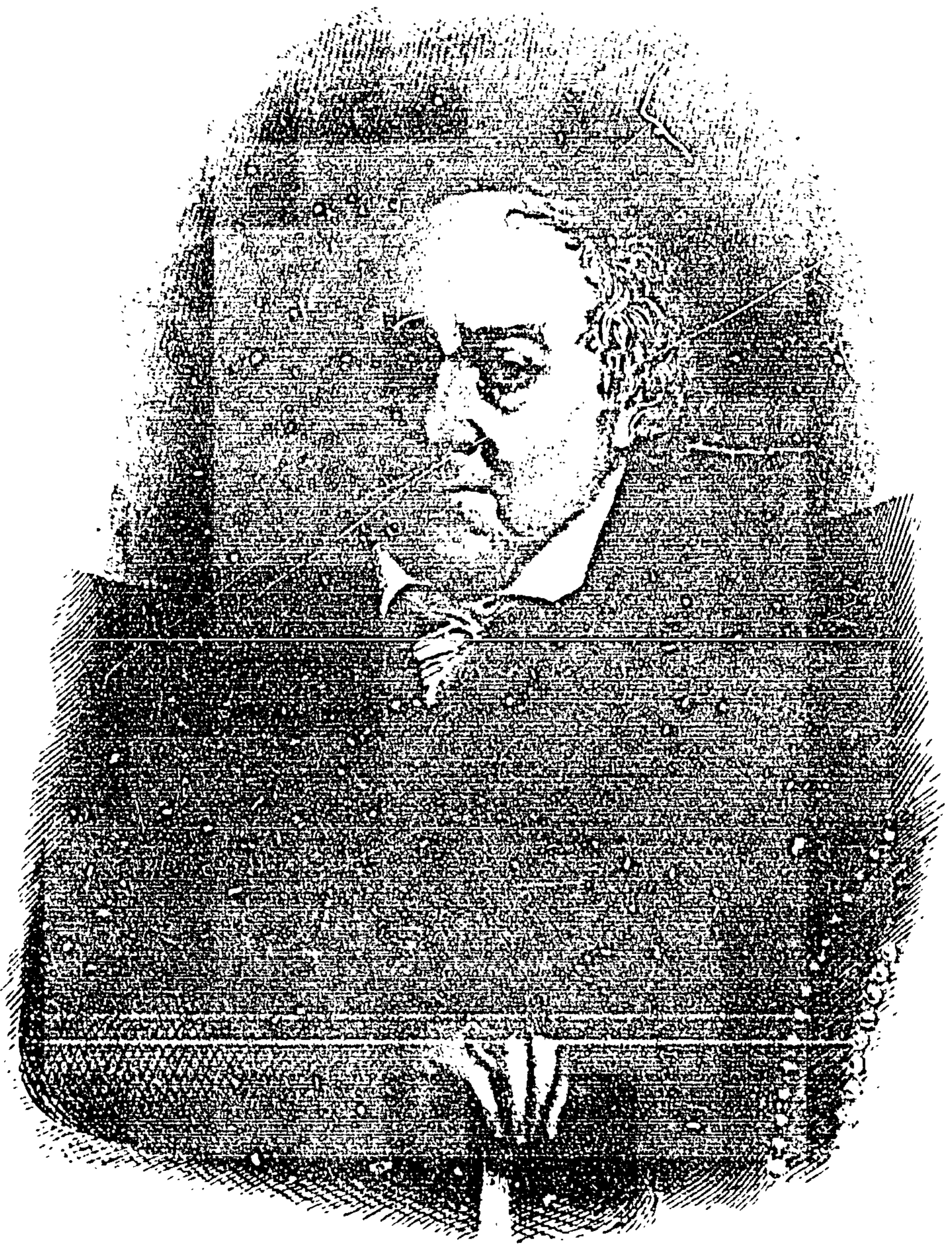


THE WORKS

OF

J O H N A D A M S .



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THE
WORKS

OF

JOHN ADAMS,

SECOND PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES:

WITH
A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

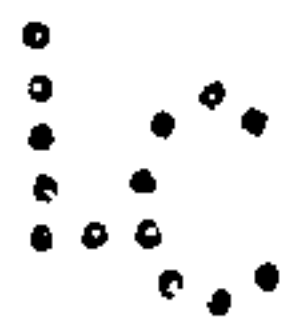
NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS,

BY

HIS GRANDSON

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

VOL. X.



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LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY.

1856.

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lemagne rolled a wave. The Crusades rolled a wave more mountainous than the French revolution. Only one hundred years ago, a wave was rolled, when Austria, England, and Holland, in alliance, contended against France for the dominion, or rather, the alliance of Spain.

Had "the clock run down," I am not so sanguine as you that the consequence would have been as you presume. I was determined, in all events, to retire. You and Mr. Madison are indebted to Bayard for an evasion of the contest. Had the voters for Burr addressed the nation, I am not sure that your convention would have decided in your favor.¹ But what reflections does this suggest! What pretensions had Aaron Burr to be President or Vice-President?

What "a wave" has rolled over christendom for fifteen hundred years! What a wave has rolled over France for fifteen hundred years, supporting in power and glory the dynasty of Bourbon! What a wave supported the house of Austria! What a wave has supported the dynasty of Mahomet for twelve hundred years! What a wave supported the house of Hercules for so many ages in more remote antiquity! These waves are not to be slighted. They are less resistible than those in the gulf stream in a hurricane. What a wave has the French revolution spread! And what a wave is our navy of five frigates raising!

If I can keep this book, "Memoirs of Lindsey," I shall have more to say. Meantime,

I remain, &c.

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON.

Quincy, 28 June, 1813.

It is very true that the denunciations of the priesthood are fulminated against every advocate for a complete freedom of religion. Comminations, I believe, would be plenteously pronounced by even the most liberal of them, against atheism,

¹ "A convention, invited by the republican members of Congress with the virtual President and Vice-President, would have been on the ground in eight weeks, would have repaired the Constitution where it was defective, and wound it up again." *Jefferson to Priestley.*

deism, — against every man who disbelieved or doubted the resurrection of Jesus, or the miracles of the New Testament. Priestley himself would denounce the man who should deny the Apocalypse, or the prophecies of Daniel. Priestley and Lindsey have both denounced as idolaters and blasphemers all the Trinitarians and even the Arians. Poor weak man! when will thy perfection arrive? Thy perfectibility I shall not deny, for a greater character than Priestley or Godwin has said, “Be ye perfect,” &c. For my part, I cannot “deal damnation round the land” on all I judge the foes of God or man. But I did not intend to say a word on this subject in this letter. As much of it as you please, hereafter; but let me now return to politics.

With some difficulty I have hunted up or down the “address of the young men of the city of Philadelphia, the district of Southwark, and the northern liberties,” and the answer.

The addressers say, “actuated by the *same principles* on which our forefathers achieved their independence, the recent attempts of a foreign power to derogate from the rights and dignity of our country, awaken our liveliest sensibility and our strongest indignation.” Huzza, my brave boys! Could Thomas Jefferson or John Adams hear these words with insensibility and without emotion? These boys afterwards add, “we regard our liberty and independence as the richest portion given us by our ancestors.” And who were these ancestors? Among them were Thomas Jefferson and John Adams; and I very coolly believe that no two men among these ancestors did more towards it than those two. Could either hear this like a statue? If, one hundred years hence, your letters and mine should see the light, I hope the reader will hunt up this address, and read it all, and remember that we were then engaged, or on the point of engaging, in a war with France. I shall not repeat the answer till we come to the paragraph upon which you criticized to Dr. Priestley, though every word of it is true; and I now rejoice to see it recorded, though I had wholly forgotten it.

The paragraph is, “Science and morals are the great pillars on which this country has been raised to its present population, opulence, and prosperity; and these alone can advance, support, and preserve it. Without wishing to damp the ardor of curiosity, or influence the freedom of inquiry, I will hazard a predic-

tion, that after the most industrious and impartial researches, the longest liver of you all will find no principles, institutions, or systems of education more fit, *in general*, to be transmitted to your posterity than those you have received from your ancestors." ¹

Now, compare the paragraph in the answer with the paragraph in the address, as both are quoted above, and see if we can find the extent and the limits of the meaning of both.

Who composed that army of fine young fellows that was then before my eyes? There were among them Roman Catholics, English Episcopalians, Scotch and American Presbyterians, Methodists, Moravians, Anabaptists, German Lutherans, German Calvinists, Universalists, Arians, Priestleyans, Socinians, Independents, Congregationalists, Horse Protestants, and House Protestants,² Deists and Atheists, and Protestants "*qui ne croyent rien.*" Very few, however, of several of these species; nevertheless, all educated in the *general principles* of Christianity, and the general principles of English and American liberty.

Could my answer be understood by any candid reader or hearer, to recommend to all the others the general principles, institutions, or systems of education of the Roman Catholics, or those of the Quakers, or those of the Presbyterians, or those of the Methodists, or those of the Moravians, or those of the Universalists, or those of the Philosophers? No. The *general principles* on which the fathers achieved independence, were the only principles in which that beautiful assembly of young men could unite, and these principles only could be intended by them in their address, or by me in my answer. And what were these *general principles*? I answer, the general principles of Christianity, in which all those sects were united, and the *general principles* of English and American liberty, in which all those young men united, and which had united all parties in America, in majorities sufficient to assert and maintain her independence. Now I will avow, that I then believed and now believe that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God; and

¹ For the whole of the answer, of which this is a part, see vol. ix. p. 188.

² All the later letters of Mr. Adams are much marred in the copying. Unless these words refer to Messrs. Horne and Howes, two of the disputants with Dr. Priestley in England, the editor cannot explain them.

that those principles of liberty are as unalterable as human nature and our terrestrial, mundane system. I could, therefore, safely say, consistently with all my then and present information, that I believed they would never make discoveries in contradiction to these *general principles*. In favor of these *general principles*, in philosophy, religion, and government, I could fill sheets of quotations from Frederic of Prussia, from Hume, Gibbon, Bolingbroke, Rousseau, and Voltaire, as well as Newton and Locke; not to mention thousands of divines and philosophers of inferior fame.

I might have flattered myself that my sentiments were sufficiently known to have protected me against suspicions of narrow thoughts, contracted sentiments, bigoted, enthusiastic, or superstitious principles, civil, political, philosophical, or ecclesiastical. The first sentence of the preface to my Defence of the Constitution, vol. i., printed in 1787, is in these words: "The arts and sciences, in general, during the three or four last centuries, have had a regular course of progressive improvement. The inventions in mechanic arts, the discoveries in natural philosophy, navigation, and commerce, and the advancement of civilization and humanity, have occasioned changes in the condition of the world, and the human character, which would have astonished the most refined nations of antiquity," &c. I will quote no farther, but request you to read again that whole page, and then say whether the writer of it could be suspected of recommending to youth "to look backward instead of forward," for instruction and improvement. This letter is already too long. In my next, I shall consider "the terrorism of the day."

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON.

Quincy, 30 June, 1813.

Before I proceed to the order of the day, which is "the terrorism of a former day," I beg leave to correct an idea that some readers may infer from an expression in one of your letters. No sentiment or expression in any of my answers to addresses was obtruded or insinuated by any person about me. Every