodied in the statutes of the United States, and they are in force to-day.

At this session Jefferson also drew an act for establishing courts of law in Virginia, the royal courts having necessarily passed out of existence when the Declaration of Independence was adopted. Moreover, he set on foot a revision of all the statutes of Virginia, a committee with him at the head being appointed for this purpose; and finally he procured the removal
[54] of the capital from Williamsburg to Richmond.

All this was accomplished, mainly by Jefferson's efforts; and yet the two bills upon which he set most store failed entirely. These were, first, a comprehensive measure of state education, running up through primary schools and grammar schools to a state university, and, secondly, a bill providing that all who were born in slavery after the passage of the bill should be free.

This was Jefferson's second ineffectual attempt to promote the abolition of slavery. During the year 1768, when he first became a member of the House of Burgesses, he had endeavored to procure the passage of a law enabling slave-owners to free their

[1] It is to be remembered that the support of public worship was compulsory in Massachusetts—the inhabitants of certain cities excepted—down to the year 1833. An attempt to free the people from this burden, led by Dr. Childs, of Berkshire County, was defeated at the Constitutional Convention of 1820.

slaves, He induced Colonel Bland, one of the ablest, oldest, and most respected members to propose the law, and he seconded the proposal; but it was overwhelmingly rejected. “I, as a younger member,” related Jefferson afterward, “was more spared in the debate; but he was denounced as an enemy to his country, and was treated with the greatest indecorum.”

In 1778 Jefferson made another attempt:—he brought in a bill [55] forbidding the further importation of slaves in Virginia, and this was passed without opposition. Again, in 1784, when Virginia ceded to the United States her immense northwestern territory, Jefferson drew up a scheme of government for the States to be carved out of it which included a provision “that after the year 1800 of the Christian Era, there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in any of the said States, otherwise than in punishment of crimes.” The provision was rejected by Congress.

In his “Notes on Virginia,” written in the year 1781, but published in 1787, he said: “The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism, on the one part, and degrading submission on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it.... With the morals of the people their industry also is destroyed. For in a warm climate no one will labor for himself who can make another labor for him.... Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice [56] cannot sleep forever.... The Almighty has no attribute which can take sides with us in such a contest.”

When the Missouri Compromise question came up, in 1820, Jefferson rightly predicted that a controversy had begun which would end in disruption; but he made the mistake of supposing that the Northern party were actuated in that matter solely by political motives. April 22, 1820, he wrote: “This momentous question, like a fire-bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union.... A geographical line, coinciding with a marked principle, moral and

political, once conceived and held up to the angry passions of men, will never be obliterated; and every new irritation will mark it deeper and deeper.... The cession of that kind of property, for so it is misnamed, is a bagatelle which would not cost me a second thought if, in that way, a general emancipation and expatriation could be effected; and gradually and with due sacrifices I think
[57] it might be. But as it is, we have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other."

And later, he wrote of the Missouri Compromise, as a "question having just enough of the semblance of morality to throw dust into the eyes of the people.... The Federalists, unable to rise again under the old division of Whig and Tory, have invented a geographical division which gives them fourteen States against ten, and seduces their old opponents into a coalition with them. Real morality is on the other side. For while the removal of the slaves from one State to another adds no more to their numbers than their removal from one country to another, the spreading them over a larger surface adds to their happiness, and renders their future emancipation more practicable."

These misconceptions as to Northern motives might be ascribed to Jefferson's advanced age, for, as he himself graphically expressed it, he then had "one foot in the grave,
[58] and the other lifted to follow it;" but it would probably be more just to say that they were due, in part, to his prejudice against the New England people and especially the New England clergy, and in part to the fact that his long retirement in Virginia had somewhat contracted his views and sympathies. Jefferson was a man of intense local attachments, and he took color from his surroundings. He never ceased, however, to regard slavery as morally wrong and socially ruinous; and in the brief autobiography which he left behind him he made these predictions: "Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free. Nor is it less certain that

the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government."

History has justified the second as well as the first of these declarations, for, excepting that brief period of anarchy known as "the carpet-bag era," it cannot be maintained that the colored race in the Southern States have been at any time, even since their emancipation, "equally free," in the sense of politically free, with their white fellow citizens.

[59]

VI

GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA

For three years Jefferson was occupied with the legislative duties already described, and especially with a revision of the Virginia statutes, and then, in June, 1779, he succeeded Patrick Henry as governor of the State. It has often been remarked that he was, all through life, a lucky man, but in this case fortune did not favor him, for the ensuing two years proved to be, so far as Virginia was concerned, by much the worst period of the war.

The French alliance, though no doubt an ultimate benefit to the colonies, had at first two bad effects: it relaxed the energy of the Americans, who trusted that France would fight their battles for them; and it stimulated the British to increased exertions. The British commissioners announced that henceforth England
[60] would employ, in the prosecution of the war, all those agencies which "God and nature had placed in her hands." This meant that the ferocity of the Indians would be invoked, a matter of special moment to Virginia, since her western frontier swarmed with Indians, the bravest of their race.

The colony, it must be remembered, was then of immense extent; for beside the present Virginia and West Virginia, Kentucky and the greater part of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois were embraced in it. It stretched, in short, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River. Upon the seaboard Virginia was especially vulnerable, the tide-water region being penetrated by numerous bays and rivers, which the enemy's ships could easily ascend, for they were undefended by forts or men. The total navy of the colony was four vessels, mounting sixty-two guns,

and a few armed boats. The flower of the Virginia soldiery, to the number of ten thousand, were in Washington's army, and supplies of men, of arms, of ammunition and food were urgently called for by General Gates, who was battling against Cornwallis [61] in North Carolina. The militia were supposed to number fifty thousand, which included every man between sixteen and fifty years of age; but this was only one man for every square mile of territory in the present State of Virginia, and of these militiamen it was estimated that, east of the Blue Ridge, only about one in five was armed with a gun. The treasury was practically bankrupt, and there was a dearth of every kind of warlike material.

Such was the situation which confronted, as Mr. Parton puts it, "a lawyer of thirty-six, with a talent for music, a taste for art, a love of science, literature, and gardening." The task was one calling rather for a soldier than a statesman; but Mr. Jefferson faced it with courage, and on the whole with success. In retaliating the cruel measures of the British, he showed a firmness which must have been especially difficult for a man of his temperament. He put in irons and confined in a dungeon Colonel Henry Hamilton and two subordinate officers who had committed atrocities upon American prisoners. He caused a [62] prison-ship, like the ships of infamous memory which were employed as prisons by the British at New York, to be prepared; and the exchange of captives between Virginia and the British was stopped. "Humane conduct on our part," wrote Jefferson, "was found to produce no effect. The contrary, therefore, is to be tried. Iron will be retaliated by iron, prison-ships for prison-ships, and like for like in general." But in November, 1779, notice was received that the English, under their new leader, Sir Henry Clinton, had adopted a less barbarous system of warfare; and fortunately Jefferson's measures of reprisal became unnecessary.

Hampered as he was by want of men and money, Jefferson did all that he could to supply the needs of the Virginia soldiers with Washington, of the army in North Carolina, led by Gates, and of

George Rogers Clarke, the heroic commander who put down the Indian uprising on the western frontier, and captured the English
[63] officer who instigated it,—that same Colonel Hamilton of whom mention has already been made. The story of Clarke's adventures in the wilderness,—he was a neighbor of Jefferson, only twenty-six years old,—of his forced marches, of his masterful dealing with the Indians, and finally of his capture of the British force, forms a thrilling chapter in the history of the American Revolution.

Many indeed of Jefferson's constituents censured him as being over-zealous in his support of the army of Gates. He stripped Virginia, they said, of troops and resources which, as it proved afterward, were needed at home. But if Cornwallis were not defeated in North Carolina, it was certain that he would overrun the much more exposed Virginia. If he could be defeated anywhere, it would be in the Carolinas. Jefferson's course, it is sufficient to say, was that recommended by Washington; and his exertions in behalf of the Continental armies were commended in the highest terms not only by Washington, but also by Generals Gates, Greene, Steuben, and Lafayette. The
[64] militia were called out, leaving behind only so many men as were required to cultivate the land, wagons were impressed, including two belonging to the governor, and attempts were even made—extraordinary for Virginia—to manufacture certain much-needed articles. "Our smiths," wrote Jefferson, "are making five hundred axes and some tomahawks for General Gates."

Thus fared the year 1779, and in 1780 things went from bad to worse. In April came a letter from Madison, saying that Washington's army was on the verge of dissolution, being only half-clothed, and in a way to be starved. The public treasury was empty and the public credit gone. In August occurred the disastrous defeat of General Gates at Camden, which left Virginia at the mercy of Cornwallis. In October a British fleet

under Leslie ravaged the country about Portsmouth, but failing to effect a juncture with Cornwallis, who was detained in North Carolina by illness among his troops, did no further harm. Two months later, however, Benedict Arnold sailed up the James River with another fleet, and, after committing some depredations at [65] Richmond, sailed down again, escaping by the aid of a favorable wind, which hauled from east to west just in the nick of time for him.

In June, 1781, Cornwallis invaded Virginia, and no one suffered more than Jefferson from his depredations. Tarleton was dispatched to seize the governor at Monticello; but the latter was forewarned by a citizen of Charlottesville, who, being in a tavern at Louisa when Tarleton and his troop swept by on the main road, immediately guessed their destination, and mounting his horse, a fleet Virginia thoroughbred, rode by a short cut through the woods straight to Monticello, arriving there about three hours ahead of Tarleton.

Jefferson took the matter coolly. He first dispatched his family to a place of safety, sent his best horse to be shod at a neighboring smithy, and then proceeded to sort and separate his papers. He left the house only about five minutes before the soldiers entered it. [66]

Two slaves, Martin, Mr. Jefferson's body servant, and Cæsar, were engaged in hiding plate and other articles under the floor of the portico, a single plank having been raised for that purpose. As Martin, above, handed the last article to Cæsar under the floor, the tramp of the approaching cavalry was heard. Down went the plank, shutting in Cæsar, and there he remained, without making any outcry, for eighteen hours, in darkness, and of course without food or water. One of the soldiers, to try Martin's nerve, clapped a pistol to his breast, and threatened to fire unless he would tell which way his master had fled. "Fire away, then," retorted the black, fiercely answering glance for glance, and not receding a hair's breath.

Tarleton and his men scrupulously refrained from injuring Jefferson's property. Cornwallis, on the other hand, who encamped on Jefferson's estate of Elk Hill, lying opposite Elk Island in the James River, destroyed the growing crops, burned all the barns and fences, carried off—"as was to be expected," [67] said Mr. Jefferson—the cattle and horses, and committed the barbarity of killing the colts that were too young to be of service. He carried off, also, about thirty slaves. "Had this been to give them freedom," wrote Jefferson, "he would have done right; but it was to consign them to inevitable death from the smallpox and putrid fever, then raging in his camp."

"Some of the miserable wretches crawled home to die," Mr. Randall relates, "and giving information where others lay perishing in hovels or in the open air, by the wayside, these were sent for by their generous master; and the last moments of all of them were made as comfortable as could be done by proper nursing and medical attendance."

These dreadful scenes, added to the agitation of having twice been obliged, at a moment's notice, to flee from the enemy, to say nothing of the anxieties which she must have endured on her husband's account, were too much for Mrs. Jefferson's already [68] enfeebled constitution. She died on September 6, 1782.

Six slave women who were household servants enjoyed for thirty years a kind of humble distinction at Monticello as "the servants who were in the room when Mrs. Jefferson died;" and the fact that they were there attests the affectionate relations which must have existed between them and their master and mistress. "They have often told my wife," relates Mr. Bacon, "that when Mrs. Jefferson died they stood around the bed. Mr. Jefferson sat by her, and she gave him directions about a good many things that she wanted done. When she came to the children, she wept, and could not speak for some time. Finally she held up her hand, and, spreading out her four fingers, she told him she could not die happy if she thought her four children were ever to have a

stepmother brought in over them. Holding her other hand in his, Mr. Jefferson promised her solemnly that he would never marry again;" and the promise was kept.

After his wife's death Jefferson sank into what he afterward described as "a stupor of mind;" and even before that he had [69] been, for the first and last time in his life, in a somewhat morbid mental condition. He was an excessively sensitive man, and reflections upon his conduct as governor, during the raids into Virginia by Arnold and Cornwallis, coming at a time when he was overwrought, rankled in his mind. He refused to serve again as governor, and desiring to defend his course when in that office, became a member of the House of Burgesses in 1781, in order that he might answer his critics there; but not a voice was raised against him. In 1782, he was again elected to the House, but he did not attend; and both Madison and Monroe endeavored in vain to draw him from his seclusion. To Monroe he replied: "Before I ventured to declare to my countrymen my determination to retire from public employment, I examined well my heart to know whether it were thoroughly cured of every principle of political ambition, whether no lurking particle remained which might leave me uneasy, when reduced within the limits of mere private life. I became satisfied that every fibre of that passion [70] was thoroughly eradicated."

Jefferson was an impulsive man,—in some respects a creature of the moment; certainly often, in his own case, mistaking, as a permanent feeling, what was really a transitory impression. His language to Monroe must, therefore, be taken as the sincere deliverance of a man who, at that time, had not the remotest expectation of receiving, or the least ambition to attain, the highest offices in the gift of the American people.

[71]

VII

ENVOY AT PARIS

Two years after his wife's death, namely, in 1784, Jefferson was chosen by Congress to serve as envoy at Paris, with John Adams and Benjamin Franklin. The appointment came at an opportune moment, when his mind was beginning to recover its tone, and he gladly accepted it. It was deemed necessary that the new Confederacy should make treaties with the various governments of Europe, and as soon as the envoys reached Paris, they drew up a treaty such as they hoped might be negotiated. It has been described as "the first serious attempt ever made to conduct the intercourse of nations on Christian principles;" and, on that account, it failed. To this failure there was, however, one exception. "Old Frederick of Prussia," as Jefferson styled him,
[72] "met us cordially;" and with him a treaty was soon concluded.

In May, 1785, Franklin returned to the United States, and Jefferson was appointed minister. "You replace Dr. Franklin," said the Count of Vergennes when Jefferson announced his appointment. "I succeed,—no one can replace him," was the reply.

Jefferson's residence in Paris at this critical period was a fortunate occurrence. It would be a mistake to suppose that he derived his political principles from France:—he carried them there; but he was confirmed in them by witnessing the injustice and misery which resulted to the common people from the monarchical governments of Europe. To James Monroe he wrote in June, 1785: "The pleasure of the trip [to Europe] will be less than you expect, but the utility greater. It will make you adore

your own country,—its soil, its climate, its equality, laws, people, and manners. My God! how little do my countrymen know what precious blessings they are in possession of and which no other people on earth enjoy! I confess I had no idea of it myself." [73]

To George Wythe he wrote in August, 1786: "Preach, my dear sir, a crusade against ignorance; establish and improve the law for educating the common people. Let our countrymen know that the people alone can protect us against these evils; and that the tax which will be paid for this purpose is not more than the thousandth part of what will be paid to kings, priests, and nobles, who will rise up among us if we leave the people in ignorance." To Madison, he wrote in January, 1787: "This is a government of wolves over sheep." Jefferson took the greatest pains to ascertain the condition of the laboring classes. In the course of a journey in the south of France, he wrote to Lafayette, begging him to survey the condition of the people for himself. "To do it most effectually," he said, "you must be absolutely incognito; you must ferret the people out of their hovels, as I have done; look into their kettles; eat their bread; loll on their beds on pretense of resting yourself, but in fact to find if they [74] are soft. You will feel a sublime pleasure in the course of the investigation, and a sublimer one hereafter, when you shall be able to apply your knowledge to the softening of their beds, or the throwing a morsel of meat into their kettle of vegetables."

These excursions among the French peasantry, who, as Jefferson well knew, were ruinously taxed in order to support an extravagant court and an idle and insolent nobility, made him a fierce Republican. "There is not a crowned head in Europe," he wrote to General Washington, in 1788, "whose talents or merits would entitle him to be elected a vestryman by the people of America."

But for the French race Jefferson had an affinity. He was glad to live with people among whom, as he said, "a man might pass a life without encountering a single rudeness." He liked their

polished manners and gay disposition, their aptitude for science, for philosophy, and for art; even their wines and cookery suited his taste, and his preference in this respect was so well known
[75] that Patrick Henry once humorously stigmatized him as "a man who had abjured his native victuals."

Jefferson's stay in Paris corresponded exactly with the "glorious" period of the French Revolution. He was present at the Assembly of the Notables in 1787, and he witnessed the destruction of the Bastille in 1789.

"The change in this country," he wrote in March, 1789, "is such as you can form no idea of. The frivolities of conversation have given way entirely to politics. Men, women, and children talk nothing else ... and mode has acted a wonderful part in the present instance. All the handsome young women, for example, are for the *tiers état*, and this is an army more powerful in France than the 200,000 men of the king."

The truth is that an intellectual and moral revolution preceded in France the outbreak of the populace. There was an interior conviction that the government of the country was excessively
[76] unjust and oppressive. A love of liberty, a feeling of fraternity, a passion for equality moved the intellect and even the aristocracy of France. In this crisis the reformers looked toward America, for the United States had just trodden the path upon which France was entering. "Our proceedings," wrote Jefferson to Madison in 1789, "have been viewed as a model for them on every occasion.... Our [authority] has been treated like that of the Bible, open to explanation, but not to question."

Jefferson's advice was continually sought by Lafayette and others; and his house, maintained in the easy, liberal style of Virginia, was a meeting place for the Revolutionary statesmen. Jefferson dined at three or four o'clock; and after the cloth had been removed he and his guests sat over their wine till nine or ten in the evening.

In July, 1789, the National Assembly appointed a committee

to draught a constitution, and the committee formally invited the American minister to assist at their sessions and favor them with his advice. This function he felt obliged to decline, as being inconsistent with his post of minister to the king. No man had [77] a nicer sense of propriety than Jefferson; and he punctiliously observed the requirements of his somewhat difficult situation in Paris.

What gave Mr. Jefferson the greatest anxiety and trouble, was our relations with the piratical Barbary powers who held the keys of the Mediterranean and sometimes extended their depredations even into the Atlantic. It was a question of paying tribute or going to war; and most of the European powers paid tribute. In 1784, for example, the Dutch contributed to "the high, glorious, mighty, and most noble, King, Prince, and Emperor of Morocco," a mass of material which included thirty cables, seventy cannon, sixty-nine masts, twenty-one anchors, fifty dozen sail-needles, twenty-four tons of pitch, two hundred and eighty loaves of sugar, twenty-four China punch-bowls, three clocks, and one "very large watch."

Jefferson ascertained that the pirates would require of the United States, as the price of immunity for its commerce, a [78] tribute of about three hundred thousand dollars per annum. "Surely," he wrote home, "our people will not give this. Would it not be better to offer them an equal treaty? If they refuse, why not go to war with them?" And he pressed upon Mr. Jay, who held the secretaryship of foreign affairs, as the office was then called, the immediate establishment of a navy. But Congress would do nothing; and it was not till Jefferson himself became President that the Barbary pirates were dealt with in a wholesome and stringent manner. During the whole term of his residence at Paris he was negotiating with the Mediterranean powers for the release of unfortunate Americans, many of whom spent the best part of their lives in horrible captivity.

Mr. Jefferson's self-imposed duties were no less arduous. He

kept four colleges informed of the most valuable new inventions, discoveries, and books. He had a Yankee talent for mechanical improvements, and he was always on the alert to obtain anything
[79] of this nature which he thought might be useful at home. Jefferson himself, by the way, invented the revolving armchair, the buggy-top, and a mould board for a plough. He bought books for Franklin, Madison, Monroe, Wythe, and himself. He informed one correspondent about Watt's engine, another about the new system of canals. He smuggled rice from Turin in his coat pockets; and he was continually dispatching to agricultural societies in America seeds, roots, nuts, and plants. Houdin was sent over by him to make the statue of Washington; and he forwarded designs for the new capitol at Richmond. For Buffon he procured the skin of an American panther, and also the bones and hide of a New Hampshire moose, to obtain which Governor Sullivan of that State organized a hunting-party in the depth of winter and cut a road through the forest for twenty miles in order to bring out his quarry.

Jefferson was the most indefatigable of men, and he did not relax in Paris. He had rooms at a Carthusian monastery to which
[80] he repaired when he had some special work on hand. He kept a carriage and horses, but could not afford a saddle horse. Instead of riding, he took a walk every afternoon, usually of six or seven miles, occasionally twice as long. It was while returning with a friend from one of these excursions that he fell and fractured his right wrist; and the fracture was set so imperfectly that it troubled him ever afterward. It was characteristic of Jefferson that he said nothing to his friend as to the injury until they reached home, though his suffering from it was great; and, also, that he at once began to write with the other hand, making numerous entries, on the very night of the accident, in a writing which, though stiff, was, and remains, perfectly clear.

Mr. Jefferson's two daughters had been placed at a convent school near Paris, and he was surprised one day to receive a note

from Martha, the elder, asking his permission to remain in the convent for the rest of her life as a nun. For a day or two she received no answer. Then her father called in his carriage, and [81] after a short interview with the abbess took his daughters away; and thenceforth Martha presided, so far as her age permitted, over her father's household. Not a word upon the subject of her request ever passed between them; and long afterward, in telling the story to her own children, she praised Mr. Jefferson's tact in dealing with what she described as a transient impulse.

After this incident, Jefferson, thinking that it was time to take his daughters home, obtained leave of absence for six months; and the little family landed at Norfolk, November 18, 1789. They journeyed slowly homeward, stopping at one friend's house after another, and, two days before Christmas, arrived at Monticello, where they were rapturously greeted by the slaves, who took the four horses from the carriage and drew it up the steep incline themselves; and when he alighted, Mr. Jefferson, in spite of himself, was carried into the house on the arms of his black servants and friends.

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VIII

SECRETARY OF STATE

Mr. Jefferson had a strong desire to resume his post as minister to France, but he yielded to Washington's earnest request that he should become Secretary of State in the new government. He lingered long enough at Monticello to witness the marriage of his daughter Martha to Thomas Mann Randolph, and then set out upon a cold, wet journey of twenty-one days, reaching New York, which was then the seat of government, late in March, 1790. He hired a small house at No. 57 Maiden Lane, and immediately attacked the arrears of work which had been accumulating for six months. The unusual confinement, aggravated, perhaps, by a homesickness, clearly revealed in his letters, for his daughters and
[83] for Monticello, brought on what seems to have been a neuralgic headache which lasted for three weeks. It may have been caused in part by the climate of New York, as to which Mr. Jefferson observed: "Spring and fall they never have, so far as I can learn. They have ten months of winter, two of summer, with some winter days interspersed." But there were other causes beside homesickness and headache which made Jefferson unhappy in his new position. Long afterward he described them as follows:—

"I had left France in the first year of her Revolution, in the fervor of natural rights and zeal for reformation. My conscientious devotion to those rights could not be heightened, but it had been aroused and excited by daily exercise. The President received me cordially, and my colleagues and the circle of principal citizens apparently with welcome. The courtesies of dinners given to me, as a stranger newly arrived among them,

placed me at once in their familiar society. But I cannot describe the wonder and mortification with which the table conversations filled me. Politics were the chief topic, and a preference of [84] kingly over republican government was evidently the favorite sentiment. An apostate I could not be, nor yet a hypocrite; and I found myself for the most part the only advocate on the republican side of the question, unless among the guests there chanced to be some member of that party from the legislative houses."

It must be remembered that Jefferson's absence in France had been the period of the Confederacy, when the inability of Congress to enforce its laws and to control the States was so evident and so disastrous that the need of a stronger central government had been impressed on men's minds. The new Constitution had been devised to supply that need, but it was elastic in its terms, and it avoided all details. Should it be construed in an aristocratic or in a democratic spirit, and should the new nation be given an aristocratic or a democratic twist? This was a burning question, and it gave rise to that long struggle led by Hamilton on one side and by Jefferson on the other, which ended with the election of Jefferson as President in the year 1800. [85]

Hamilton and his party utterly disbelieved in government by the people.[2] John Adams declared that the English Constitution, barring its element of corruption, was an ideal constitution. Hamilton went farther and asserted that the English form of government, corruption and all, was the best practicable form. An aristocratic senate, chosen for a long term, if not for life, was thought to be essential even by Mr. Adams. Hamilton's notion was that mankind were incapable of self-government, and must be governed in one or two ways,—by force or by fraud. Property was, in his view, the ideal basis of government; and he was

[2] The father of Miss Catherine Sedgwick was a leading Federalist, and his daughter records that, though a most kind-hearted man, he habitually spoke of the people as "Jacobins" and "miscreants."

inclined to fix the possession of “a thousand Spanish dollars” as the proper qualification for a voter.

[86] The difference between the Hamiltonian and the Jeffersonian view arises chiefly from a different belief as to the connection between education and morality. All aristocratic systems must, in the last analysis, be founded either upon brute force or else upon the assumption that education and morality go hand-in-hand, and that the well-to-do and best educated class is morally superior to the less educated. Jefferson rejected this assumption, and all real believers in democracy must take their stand with him. He once stated his creed upon this point in a letter as follows:—

“The moral sense or conscience is as much a part of man as his leg or arm.... It may be strengthened by exercise, as may any particular limb of the body. This sense is submitted, indeed, in some degree to the guidance of reason, but it is a small stock which is required for this, even a less one than what we call common sense. State a moral case to a ploughman and a professor. The former will decide it as well and often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray by artificial rules.”

[87] This is sound philosophy. The great problems in government, whether they relate to matters external or internal, are moral, not intellectual. There are, indeed, purely intellectual problems, such as the question between free silver and a gold standard; and as to these problems, the people may go wrong. But they are not vital. No nation ever yet achieved glory or incurred destruction by taking one course rather than another in a matter of trade or finance. The crucial questions are moral questions, and experience has shown that as to such matters the people can be trusted. As Jefferson himself said, “The will of the majority, the natural law of every society, is the only sure guardian of the rights of man. Perhaps even this may sometimes err; but its errors are honest, solitary, and short-lived.”

Washington’s cabinet was made up on the theory that it should represent not the party in power, but both parties,—for two

parties already existed, the Federalists and the anti-Federalists, who, under Jefferson's influence, soon became known by the better name of Republicans. The cabinet consisted of four members, Jefferson, Secretary of State, Hamilton, Secretary [88] of the Treasury, Henry Knox, Secretary of War, and Edmund Randolph, Attorney-General.

Knox sided almost always with Hamilton, and Randolph was an inconstant supporter of Jefferson. Though an able and learned man, he was given to hair-splitting and hesitation, and, in allusion to his habit of arguing on one side, but finally voting upon the other, Jefferson once remarked that he usually gave the shell to his friends, and reserved the oyster for his opponents.

The political opinions of Jefferson and Hamilton were so diametrically opposed that the cabinet was soon torn by dissension. Hamilton was for a strong government, for surrounding the President with pomp and etiquette, for a central authority as against the authority of the States. In pursuance of these ideas, he brought forward his famous measures for assumption of the state debts by the national government, for the funding of the national debt, and finally for the creation of a national bank. Jefferson opposed these measures, and, although [89] the assumption and the funding laws had grave faults, and led to speculation, and in the case of many persons to financial ruin, yet it must be admitted that Jefferson never appreciated their merits.

The truth is that both Hamilton and Jefferson were essential to the development of this country; and the principles of each have been adopted in part, and rejected in part. Hamilton's conception of a central government predominating over the state governments has been realized, though not nearly to the extent to which he would have carried it. On the other hand, his various schemes for making the government into an aristocracy instead of a democracy have all been abandoned, or, like the Electoral College, turned to a use the opposite of what he intended. So, Jefferson's view of state rights has not strictly

been maintained; but his fundamental principles of popular government and popular education have made the United States what it is, and are destined, we hope, when fully developed, to
[90] make it something better yet.

No less an authority than that of Washington, who appreciated the merits of both men, could have kept the peace between them. Hamilton under an assumed name attacked Jefferson in the public prints. Jefferson never published a line unsigned; but he permitted Philip Freneau, who had slight employment as a translator in his department, and the trifling salary of $250 a year, to wage war against Hamilton in the gazette which Freneau published; and he even stood by while Freneau attacked Washington. Washington indeed once gave Jefferson a hint on this subject, which the latter refused to take. "He was evidently sore and warm," wrote Jefferson, "and I took his intention to be that I should interfere in some way with Freneau, perhaps withdraw his appointment of translating clerk to my office. But I will not do it. His paper has saved our constitution, which was galloping fast into monarchy.... And the President has not, ... with his usual good sense and *sang froid*, ... seen that, though some bad things had passed through it to the public, yet the good
[91] have predominated immensely."

In the spring of 1792, Jefferson, who had now been two years in office, was extremely anxious to retire, not only because his situation at Washington was unpleasant, but because his affairs at home had been so neglected during his long absences that he was in danger of bankruptcy. His estate was large, but it was incumbered by a debt to English creditors of $13,000. Some years before he had sold for cash a farm near Monticello in order to discharge this debt; but at that time the Revolutionary war had begun, and the Virginia legislature passed an act inviting all men owing money to English creditors to deposit the same in the state treasury, the State agreeing to pay it over to the English creditors after the war. Jefferson accordingly deposited

the $13,000 in gold which he had just received. Later, however, this law was rescinded, and the money received under it was paid back, not in gold, but in paper money of the State, which was then so depreciated as to be almost worthless. In riding by the farm thus disposed of, Jefferson in after years would sometimes point to it and say: "That farm I once sold for an [92] overcoat;"—the price of the overcoat having been the $13,000 in paper money. Cornwallis, as we have seen, destroyed Jefferson's property to an amount more than double this debt, which might be considered as a second payment of it; but Jefferson finally paid it the third time,—and this time into the hands of the actual creditor. Meanwhile, he wrote: "The torment of mind I endure till the moment shall arrive when I shall not owe a shilling on earth is such really as to render life of little value."

Urged by all these motives, Jefferson had resolved to resign his office in 1792, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Washington; but the attacks made upon him by the Federalists, especially those made in the newspapers, were so violent that a retirement at that time would have given the public cause to believe that he had been driven from office by his enemies. Jefferson, therefore, concluded to remain Secretary of State a few months longer; and those few, as it happened, were the most important of the whole term. [93]

On January 21, 1793, King Louis of France was executed, and within a week thereafter England was at war with the new rulers of the French. Difficult questions at once arose under our treaties with France. The French people thought that we were in honor bound to assist them in their struggle against Great Britain, as they had assisted us; and they sent over as minister "Citizen" Genet, in the frigate L'Embuscade. The frigate, carrying forty guns and three hundred men, sailed into the harbor of Charleston, April 8, 1793, with a liberty-cap for her figure-head, and a British prize in her wake. Citizen Genet, even for a Frenchman, was a most indiscreet and hot-headed person, and before he had

been a week on shore he had issued commissions to privateers manned by American citizens. L'Embuscade then proceeded to Philadelphia, where, as in Charleston, Citizen Genet was welcomed with the utmost enthusiasm. His coming was hailed by the Republicans generally with rapture; and their cry was for
[94] war. "I wish," wrote Jefferson, in a confidential letter to Monroe, "that we may be able to repress the people within the limits of a fair neutrality."

This was the position taken also by Washington and the whole cabinet; and it is a striking example of Jefferson's wisdom, justice, and firmness, that, although the bulk of the Republicans were carried off their feet by sympathy with France and with Genet, he, the very person in the United States who most loved the French and best understood the causes and motives of the French Revolution, withstood the storm, and kept his eye fixed upon the interests of his own country. England, contrary to the treaty which closed the Revolutionary War, still retained her military posts in the west; and she was the undisputed mistress of the sea. War with her would therefore have been suicidal for the United States. The time for that had not yet come. Moreover, if the United States had taken sides with France, a war with Spain also would inevitably have followed; and Spain then held Florida
[95] and the mouth of the Mississippi.

Nevertheless, there were different ways of preserving neutrality: there were the offensive way and the friendly way. Hamilton, whose extreme bias toward England made him bitter against France, was always for the one; Jefferson for the other. A single example will suffice as an illustration. M. Genet asked as a favor that the United States should advance an installment of its debt to France. Hamilton advised that the request be refused without a word of explanation. Jefferson's opinion was that the request should be granted, if that were lawful, and if it were found to be unlawful, them that the refusal should be explained. Mr. Jefferson's advice was followed.

Mr. Jefferson, also, though he firmly withstood the many illegal and unwarrantable acts attempted by Genet, did so in such a manner as not to lose the friendship of the minister or even a degree of control over him. To Madison Jefferson wrote of Genet: "He renders my position immensely difficult. He does me justice personally; and giving him time to vent himself and become more cool, I am on a footing to advise him freely, and he [96] respects it; but he will break out again on the very first occasion."

Finally Citizen Genet, becoming desperate, fitted out one of L'Embuscade's prizes as a frigate to be used against England, which amounted on the part of the United States to a breach of neutrality; and being hindered in sending her to sea, he threatened to appeal from the President to the people of the United States. Thereupon the question arose, what shall be done with Genet? and upon this question the cabinet divided with more than usual acrimony. Knox was for sending him out of the country without ceremony; Hamilton for publishing the whole correspondence between him and the government, with a statement of his proceedings. Jefferson was for sending an account of the affair to the French government, with copies of the correspondence, and a request for Genet's recall. Meanwhile the whole country was thrown into a state of tumultuous excitement. There was a riot in Philadelphia; and even the sacred character [97] of Washington was assailed in prose and verse.

The President decided to adopt the course proposed by Jefferson; France appointed another minister, and the Genet episode ended by his marriage to a daughter of George Clinton, governor of New York, in which State he lived thereafter as a respectable citizen and a patron of agriculture. He died in the year 1834.

The summer of delirium at Philadelphia culminated in the panic and desolation of the yellow fever, and every member of the government fled from the city, Jefferson being the last to depart.

When, in the next year, the correspondence between Genet and Jefferson, and between the English minister and Jefferson, was published, the Secretary was seen to have conducted it on his part with so much ability, discretion, and tact, and with so true a sense of what was due to each nation concerned, that he may be said to have retired to his farm in a blaze of glory.

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IX

THE TWO PARTIES

When Jefferson at last found himself at Monticello, having resigned his office as Secretary of State, he declared and believed that he had done with politics forever. To various correspondents he wrote as follows: "I think that I shall never take another newspaper of any sort. I find my mind totally absorbed in my rural occupations.... No circumstances, my dear sir, will ever more tempt me to engage in anything public.... I would not give up my retirement for the empire of the universe."

When Madison wrote in 1795, soliciting him to accept the Republican nomination for the presidency, Mr. Jefferson replied: "The little spice of ambition which I had in my younger days has long since evaporated, and I set still less store by a posthumous than present fame. The question is forever closed with me." [99] Nevertheless, within a few months Mr. Jefferson accepted the nomination, chiefly, it is probable, because, with his usual sagacity, he foresaw that the Republican candidate would be defeated as President, but elected as Vice-President. It must be remembered that at that time the candidate receiving the next to the highest number of electoral votes was declared to be Vice-President; so that there was always a probability that the presidential candidate of the party defeated would be chosen to the second office.

There were several reasons why Jefferson would have been glad to receive the office of Vice-President. It involved no disagreeable responsibility; it called for no great expenditure of money in the way of entertainments; it carried a good salary;

it required only a few months' residence at Washington. "Mr. Jefferson often told me," remarks Mr. Bacon, "that the office of Vice-President was far preferable to that of President."

Mr. Jefferson therefore became the Republican nominee for
[100] President, and, as he doubtless expected, was elected Vice-President, the vote standing as follows: Adams, 71; Jefferson, 68; Pinckney, 59; Burr, 30.

It is significant of Mr. Jefferson's high standing in the country that many people believed that he would not deign to accept the office of Vice-President; and Madison wrote advising him to come to Washington on the 4th of March, and take the oath of office, in order that this belief might be dispelled. Jefferson accordingly did so, bringing with him the bones of a mastodon, lately discovered, and a little manuscript book written in his law-student days, marked "Parliamentary Pocket-Book." This was the basis of that careful and elaborate "Manual of Parliamentary Practice" which Jefferson left as his legacy to the Senate.

Upon receiving news of the election Jefferson had written to Madison: "If Mr. Adams can be induced to administer the government on its true principles, and to relinquish his bias to an English Constitution, it is to be considered whether it would
[101] not be, on the whole, for the public good to come to a good understanding with him as to his future elections. He is perhaps the only sure barrier against Hamilton's getting in."

Mr. Adams, indeed, at the outset of his administration, was inclined to be confidential with Mr. Jefferson; but soon, by one of those sudden turns not infrequent with him, he took a different course, and thenceforth treated the Vice-President with nothing more than bare civility.

It was a time, indeed, when cordial relations between Federalist and Republican were almost impossible. In a letter written at this period to Mr. Edward Rutledge, Jefferson said: "You and I have formerly seen warm debates, and high political passions. But gentlemen of different politics would then speak to each other,

and separate the business of the Senate from that of society. It is not so now. Men who have been intimate all their lives cross the street to avoid meeting, and turn their heads another way, lest they should be obliged to touch their hats."

These party feelings were intensified in the year 1798 by what is known as the X Y Z business. Mr. Adams had sent [102] three commissioners to Paris to negotiate a treaty. Talleyrand, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, held aloof from them; but they were informed by certain mysterious agents that a treaty could be had on three conditions, (1) that the President should apologize for certain expressions in his recent message to Congress; (2) that the United States should loan a large sum of money to the French government; (3) that a *douceur* of $25,000 should be given to Talleyrand's agents.

These insulting proposals were indignantly rejected by the commissioners, and being reported in this country, they aroused a storm of popular indignation. Preparations for war were made forthwith. General Washington, though in failing health, was appointed commander-in-chief,—the real command being expected to devolve upon Hamilton, who was named second; men and supplies were voted; letters of marque were issued, and war actually prevailed upon the high seas. The situation redounded greatly to the advantage of the Federalists, for they were always as eager to go to war with France as they were [103] reluctant to go to war with England. The newly appointed officers were drawn almost, if not quite, without exception from the Federalist party, and Hamilton seemed to be on the verge of that military career which he had long hoped for. He trusted, as his most intimate friend, Gouverneur Morris, said after his death, "that in the changes and chances of time we would be involved in some war which might strengthen our union and nerve our executive." So late as 1802, Hamilton wrote to Morris, "there must be a systematic and persevering endeavor to establish the future of a great empire on foundations much firmer than have

yet been devised." At this very time he was negotiating with Miranda and with the British government, his design being to use against Mexico the army raised in expectation of a war with France.

Hamilton was not the man to overturn the government out of personal ambition, nor even in order to set up a monarchy in place of a republic. But he had convinced himself that the republic
[104] must some day fall of its own weight. He was always anticipating a "crisis," and this word is repeated over and over again in his correspondence. It even occurs in the crucial sentence of that pathetic document which he wrote on the eve of his fatal duel. When the "crisis" came, Hamilton meant to be on hand; and, if possible, at the head of an army.

However, the X Y Z affair ended peacefully. The warlike spirit shown by the people of the United States had a wholesome effect upon the French government; and at their suggestion new envoys were sent over by the President, by whom a treaty was negotiated. This wise and patriotic act upon the part of Mr. Adams was a benefit to his country, but it aroused the bitter anger of the Federalists and ruined his position in that party.

But what was Mr. Jefferson's attitude during this business? He was not for war, and he contended that a distinction should be made between the acts of Talleyrand and his agents, and the real disposition of the French people. He wrote as
[105] follows: "Inexperienced in such manœuvres, the people did not permit themselves even to suspect that the turpitude of private swindlers might mingle itself unobserved, and give its own hue to the communications of the French government, of whose participation there was neither proof nor probability." And again: "But as I view a peace between France and England the ensuing winter to be certain, I have thought it would have been better for us to have contrived to bear from France through the present summer what we have been bearing both from her and from England these four years, and still continue to bear from

England, and to have required indemnification in the hour of peace, when, I firmly believe, it would have been yielded by both."

But this is bad political philosophy. A nation cannot obtain justice by submitting to wrongs or insults even for a time. Jefferson himself had written long before: "I think it is our interest to punish the first insult, because an insult unpunished is the parent of many others." It is possible that he was misled at this juncture by his liking for France, and by his dislike of the [106] Federalists and of their British proclivities. It is true that the bribe demanded by Talleyrand's agents might be considered, to use Mr. Jefferson's words, as "the turpitude of private swindlers;" but the demand for a loan and for a retraction could be regarded only as national acts, being acts of the French government, although the bulk of the French people might repudiate them.

Whether Jefferson was right or wrong in the position which he took, he maintained it with superb self-confidence and aplomb. For the moment, the Federalists had everything their own way. They carried the election. Hamilton's oft-anticipated "crisis" seemed to have arrived at last. But Jefferson coolly waited till the storm should blow over. "Our countrymen," he wrote to a friend, "are essentially Republicans. They retain unadulterated the principles of '76, and those who are conscious of no change in themselves have nothing to fear in the long run."

And so it proved. The ascendency of the Federalists was soon destroyed, and destroyed forever, by the political crimes [107] and follies which they committed; and especially by the alien and sedition laws. The reader need hardly be reminded that the alien law gave the President authority to banish from the country "all such aliens as *he* should judge dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States,"—a despotic power which no king of England ever possessed. The sedition act made it a crime, punishable by fine and imprisonment, to speak or write anything "false, scandalous, and malicious," with intent to excite

against either House of Congress or against the President, "the hatred of the good people of the United States." It can readily be seen what gross oppression was possible under this elastic law, interpreted by judges who, to a man, were members of the Federal party. Matthew Lyon, of Vermont, ventured to read aloud at a political meeting a letter which he had received expressing astonishment that the President's recent address to the House of Representatives had not been answered by "an order to send
[108] him to a mad-house." For this Mr. Lyon was fined $1,000, and imprisoned in a veritable dungeon.

These unconstitutional and un-American laws were vigorously opposed by Jefferson and Madison. In October, 1798, Jefferson wrote: "For my own part I consider those laws as merely an experiment on the American mind to see how far it will bear an avowed violation of the Constitution. If this goes down, we shall immediately see attempted another act of Congress declaring that the President shall continue in office during life, reserving to another occasion the transfer of the succession to his heirs, and the establishment of the Senate for life."

Jefferson also prepared the famous Kentucky resolutions, which were adopted by the legislature of that State,—the authorship, however, being kept secret till Jefferson avowed it, twenty years later. These much-discussed resolutions have been said to have originated the doctrine of nullification, and to contain that principle of secession upon which the South
[109] acted in 1861. They may be summed up roughly as follows: The source of all political power is in the people. The people have, by the compact known as the Constitution, granted certain specified powers to the federal government; all other powers, if not granted to the several state governments, are retained by the people. The alien and sedition laws assume the exercise by the federal government of powers not granted to it by the Constitution. They are therefore void.

Thus far there can be no question that Jefferson's argument

was sound, and its soundness would not be denied, even at the present day. But the question then arose: what next? May the laws be disregarded and disobeyed by the States or by individuals, or must they be obeyed until some competent authority has pronounced them void? and if so, what is that authority? We understand now that the Supreme Court has sole authority to decide upon the constitutionality of the acts of Congress. It was so held, for the first time, in the year 1803, in the case of Marbury *v.* Madison, by Chief Justice Marshall and his associates; and [110] that decision, though resisted at the time, has long been accepted by the country as a whole. But this case did not arise until several years after the Kentucky Resolutions were written. Moreover, Marshall was an extreme Federalist, and his view was by no means the commonly accepted view. Jefferson scouted it. He protested all his life against the assumption that the Supreme Court, a body of men appointed for life, and thus removed from all control by the people, should have the enormous power of construing the Constitution and of passing upon the validity of national laws. In a letter written in 1804, he said: "You seem to think it devolved on the judges to decide the validity of the sedition law. But nothing in the Constitution has given them a right to decide for the executive more than the executive to decide for them. But the opinion which gives to the judges the right to decide what laws are constitutional and what not—not only for themselves in their own sphere of action, but for the legislature and executive also in their spheres—would make the [111] judiciary a despotic branch."[3]

In the Kentucky resolutions, Jefferson argued, first, that the Constitution was a compact between the States; secondly, that

[3] Abraham Lincoln said in his first inaugural address:—"But if the policy of the government upon a vital question affecting the whole people is to be irrevocably fixed by the decisions of the Supreme Court, the moment they are made, the people will cease to be their own masters; having to that extent resigned their government into the hands of that eminent tribunal."

no person or body had been appointed by the Constitution as a common judge in respect to questions arising under the Constitution between any one State and Congress, or between the people and Congress; and thirdly, "as in all other cases of compact among powers having no common judge, each party has an equal right to judge for itself, as well of infractions as of the mode and measure of redress." It was open to him to take this view, because it had not yet been decided that the Supreme Court was the "common judge" appointed by the Constitution; and the
[112] Constitution itself was not explicit upon the point. Moreover, the laws in question had not been passed upon by the Supreme Court,—they expired by limitation before that stage was reached.

It must be admitted, then, that the Kentucky resolutions do contain the principles of nullification. But at the time when they were written, nullification was a permissible doctrine, because it was not certainly excluded by the Constitution. In 1803, as we have seen, the Constitution was interpreted by the Supreme Court as excluding this doctrine; and that decision having been reaffirmed repeatedly, and having been acquiesced in by the nation for fifty years, may fairly be said to have become by the year 1861 the law of the land.

Jefferson, however, by no means intended to push matters to their logical conclusion. His resolutions were intended for moral effect, as he explained in the following letter to Madison:—

"I think we should distinctly affirm all the important principles
[113] they contain, so as to hold to that ground in future, and leave the matter in such a train that we may not be committed absolutely to push the matter to extremities, and yet may be free to push as far as events will render prudent."

As to the charge that the Kentucky Resolutions imply the doctrine of secession, as well as that of nullification, it has no basis. The two doctrines do not stand or fall together. There is nothing in the resolutions which implies the right of secession. Jefferson, like most Americans of his day, contemplated with

indifference the possibility of an ultimate separation of the region beyond the Mississippi from the United States. But nobody placed a higher value than he did on what he described “as our union, the last anchor of our hope, and that alone which is to prevent this heavenly country from becoming an arena of gladiators.”

[114]

X

PRESIDENT JEFFERSON

For the presidential election of 1800, Adams was again the candidate on the Federal side, and Jefferson on the Republican side. Jefferson, by interviews, by long and numerous letters, by the commanding force of his own intellect and character, had at last welded the anti-Federal elements into a compact and disciplined Republican party. The contest was waged with the utmost bitterness, and especially with bitterness against Jefferson. For this there were several causes. Jefferson had deeply offended two powerful classes in Virginia, the old aristocratic and Tory element, and—excluding the dissenters—the religious element; the former, by the repeal of the law of entail, and the latter by the statute for freedom of religion in Virginia. These were among the most meritorious acts of his life, but they produced
[115] an intense enmity which lasted till his death and even beyond his death. Jefferson, also, though at times over-cautious, was at times rash and indiscreet, and the freedom of his comments upon men and measures often got him into trouble. His career will be misunderstood unless it is remembered that he was an impulsive man. His judgments were intuitive, and though usually correct, yet sometimes hasty and ill-considered.

Above all, Jefferson was both for friends and foes the embodiment of Republicanism. He represented those ideas which the Federalists, and especially the New England lawyers and clergy, really believed to be subversive of law and order, of government and religion. To them he figured as “a fanatic in politics, and an atheist in religion;” and they were so disposed

to believe everything bad of him that they swallowed whole the worst slanders which the political violence of the times, far exceeding that of the present day, could invent. We have seen with what tenderness Jefferson treated his widowed sister, Mrs. Carr, and her children. It was in reference to this very family that [116] the Rev. Mr. Cotton Mather Smith, of Connecticut, declared that Jefferson had gained his estate by robbery, namely, by robbing a widow and her children of £10,000, "all of which can be proved."

Jefferson, as we have said, was a deist. He was a religious man and a daily reader of the Bible, far less extreme in his notions, less hostile to orthodox Christianity than John Adams. Nevertheless,—partly, perhaps, because he had procured the disestablishment of the Virginia Church, partly on account of his scientific tastes and his liking for French notions,—the Federalists had convinced themselves that he was a violent atheist and anti-Christian. It was a humorous saying of the time that the old women of New England hid their Bibles in the well when Jefferson's election in 1800 became known.

The vote was as follows:—Jefferson, 73, Burr, 73; Adams, 65; C. C. Pinckney, 64; Jay, 1. There being a tie between Jefferson and Burr, the Republican candidate for Vice-President, [117] the election was thrown into the House of Representatives, voting by States. In that House the Federalists were in the majority, but they did not have a majority by States. They could not, therefore, elect Adams; but it was possible for them to make Burr President instead of Jefferson. At first, the leaders were inclined to do this, some believing that Burr's utter want of principle was less dangerous than the pernicious principles which they ascribed to Jefferson, and others thinking that Burr, if elected by Federal votes, would pursue a Federal policy. It was feared that Jefferson would wipe out the national debt, abolish the navy, and remove every Federal officeholder in the land. He was approached from many quarters, and even President Adams desired him to give some intimation of his intended policy on these points, but

Jefferson firmly refused.

As to one such interview, with Gouverneur Morris, Jefferson wrote afterward: "I told him that I should leave the world to
[118] judge of the course I meant to pursue, by that which I had pursued hitherto, believing it to be my duty to be passive and silent during the present scene; that I should certainly make no terms; should never go into the office of President by capitulation, nor with my hands tied by any conditions which would hinder me from pursuing the measures which I should deem for the public good."

The Federalists had a characteristic plan: they proposed to pass a law devolving the Presidency upon the chairman of the Senate, in case the office of President should become vacant; and this vacancy they would be able to bring about by prolonging the election until Mr. Adams's term of office had expired. The chairman of the Senate, a Federalist, of course, would then become President. This scheme Jefferson and his friends were prepared to resist by force. "Because," as he afterward explained, "that precedent once set, it would be artificially reproduced, and would soon end in a dictator."

Hamilton, to his credit, be it said, strongly advocated the election of Jefferson; and finally, through the action of Mr.
[119] Bayard, of Delaware, a leading Federalist, who had sounded an intimate friend of Mr. Jefferson as to his views upon the points already mentioned, Mr. Jefferson was elected President, and the threatening civil war was averted.

Mr. Adams, who was deeply chagrined by his defeat, did not attend the inauguration of his successor, but left Washington in his carriage, at sunrise, on the fourth of March; and Jefferson rode on horseback to the Capitol, unattended, and dismounting, fastened his horse to the fence with his own hands. The inaugural address, brief, and beautifully worded, surprised most of those who heard it by the moderation and liberality of its tone. "Let us," said the new President, "restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty, and even life itself,

are but dreary things."

Jefferson served two terms, and he was succeeded first by Madison, and then by Monroe, both of whom were his friends and disciples, and imbued with his ideas. They, also, were reëlected. For twenty-four years, therefore, Jefferson and Jeffersonian Democracy predominated in the government of the United States, [120] and the period was an exceedingly prosperous one. Not one of the dismal forebodings of the Federalists was fulfilled; and the practicability of popular government was proved.

The first problem with which Jefferson had to deal was that of appointments to office. The situation was much like that which afterward confronted President Cleveland when he entered upon his first term,—that is, every place was filled by a member of the party opposed to the new administration. The principle which Mr. Jefferson adopted closely resembles that afterward adopted by Mr. Cleveland, namely, no officeholder was to be displaced on account of his political belief; but if he acted aggressively in politics, that was to be sufficient ground for removal. "Electioneering activity" was the phrase used in Mr. Jefferson's time, and "offensive partisanship" in Mr. Cleveland's.

The following letter from President Jefferson to the Secretary of the Treasury will show how the rule was construed by him:— [121]

"The allegations against Pope [collector] of New Bedford are insufficient. Although meddling in political caucuses is no part of that freedom of personal suffrage which ought to be allowed him, yet his mere presence at a caucus does not necessarily involve an active and official influence in opposition to the government which employs him."

There were some lapses, but, on the whole, Mr. Jefferson's rule was adhered to; and it is difficult to say whether he received more abuse from the Federalists on account of the removals which he did make, or from a faction in his own party on account of the removals which he refused to make.

His principle was thus stated in a letter: “If a due participation of office is a matter of right, how are vacancies to be obtained? Those by death are few; by resignation, none.... It would have been to me a circumstance of great relief, had I found a moderate participation of office in the hands of the majority. I should
[122] gladly have left to time and accident to raise them to their just share. But their total exclusion calls for prompter corrections. I shall correct the procedure; but that done, disdain to follow it. I shall return with joy to that state of things when the only questions concerning a candidate shall be, Is he honest? Is he capable? Is he faithful to the Constitution?”

The ascendency of Jefferson and of the Republican party produced a great change in the government and in national feeling, but it was a change the most important part of which was intangible, and is therefore hard to describe. It was such a change as takes place in the career of an individual, when he shakes off some controlling force, and sets up in life for himself. The common people felt an independence, a pride, an élan, which sent a thrill of vigor through every department of industry and adventure.

The simplicity of the forms which President Jefferson adopted were a symbol to the national imagination of the change which had taken place. He gave up the royal custom of levees; he
[123] stopped the celebration of the President’s birthday; he substituted a written message for the speech to Congress delivered in person at the Capitol, and the reply by Congress, delivered in person at the White House. The President’s residence ceased to be called the Palace. He cut down the army and navy. He introduced economy in all the departments of the government, and paid off thirty-three millions of the national debt. He procured the abolition of internal taxes and the repeal of the bankruptcy law—two measures which greatly decreased his own patronage, and which called forth John Randolph’s encomium long afterward: “I have never seen but one administration which

seriously and in good faith was disposed to give up its patronage, and was willing to go farther than Congress or even the people themselves ... desired; and that was the first administration of Thomas Jefferson."

The two most important measures of the first administration were, however, the repression of the Barbary pirates and the acquisition of Louisiana. Mr. Jefferson's ineffectual efforts, [124] while he was minister to France, to put down by force Mediterranean piracy have already been rehearsed. During Mr. Adams's term, two million dollars were expended in bribing the bucaneers. One item in the account was as follows, "A frigate to carry thirty-six guns for the Dey of Algiers;" and this frigate went crammed with a hundred thousand dollars' worth of powder, lead, timber, rope, canvas, and other means of piracy. One hundred and twenty-two captives came home in that year, 1796, of whom ten had been held in slavery for eleven years.

Jefferson's first important act as President was to dispatch to the Mediterranean three frigates and a sloop-of-war to overawe the pirates, and to cruise in protection of American commerce. Thus began that series of events which finally rendered the commerce of the world as safe from piracy in the Mediterranean as it was in the British channel. How brilliantly Decatur and his gallant comrades carried out this policy, and how at last the tardy naval powers of Europe followed an example which they ought [125] to have set, every one is supposed to know.

The second important event was the acquisition of Louisiana. Louisiana meant the whole territory from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, embracing about one million square miles. All this region belonged to Spain by right of discovery; and early in the year 1801 news came from the American minister at Paris that Spain had ceded or was about to cede it to France. The Spanish ownership of the mouth of the Mississippi had long been a source of annoyance to the settlers on the Mississippi River; and it had begun to be felt that the United States must control

New Orleans at least. If this vast territory should come into the hands of France, and Napoleon should colonize it, as was said to be his intention,—France then being the greatest power in Europe,—the United States would have a powerful rival on its borders, and in control of a seaport absolutely necessary for its commerce. We can see this now plainly enough, but even so
[126] able a man as Mr. Livingston, the American minister at Paris, did not see it then. On the contrary, he wrote to the government at Washington: "... I have, however, on all occasions, declared that as long as France conforms to the existing treaty between us and Spain, the government of the United States does not consider itself as having any interest in opposing the exchange."

Mr. Jefferson's very different view was expressed in the following letter to Mr. Livingston: "... France, placing herself in that door, assumes to us the attitude of defiance. Spain might have retained it quietly for years. Her pacific disposition, her feeble state would induce her to increase our facilities there.... Not so can it ever be in the hands of France; the impetuosity of her temper, the energy and restlessness of her character, placed in a point of eternal friction with us and our character, which, though quiet and loving peace and the pursuit of wealth, is high-minded, despising wealth in competition with insult or injury, enterprising and energetic as any nation on earth,—these
[127] circumstances render it impossible that France and the United States can continue long friends when they meet in so irritable a position.... The day that France takes possession of New Orleans fixes the sentence which is to restrain her forever within her low-water mark.... From that moment we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation."

Thus, at a moment's notice, and in obedience to a vital change in circumstance, Jefferson threw aside the policy of a lifetime, suppressed his liking for France and his dislike for England, and entered upon that radically new course which, as he foresaw, the interests of the United States would require.

Livingston, thus primed, began negotiations for the purchase of New Orleans; and Jefferson hastily dispatched Monroe, as a special envoy, for the same purpose, armed, it is supposed, with secret verbal instructions, to buy, if possible, not only New Orleans, but the whole of Louisiana. Monroe had not a word in writing to show that in purchasing Louisiana—if the act should be repudiated by the nation—he did not exceed his instructions. [128] But, as Mr. Henry Adams remarks, "Jefferson's friends always trusted him perfectly."

The moment was most propitious, for England and France were about to close in that terrific struggle which ended at Waterloo, and Napoleon was desperately in need of money. After some haggling the bargain was concluded, and, for the very moderate sum of fifteen million dollars, the United States became possessed of a territory which more than doubled its area.

The purchase of Louisiana was confessedly an unconstitutional, or at least an extra-constitutional act, for the Constitution gave no authority to the President to acquire new territory, or to pledge the credit of the United States in payment. Jefferson himself thought that the Constitution ought to be amended in order to make the purchase legal; but in this he was overruled by his advisers.

Thus, Jefferson's first administration ended with a brilliant achievement; but this public glory was far more than outweighed [129] by a private loss. The President's younger daughter, Mrs. Eppes, died in April, 1804; and in a letter to his old friend, John Page, he said: "Others may lose of their abundance, but I, of my wants, have, lost even the half of all I had. My evening prospects now hang on the slender thread of a single life. Perhaps I may be destined to see even this last cord of parental affection broken. The hope with which I have looked forward to the moment when, resigning public cares to younger hands, I was to retire to that domestic comfort from which the last great step is to be taken, is

fearfully blighted."

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XI

SECOND PRESIDENTIAL TERM

The purchase of Louisiana increased Jefferson's popularity, and in 1805, at the age of sixty-two, he was elected to his second term as President by an overwhelming majority. Even Massachusetts was carried by the Republicans, and the total vote in the electoral college stood: 162 for Jefferson and Clinton; 14 for C. C. Pinckney and Rufus King, the Federal candidates.

This result was due in part to the fact that Jefferson had stolen the thunder of the Federalists. His Louisiana purchase, though bitterly opposed by the leading Federalists, who were blinded by their hatred of the President, was far more consonant with Federal than with Republican principles; and in his second inaugural address Jefferson went even farther in the direction of a strong central government, for he said: "Redemption once effected, the revenue thereby liberated may, by a just [131]
repartition among the States, and a corresponding amendment of the Constitution, be applied *in time of peace* to rivers, canals, roads, arts, manufactures, education, and other great objects within each State. In time of war, ... aided by other measures reserved for that crisis, it may meet within the year all the expenses of the year without encroaching on the rights of future generations by burdening them with the debts of the past."

This proposal flatly contradicted what the President had said in his first inaugural address, and was in strange contrast with his criticism made years before upon a similar Federal scheme of public improvement, that the mines of Peru would not supply the moneys which would be wasted on this object. In later years, after

his permanent retirement to Monticello, Jefferson seems to have reverted to his earlier views, and he condemned the measures of John Quincy Adams for making public improvements with
[132] national funds.

But the President was no longer to enjoy a smooth course. One domestic affair gave him much annoyance, and our foreign relations were a continual source of anxiety and mortification.

Aaron Burr had been a brilliant soldier of the Revolution, a highly successful lawyer and politician, and finally, during Mr. Jefferson's first administration, Vice-President of the United States. But in the year 1805 he found himself, owing to a complication of causes, most of which, however, could be traced to his own moral defects, a bankrupt in reputation and in purse. Such being his condition, he applied to the President for a foreign appointment; and Mr. Jefferson very properly refused it, frankly explaining that Burr, whether justly or unjustly, had lost the confidence of the public.

Burr took this rebuff with the easy good-humor which characterized him, dined with the President a few days later, and then started westward to carry out a scheme which he had been preparing for a year. His plans were so shrouded in mystery
[133] that it is difficult to say exactly what they were, but it is certain that he contemplated an expedition against Mexico, with the intention of making himself the ruler of that country; and it is possible that he hoped to capture New Orleans, and, after dividing the United States, to annex the western half to his Mexican empire. Burr had got together a small supply of men and arms, and he floated down the Ohio, gathering recruits as he went.

Jefferson, with his usual good sense, perceived the futility of Burr's designs, which were based upon a false belief as to the want of loyalty among the western people; but he took all needful precautions. General Wilkinson was ordered to protect New Orleans, Burr's proceedings were denounced by a

proclamation, and finally Burr himself was arrested in Alabama, and brought to Richmond for trial.

The trial at once became a political affair, the Federalists, to spite the President, making Burr's cause their own, though he had killed Alexander Hamilton but three years before, and pretending to regard him as an innocent man persecuted by the [134] President for political reasons. Jefferson himself took a hand in the prosecution to the extent of writing letters to the district attorney full of advice and suggestions. It would have been more dignified had he held aloof, but the provocation which he received was very great. Burr and his counsel used every possible means of throwing odium upon the President; and in this they were assisted by Chief Justice Marshall, who presided at the trial. Marshall, though in the main a just man, was bitterly opposed to Jefferson in political affairs, and in this case he harshly blamed the executive for not procuring evidence with a celerity which, under the circumstances, was impossible. He also summoned the President into court as a witness. The President, however, declined to attend, and the matter was not pressed. Burr was acquitted, chiefly on technical grounds.

The Burr affair, however, was but a trifle compared with the difficulties arising from our relations with England. That country had always asserted over the United States the right of [135] impressment, a right, namely, to search American ships, and to take therefrom any Englishmen found among the crew. In many cases, Englishmen who had been naturalized in the United States were thus taken. This alleged right had always been denied by the United States, and British perseverance in it finally led to the war of 1812.

Another source of contention was the neutral trade. During the European wars in the early part of the century the seaport towns of the United States did an immense and profitable business in carrying goods to European ports, and from one European port to another. Great Britain, after various attempts to discourage

American commerce with her enemies, undertook to put it down by confiscating vessels of the United States on the ground that their cargoes were not neutral but belligerent property,—the property, that is, of nations at war with Great Britain. And, no doubt, in some cases this was the fact,—foreign merchandise having been imported to this country to get a neutral name for
[136] it, and thence exported to a country to which it could not have been shipped directly from its place of origin. In April, 1806, the President dispatched Mr. Monroe to London in order, if possible, to settle these disputed matters by a treaty. Monroe, in conjunction with Mr. Pinckney, our minister to England, sent back a treaty which contained no reference whatever to the matter of impressments. It was the best treaty which they could obtain, but it was silent upon this vital point.

The situation was a perilous one; England had fought the battle of Trafalgar the year before; and was now able to carry everything before her upon the high seas. Nevertheless, the President's conduct was bold and prompt. The treaty had been negotiated mainly by his own envoy and friend, Monroe, and great pressure was exerted in favor of it,—especially by the merchants and shipowners of the east. But Jefferson refused even to lay it before the Senate, and at once sent it back to England. His position, and history has justified it, was that to
[137] accept a treaty which might be construed as tacitly admitting the right of impressment would be a disgrace to the country. The other questions at issue were more nearly legal and technical, but this one touched the national honor; and with the same right instinct which Jefferson showed in 1807, the people of the United States, five years later, fixed upon this grievance, out of the fog in which diplomacy had enveloped our relations with England, as the true and sufficient cause of the war of 1812.

Nevertheless, Jefferson treated Monroe with the greatest consideration. At this period Monroe and Madison were both candidates for the Republican nomination for the presidency.

Jefferson's choice was Madison, but he remained impartial between them; and he withheld Monroe's treaty from publication at a time when to publish it would have given a fatal blow to Monroe's prospects. In every way, in fact, he exerted himself to disguise and soften Monroe's discredit.

The wisdom of Jefferson's course as to the treaty was shown before three months had elapsed by an act of British aggression, which, had the Monroe treaty been accepted, might fairly have [138] been laid to its door. In June, 1807, the British frigate Leopard, having been refused permission to search the American frigate Chesapeake, fired upon the Chesapeake, which was totally unprepared for action, and, after killing three men and wounding eighteen, refused to accept the surrender of the ship, but carried off three alleged deserters.

This event roused a storm of indignation, which never quite subsided until the insult had been effaced by the blood which was shed in the war of 1812. "For the first time in their history," says Mr. Henry Adams, "the people of the United States learned in June, 1807, the feeling of a true national emotion." "Never since the battle of Lexington," wrote Jefferson, "have I seen this country in such a state of exasperation as at present."

War might easily have been precipitated, had Jefferson been carried away by the popular excitement. He immediately dispatched a frigate to England demanding reparation, and he [139] issued a proclamation forbidding all British men-of-war to enter the waters of the United States, unless in distress or bearing dispatches. Jefferson expected war, but he meant to delay it for a while.

To his son-in-law, John Eppes, he wrote: "Reason and the usage of civilized nations require that we should give them an opportunity of disavowal and reparation. Our own interests, too, the very means of making war, require that we should give time to our merchants to gather in their vessels and property and our seamen now afloat."

Gallatin, the Secretary of the Treasury, even criticised the President's annual message at this time as being too warlike and "not in the style of the proclamation, which has been almost universally approved at home and abroad." It cannot truly be said, therefore, that Jefferson had any unconquerable aversion to war.

Mr. Canning, the British Foreign Minister, went through the form of expressing his regrets for the Chesapeake affair, and sent
[140] a special envoy to Washington to settle the difficulty. Reparation was made at last, but not till the year 1811.

In the mean time, both Great Britain and France had given other causes of offense, which may be summarized as follows: In May, 1806, Great Britain declared the French ports from Brest to the Elbe closed to American as to all other shipping. In the following November, Napoleon retorted with a decree issued from Berlin, prohibiting all commerce with Great Britain. That power immediately forbade the coasting trade between one port and another in the possession of her enemies. And in November, 1807, Great Britain issued the famous Orders in Council, which forbade all trade whatsoever with France and her allies, except on payment of a tribute to Great Britain, each vessel to pay according to the value of its cargo. Then followed Napoleon's Milan decree prohibiting trade with Great Britain, and declaring that all vessels which paid the tribute demanded were lawful prizes to the French marine.

Such was the series of acts which assailed the foreign
[141] commerce of the United States, and wounded the national honor by attempting to prostrate the country at the mercy of the European powers. Diplomacy had been exhausted. The Chesapeake affair, the right of impressment, the British decrees and orders directed against our commerce,—all these causes of offense had been tangled into a complication which no man could unravel. Retaliation on our part had become absolutely necessary. What form should it take? Jefferson rejected war, and

proposed an embargo which prohibited commerce between the United States and Europe. The measure was bitterly opposed by the New England Federalists; but the President's influence was so great that Congress adopted it almost without discussion.

Jefferson's design, to use his own words, was "to introduce between nations another umpire than arms;" and he expected that England would be starved into submission. The annual British exports to the United States amounted to $50,000,000. Cutting off this trade meant the throwing out of work of thousands of British sailors and tens of thousands of British factory hands, who [142] had no other means of livelihood. Mr. Jefferson felt confident that the starvation of this class would bring such pressure to bear upon the English government, then engaged in a death struggle with Bonaparte, that it would be forced to repeal the laws which obstructed American commerce. It is possible that this would have been the result had the embargo been observed faithfully by all citizens of the United States. Jefferson maintained till the day of his death that such would have been the case; and Madison, no enthusiast, long afterward asserted that the American state department had proofs that the English government was on the point of yielding. The embargo pressed hardest of all upon Virginia, for it stopped the exportation of her staples,—wheat and tobacco. It brought about, by the way, the financial ruin of Jefferson himself and of his son-in-law, Colonel Randolph. But the Virginians bore it without a murmur. "They drained the poison which their own President held obstinately to their lips." [143]

It was otherwise in New England. There the disastrous effect of the embargo was not only indirect but direct. The New England farmers, it is true, could at least exist upon the produce of their farms; but the mariners, the sea-captains, and the merchants of the coast towns, saw a total suspension of the industry by which they lived. New England evaded the embargo by smuggling, and resisted it tooth and nail. Some of the Federal leaders in that section believing, or pretending to believe, that it was a pro-

French measure, were in secret correspondence with the British government, and meditated a secession of the eastern States from the rest of the country. They went so far, in private conversation at least, as to maintain the British right of impressment; and even the Orders in Council were defended by Gardenier, a leading Federalist, and a member of Congress.

The present generation has witnessed a similar exhibition of anglomania, when, upon the assertion of the Monroe doctrine in
[144] respect to Venezuela, by President Cleveland, his attitude was criticised more severely by a group in New York and Boston than it was by the English themselves.

Jefferson's effort to enforce the embargo and his calm resistance to New England fury showed extraordinary firmness of will and tenacity of purpose. In August, 1808, he wrote to General Dearborn, Secretary of War, who was then in Maine: "The Tories of Boston openly threaten insurrection if their importation of flour is stopped. The next post will stop it."

Blood was soon shed; but Jefferson did not shrink. The army was stationed along the Canadian frontier, to prevent smuggling; gunboats and frigates patrolled the coast. The embargo failed; but Mr. Henry Adams, the ablest and fairest historian of this period, declares that it "was an experiment in politics well worth making. In the scheme of President Jefferson, non-intercourse was the substitute for war.... Failure of the embargo meant in his mind not only a recurrence to the practice of war, but to every
[145] political and social evil that war had always brought in its train. In such a case the crimes and corruptions of Europe, which had been the object of his political fears, must, as he believed, sooner or later, teem in the fat soil of America. To avert a disaster so vast was a proper motive for statesmanship, and justified disregard for smaller interests." Mr. Parton observes, with almost as much truth as humor, that the embargo was approved by the two highest authorities in Europe, namely, Napoleon Bonaparte and the "Edinburgh Review."

Perhaps the fundamental error in Jefferson's theory was that nations are governed mainly by motives of self-interest. He thought that England would cease to legislate against American commerce, when it was once made plain that such a course was prejudicial to her own interests. But nations, like individuals, are influenced in their relations to others far more by pride and patriotism, and even by prejudice, than by material self-interest. The only way in which America could win respect and fair treatment from Europe was by fighting, or at least by showing a [146] perfect readiness to fight. This she did by the war of 1812.

The embargo was an academic policy,—the policy of a philosopher rather than that of a practical man of affairs. Turreau, the French ambassador, wrote to Talleyrand, in May, 1806, that the President "has little energy and still less of that audacity which is indispensable in a place so eminent, whatever may be the form of government. The slightest event makes him lose his balance, and he does not even know how to disguise the impression which he receives.... He has made himself ill, and has grown ten years older."

Jefferson had energy and audacity,—but he was energetic and audacious only by fits and starts. He was too sensitive, too full of ideas, too far-sighted, too conscious of all possible results for a man of action. During the last three months of his term he made no attempt to settle the difficulties in which the country was involved, declaring that he felt bound to do nothing which might embarrass his successor. But it may be doubted if he did [147] not unconsciously decline the task rather from its difficulty than because he felt precluded from undertaking it. Self-knowledge was never Mr. Jefferson's strong point.

But he had done his best, and if his scheme had failed, the failure was not an ignoble one. He was still the most beloved, as well as the best hated man in the United States; and he could have had a third term, if he would have taken it.

He retired, permanently, as it proved, to Monticello, wearied

and harassed, but glad to be back on his farm, in the bosom of his family, and among his neighbors. His fellow-citizens of Albemarle County desired to meet the returning President, and escort him to his home; but Mr. Jefferson, characteristically, avoided this demonstration, and received instead an address, to which he made a reply that closed in a fit and pathetic manner his public career. "... The part which I have acted on the theatre of public life has been before them [his countrymen], and to
[148] their sentence I submit it; but the testimony of my native county, of the individuals who have known me in private life, to my conduct in its various duties and relations, is the more grateful as proceeding from eyewitnesses and observers, from triers of the vicinage. Of you, then, my neighbors, I may ask in the face of the world, 'whose ox have I taken, or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed, or of whose hand have I received a bribe to blind mine eyes therewith?' On your verdict I rest with conscious security."

[149]

XII

A PUBLIC MAN IN PRIVATE LIFE

Jefferson's second term as President ended March 4, 1809, and during the rest of his life he lived at Monticello, with occasional visits to his more retired estate at Poplar Forest, and to the homes of his friends, but never going beyond the confines of Virginia. Just before leaving Washington, he had written: "Never did a prisoner released from his chains feel such relief as I shall on shaking off the shackles of power. Nature intended me for the tranquil pursuits of science by rendering them my supreme delight. But the enormities of the times in which I have lived have forced me to take a part in resisting them, and to commit myself on the boisterous ocean of political passions."

Though no longer in office, Jefferson remained till his death the chief personage in the United States, and his authority continued to be almost supreme among the leaders as well as [150] among the rank and file of the Republican party. Madison first, and Monroe afterward, consulted him in all the most important matters which arose during the sixteen years of their double terms as President. Long and frequent letters passed between them; and both Madison and Monroe often visited Jefferson at Monticello.

The Monroe doctrine, as it is called, was first broached by Jefferson. In a letter of August 4, 1820, to William Short, he said: "The day is not far distant, when we may formally require a meridian through the ocean which separates the two hemispheres on the hither side of which no European gun shall ever be heard, nor an American on the other;" and he spoke of "the essential policy of interdicting in the seas and territories of both Americas

the ferocious and sanguinary contests of Europe." Later, when applied to by Monroe himself, in October, 1823, Jefferson wrote to him: "Our first and fundamental maxim should be never to
[151] entangle ourselves in the broils of Europe. Our second, never to suffer Europe to meddle in cisatlantic affairs." The whole letter, a long one, deserves to be read as the first exposition of what has since become a famous doctrine.

The darling object of Mr. Jefferson's last years was the founding of the University of Virginia at Charlottesville. For this purpose he gave $1000; many of his neighbors in Albemarle County joined him with gifts; and through Jefferson's influence, the legislature appropriated considerable sums. But money was the least of Jefferson's endowment of the University. He gave of the maturity of his judgment and a great part of his time. He was made regent. He drew the plans for the buildings, and overlooked their construction, riding to the University grounds almost every day, a distance of four miles, and back, and watching with paternal solicitude the laying of every brick and stone. His design was the perhaps over-ambitious one of displaying in the University buildings the various leading styles of architecture;
[152] and certain practical inconveniences, such as the entire absence of closets from the houses of the professors, marred the result. Some offense also was given to the more religious people of Virginia, by the selection of a Unitarian as the first professor. However, Jefferson's enthusiasm, ingenuity, and thoroughness carried the scheme through with success; and the University still stands as a monument to its founder.

It should be recorded, moreover, that under Jefferson's regency the University of Virginia adopted certain reforms, which even Harvard, the most progressive of eastern universities, did not attain till more than half a century later. These were, an elective system of studies; the abolition of rules and penalties for the preservation of order, and the abolition of compulsory attendance at religious services.

Mr. Jefferson's daily life was simple and methodical. He rose as soon as it was light enough for him to see the hands of a clock which was opposite his bed. Till breakfast time, which was about nine o'clock, he employed himself in writing. The whole morning was devoted to an immense correspondence; [153] the discharge of which was not only mentally, but physically distressing, inasmuch as his crippled hands, each wrist having been fractured, could not be used without pain. In a letter to his old friend, John Adams, he wrote: "I can read by candle-light only, and stealing long hours from my rest; nor would that time be indulged to me could I by that light see to write. From sunrise to one or two o'clock, and often from dinner to dark, I am drudging at the writing-table. And all this to answer letters, in which neither interest nor inclination on my part enters; and often from persons whose names I have never before heard. Yet writing civilly, it is hard to refuse them civil answers." At his death Jefferson left copies of 16,000 letters, being only a part of those written by himself, and 26,000 letters written by others to him.

At one o'clock he set out upon horseback, and was gone for one or two hours,—never attended by a servant, even when he became old and infirm. He continued these rides until he had [154] become so feeble that he had to be lifted to the saddle; and his mount was always a fiery one. Once, in Mr. Jefferson's old age, news came that a serious accident had happened in the neighboring village to one of his grandsons. Immediately he ordered his horse to be brought round, and though it was night and very dark, he mounted, despite the protests of the household, and, at a run, dashed down the steep ascent by which Monticello is reached. The family held their breath till the tramp of his horse's feet, on the level ground below, could faintly be heard.

At half past three or four he dined; and at six he returned to the drawing-room, where coffee was served. The evening was spent in reading or conversation, and at nine he went to bed.

"His diet," relates a distinguished visitor, Daniel Webster, "is simple, but he seems restrained only by his taste. His breakfast is tea and coffee, bread always fresh from the oven, of which he does not seem afraid, with at times a slight accompaniment
[155] of cold meat. He enjoys his dinner well, taking with his meat a large proportion of vegetables." The fact is that he used meat only as a sort of condiment to vegetables. "He has a strong preference for the wines of the continent, of which he has many sorts of excellent quality.... Dinner is served in half Virginian, half French style, in good taste and abundance. No wine is put on the table till the cloth is removed. In conversation, Mr. Jefferson is easy and natural, and apparently not ambitious; it is not loud as challenging general attention, but usually addressed to the person next him." His health remained good till within a few months of his death, and he never lost a tooth.

Scarcely less burdensome than his correspondence was the throng of visitors at Monticello, of all nationalities, from every State in the Union, some coming from veneration, some from curiosity, some from a desire to obtain free quarters. Groups of people often stood about the house and in the halls to see Jefferson pass from his study to his dining-room. It is recorded
[156] that "a female once punched through a window-pane of the house with her parasol to get a better view of him." As many as fifty guests sometimes lodged in the house. "As a specimen of Virginia life," relates one biographer, "we will mention that a friend from abroad came to Monticello, with a family of six persons, and remained ten months.... Accomplished young kinswomen habitually passed two or three of the summer months there, as they would now at a fashionable watering-place. They married the sons of Mr. Jefferson's friends, and then came with their families."

The immense expense entailed by these hospitalities, added to the debt, amounting to $20,000, which Mr. Jefferson owed when he left Washington, crippled him financially. Moreover,

Colonel Randolph, who managed his estate for many years, though a good farmer, was a poor man of business. It was a common saying in the neighborhood that nobody raised better crops or got less money for them than Colonel Randolph. The embargo, and the period of depression which followed the war of 1812, went far to impoverish the Virginia planters. Monroe [157] died a bankrupt, and Madison's widow was left almost in want of bread. Jefferson himself wrote in 1814: "What can we raise for the market? Wheat? we can only give it to our horses, as we have been doing since harvest. Tobacco? It is not worth the pipe it is smoked in. Some say whiskey, but all mankind must become drunkards to consume it." Jefferson, also, was so anxious lest his slaves should be overworked, that the amount of labor performed upon his plantation was much less than it should have been. And, to cap the climax of his financial troubles, he lost $20,000 by indorsing to that amount for his intimate friend, Governor Nicholas, an honorable but unfortunate man. It should be added that Mr. Nicholas, in his last hours, "declared with unspeakable emotion that Mr. Jefferson had never by a word, by a look, or in any other way, made any allusion to his loss by him."

In 1814, Mr. Jefferson sold his library to Congress for $23,950, about one half its cost; and in the very year of his death he requested of the Virginia legislature that a law [158] might be passed permitting him to sell some of his farms by means of a lottery,—the times being such that they could be disposed of in no other way. He even published some "Thoughts on Lotteries,"—by way of advancing this project. The legislature granted his request, with reluctance; but in the mean time his necessities became known throughout the country, and subscriptions were made for his relief. The lottery was suspended, and Jefferson died in the belief that Monticello would be saved as a home for his family.

In March, 1826, Mr. Jefferson's health began to fail; but so

late as June 24 he was well enough to write a long letter in reply to an invitation to attend the fiftieth celebration, at Washington, of the 4th of July. During the 3d of July he dozed hour after hour under the influence of opiates, rousing occasionally, and uttering a few words. It was evident that his end was very near. His family and he himself fervently desired that he might live till
[159] the 4th of July. At eleven in the evening of July 3 he whispered to Mr. Trist, the husband of one of his granddaughters, who sat by him: "This is the fourth?" Not bearing to disappoint him, Mr. Trist remained silent; and Mr. Jefferson feebly asked a second time: "This is the fourth?" Mr. Trist nodded assent. "Ah!" he breathed, and sank into a slumber from which he never awoke; but his end did not come till half past twelve in the afternoon of Independence Day. On the same day, at Quincy, died John Adams, his last words being, "Thomas Jefferson still lives!"

The double coincidence made a strong impression upon the imagination of the American people. "When it became known," says Mr. Parton, "that the author of the Declaration and its most powerful defender had both breathed their last on the Fourth of July, the fiftieth since they had set it apart from the roll of common days, it seemed as if Heaven had given its visible and unerring sanction to the work which they had done."

[160] Jefferson's body was buried at Monticello, and on the tombstone is inscribed, as he desired, the following: "Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, and Father of the University of Virginia."

Jefferson's expectation that Monticello would remain the property of his descendants was not fulfilled. His debts were paid to the uttermost farthing by his executor and grandson, Thomas Jefferson Randolph; but Martha Randolph and her family were left homeless and penniless. When this became known, the legislatures of South Carolina and Louisiana each voted to Mrs. Randolph a gift of $10,000. She died suddenly, in 1836, at the

age of sixty-three. Monticello passed into the hands of strangers.

Jefferson had his faults and defects. As a statesman and ruler, he showed at times irresolution, want of energy and of audacity, and a misunderstanding of human nature; and at times his judgment was clouded by the political prejudices which were common in his day. His attitude in the X Y Z business, his [161] embargo policy, and his policy or want of policy after the failure of the embargo,—in these cases, and perhaps in these alone, his defects are exhibited. It is certain also that although at times frank and outspoken to a fault, he was at other times over-complaisant and insincere. To Aaron Burr, for example, he expressed himself in terms of friendship which he could hardly have felt; and, once, in writing to a minister of the gospel he implied, upon his own part, a belief in revelation which he did not really feel. It seems to be true also that Jefferson had an overweening desire to win the approbation of his fellow-countrymen; and at times, though quite unconsciously to himself, this motive led him into courses which were rather selfish than patriotic. This was the case, perhaps, in his negotiations with the English minister after the failure of the embargo. It is charged against him, also, that he avoided unpleasant situations; and that he said or did nothing to check the Republican slanders which were cast upon Washington and upon John Adams. But when this much has been said, all [162] has been said. As a citizen, husband, father, friend, and master, Jefferson was almost an ideal character. No man was ever more kind, more amiable, more tender, more just, more generous. To her children, Mrs. Randolph declared that never, never had she witnessed a *particle* of injustice in her father,—never had she heard him say a word or seen him do an act which she at the time or afterward regretted. He was magnanimous,—as when he frankly forgave John Adams for the injustice of his midnight appointments. Though easily provoked, he never bore malice. In matters of business and in matters of politics he was punctiliously honorable. How many times he paid his British debt has already

been related. On one occasion he drew his cheque to pay the duties on certain imported wines which might have come in free,—yet made no merit of the action, for it never came to light until long after his death. In the presidential campaigns when
[163] he was a candidate, he never wrote a letter or made a sign to influence the result. He would not say a word by way of promise in 1801, when a word would have given him the presidency, and when so honorable a man as John Adams thought that he did wrong to withhold it. There was no vanity or smallness in his character. It was he and not Dickinson who wrote the address to the King, set forth by the Continental Congress of 1775; but Dickinson enjoyed the fame of it throughout Jefferson's lifetime.

Above all, he was patriotic and conscientious. When he lapsed, it was in some subordinate matter, and because a little self-deception clouded his sight. But in all important matters, in all emergencies, he stood firm as a rock for what he considered to be right, unmoved by the entreaties of his friends or by the jeers, threats, and taunts of his enemies. He shrank with almost feminine repugnance from censure and turmoil, but when the occasion demanded it, he faced even these with perfect courage and resolution. His course as Secretary of State, and his
[164] enforcement of the embargo, are examples.

Jefferson's political career was bottomed upon a great principle which he never, for one moment, lost sight of or doubted, no matter how difficult the present, or how dark the future. He believed in the people, in their capacity for self-government, and in their right to enjoy it. This belief shaped his course, and, in spite of minor inconsistencies, made it consistent. It was on account of this belief, and of the faith and courage with which he put it in practice, that he became the idol of his countrymen, and attained a unique position in the history of the world.

Transcriber’s Note

Black letter has been rendered as boldface.
The following changes have been made to the text:

page 65, “Charlotteville” changed to “Charlottesville”
page 73, “goverment” changed to “government”
page 93, “1795” changed to “1793”
page 98, “circumtances” changed to “circumstances”

Both “draught” and “draft” are used in the text.

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