

THE WRITINGS OF
THOMAS JEFFERSON

Definitive Edition

CONTAINING HIS

AUTOBIOGRAPHY, NOTES ON VIRGINIA, PARLIAMENTARY MANUAL,
OFFICIAL PAPERS, MESSAGES AND ADDRESSES, AND OTHER WRITINGS,
OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE, NOW COLLECTED AND

PUBLISHED IN THEIR ENTIRETY FOR THE FIRST TIME

INCLUDING

ALL OF THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS, DEPOSITED IN THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AND PUBLISHED IN 1853 BY ORDER OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE OF CONGRESS

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS
AND

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYTICAL INDEX

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THOMAS JEFFERSON

Steel engraving by Alfred B. Hall

[The pages included in this document are 265-281 inclusive; then 309-319 inclusive; and lastly, page 325. Original page numbers are shown in brackets at the point where the text of that page begins].

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The “three volumes bound in marbled paper,” to which the introductory “Explanation” refers, contain the celebrated “Anas,” up to the time of Jefferson’s retirement from the Secretaryship of State on January 1st, 1794. Some of his friends have regretted that they were ever published. However that may be, they have been published, and it was manifestly the purpose of Mr. Jefferson that they should be. Late in life, “when the passions of the times had passed away,” he carefully revised them for publication.

“At this day,” he says, “after the lapse of twenty-five years, or more, from their dates, I have given to the whole a calm revisal; when the passions of the times are passed away, and the reasons of the transactions act alone upon the judgment. Some of the informations I had recorded are now cut out from the rest, because I have seen that they were incorrect, or doubtful, or merely personal or private, with which we have nothing to do. I should, perhaps, not have thought the rest worth preserving, but for their testimony against the only history of that period, which pretends to have been compiled from authentic and unpublished documents.” Considering these circumstances, these three volumes of the “Anas” ought not to be excluded from a publication professing to be a complete edition of the Writings of Thomas Jefferson. They are accordingly inserted in the form in which he left them after his last revisal.

The supplementary portion of the “Anas,” omitted from the Congressional Edition published in 1853, extends from 1797 to 1808, covering many interesting events of Jefferson’s first and second Administrations, while President of the United States.

[264]

THE ANAS

EXPLANATION OF THE THREE VOLUMES BOUND IN MARBLED PAPER.

[p.265] IN these three volumes will be found copies of the official opinions* given in writing by me to General Washington, while I was Secretary of State, with sometimes the documents belonging to the case. Some of these are the rough draughts, some press copies, some fair ones. In the earlier part of my acting in that office, I took no other note of the passing transactions; but after awhile, I saw the importance of doing it in aid of my memory. Very often, therefore, I made memorandums on loose scraps of paper, taken out of my pocket in the moment, and laid by to be copied fair at leisure, which, however, they hardly ever were. These scraps, therefore, ragged, rubbed and scribbled as they were, I had bound with the others by a binder who came into my cabinet, did it under my own eye and without the opportunity of reading a single paper. At this day after the lapse of twenty-five [p. 266] years, or more, from their dates, I have given to the whole a calm revisal, when the passions of the time are passed away, and the reasons of the transactions act alone on the judgment. Some of the informations I had recorded, are now cut out from the rest, because I have seen that they were incorrect, or doubtful, or merely personal or private, with which we have nothing to do I should perhaps have thought the rest not worth preserving, but for their testimony against the only history of that period, which pretends to have been compiled from authentic and unpublished documents.

*The opinions here alluded to will be found in the Official Papers of Jefferson

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[p.266] But a short review of facts will show, that the contests of that day were contests of principle, between the advocates of republican, and those of kingly government, and that had not the former made the efforts they did, our government would have been, even at this early day, a very different thing from what the successful issue of those efforts have made it.

The alliance between the States under the old Articles of Confederation, for the purpose of joint defense against the aggression of Great Britain, was found insufficient, as treaties of alliance generally are, to enforce compliance with their mutual stipulations; and these, once fulfilled, that bond was to expire of itself, and each State to become sovereign and independent in all things. Yet it could not but occur to every one, that these separate independ- [p. 267] encies, like the petty States of Greece, would be eternally at war with each other, and would become at length the mere partisans and satellites of the leading powers of Europe. All then must have looked forward to some further bond of union, which would insure eternal peace, and a political system of our own, independent of that of Europe. Whether all should be consolidated into a single government, or each remain independent as to internal matters, and the whole form a single nation as to what was foreign only, and whether that national government should be a monarchy or republic,

would of course divide opinions, according to the constitutions, the habits, and the circumstances of each individual. Some officers of the army, as it has always been said and believed, (and Steuben and Knox have ever been named as the leading agents,) trained to monarchy by military habits, are understood to have proposed to General Washington to decide this great question by the army before its disbandment, and to assume himself the crown on the assurance of their support. The indignation with which he is said to have scouted this parricide proposition was equally worthy of his virtue and wisdom.

The next effort was, (on suggestion of the same individuals, in the moment of their separation,) the establishment of an hereditary order under the name of the Cincinnati, ready prepared by that distinction to be ingrafted into the future frame of government, and placing General Washington still at their head.

[p. 268] The General wrote to me on this subject, while I was in Congress at Annapolis, and an extract from my letter is inserted in 5th Marshall's history, page 28. He afterwards called on me at that place on his way to a meeting of the society, and after a whole evening of consultation, he left that place fully determined to use all his endeavors for its total suppression. But he found it so firmly riveted in the affections of the members, that, strengthened as they happened to be by an adventitious occurrence of the moment, he could effect no more than the abolition of its hereditary principle. He called again on his return, and explained to me fully the opposition which had been made, the effect of the occurrence from France, and the difficulty with which its duration had been limited to the lives of the present members. Further details will be found among my papers, in his and my letters, and some in the *Encyclopedie Methodique et Dictionnaire d'Economie Politique*, communicated by myself to M. Meusnier, its author, who had made the establishment of this society the ground, in that work, of a libel on our country.

The want of some authority which should procure justice to the public creditors, and an observance of treaties with foreign nations, produced, some time after, the call of a convention of the States at Annapolis. Although, at this meeting, a difference of opinion was evident on the question of a republican or kingly government, yet, so general through [p. 269] the States was the sentiment in favor of the former, that the friends of the latter confined themselves to a course of obstruction only, and delay, to everything proposed; they hoped, that nothing being done, and all things going from bad to worse, a kingly government might be usurped, and submitted to by the people, as better than anarchy and wars internal and external, the certain consequences of the present want of a general government. The effect of their manoeuvres, with the defective attendance of Deputies from the States, resulted in the measure of calling a more general convention, to be held at Philadelphia. At this, the same party exhibited the same practices, and with the same views of preventing a government of concord, which they foresaw would be republican, and of forcing through anarchy their way to monarchy. But the mass of that convention was too honest, too wise, and too steady, to be baffled and misled by their manoeuvres.

One of these was a form of government proposed by Colonel Hamilton, which would have been in fact a compromise between the two parties of royalism and republicanism. According to this, the executive and one branch of the legislature were to be during good behavior, i. e. for life, and the governors of the States were to be named by these two permanent organs. This, however, was rejected; on which Hamilton left the convention,

as desperate, and never returned again until near its final conclusion. These opinions and efforts, secret or avowed, of the [p. 270] advocates for monarchy, had begotten great jealousy through the States generally; and this jealousy it was which excited the strong opposition to the conventional constitution; a jealousy which yielded at last only to a general determination to establish certain amendments as barriers against a government either monarchical or consolidated. In what passed through the whole period of these conventions, I have gone on the information of those who were members of them, being absent myself on my mission to France.

I returned from that mission in the first year of the new government, having landed in Virginia in December 1789, and proceeded to New York in March 1790, to enter on the office of Secretary of State. Here, certainly, I found a state of things which, of all I had ever contemplated, I the least expected. 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 these 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 dinner parties given me, as a stranger newly arrived among them, placed me at one 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 kingly over republic- [p. 271] can 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. Hamilton's financial system had then passed. It had two objects; 1st, as a puzzle, to exclude popular understanding and inquiry; 2nd, as a machine for the corruption of the legislature; for he avowed the opinion, that man could be governed by one of two motives only, force or interest; force, he observed, in this country was out of the question, and the interests, therefore, of the members must be laid hold of, to keep the legislative in unison with the executive. And with grief and shame it must be acknowledged that his machine was not without effect; that even in this, the birth of our government, some members were found sordid enough to bend their duty to their interests, and to look after personal rather than public good.

It is well known that during the war the greatest difficulty we encountered was the want of money or means to pay our soldiers who fought, or our farmers, manufacturers and merchants, who furnished the necessary supplies of food and clothing for them. After the expedient of paper money had exhausted itself, certificates of debt were given to the individual creditors, with assurance of payment so soon as the United States should be able. But the distresses of [p. 272] these people often obliged them to part with these for the half, the fifth, and even a tenth of their value; and speculators had made a trade of cozening them from the holders by the most fraudulent practices, and persuasions that they would never be paid. In the bill for funding and paying these, Hamilton made no difference between the original holders and the fraudulent purchasers of this paper. Great and just repugnance arose at putting these two classes of creditors on the same footing, and great exertions were used to pay the former the full value, and to the latter, the price only which they had paid, with interest. But this would have prevented the game which was to be played, and for which the minds of greedy members were already tutored and prepared. When the trial of strength on these several efforts had indicated the form in which the bill would finally pass, this being known within doors sooner than without, and

especially, than to those who were in distant parts of the Union, the base scramble began. Couriers and relay horses by land, and swift sailing pilot boats by sea, were flying in all directions. Active partners and agents were associated and employed in every State, town, and country neighborhood, and this paper was bought up at five shillings, and even as low as two shillings in the pound, before the holder knew that Congress had already provided for its redemption at par. Immense sums were thus filched from the poor and ignorant, and fortunes accumulated by those who had them- [p. 273] selves been poor enough before. Men thus enriched by the dexterity of a leader, would follow of course the chief who was leading them to fortune, and become the zealous instruments of all his enterprises.

This game was over, and another was on the carpet at the moment of my arrival; and to this I was most ignorantly and innocently made to hold the candle. This fiscal manoeuvre is well known by the name of the Assumption. Independently of the debts of Congress, the States had during the war contracted separate and heavy debts; and Massachusetts particularly, in an absurd attempt, absurdly conducted, on the British post of Penobscot: and the more debt Hamilton could rake up, the more plunder for his mercenaries. This money, whether wisely or foolishly spent, was pretended to have been spent for general purposes, and ought, therefore, to be paid from the general purse. But it was objected, that nobody knew what these debts were, what their amount, or what their proofs. No matter; we will guess them to be twenty millions. But of these twenty millions, we do not know how much should be reimbursed to one State, or how much to another. No matter; we will guess. And so another scramble was set on foot among the several States, and some got much, some little, some nothing. But the main object was obtained; the phalanx of the Treasury was reinforced by additional recruits. This measure produced the most bitter and angry contest ever known in Congress, [p.274] before or since the Union of the States. I arrived in the midst of it. But a stranger to the ground, a stranger to the actors on it, so long absent as to have lost all familiarity with the subject, and as yet unaware of its object, I took no concern in it.

The great and trying question, however, was lost in the House of Representatives. So high were the feuds excited by this subject, that on its rejection business was suspended. Congress met and adjourned from day to day without doing anything, the parties being too much out of temper to do business together. The eastern members particularly, who, with Smith from South Carolina, were the principal gamblers in these scenes, threatened a secession and dissolution. Hamilton was in despair. As I was going to the President's one day, I met him in the street. He walked me backwards and forwards before the President's door for half an hour. He painted pathetically the temper into which the legislature had been wrought; the disgust of those who were called the creditor States; the danger of the *secession* of their members, and the separation of the States. He observed that the members of the administration ought to act in concert; that though this question was not of my department, yet a common duty should make it a common concern; that the President was the centre on which all administrative questions ultimately rested, and that all of us should rally around him, and support, with joint efforts, measures approved by him; and that the [p. 275] question having been lost by a small majority only, it was probable that an appeal from me to the judgment and discretion of some of my friends, might effect a change in the vote, and the machine of government, now suspended, might be again set into motion. I told him that I was really a stranger to the whole subject; that not having yet informed myself of the system of finances adopted, I knew not how far

this was a necessary sequence; that undoubtedly, if its rejection endangered a dissolution of our Union at this incipient stage, I. should deem that the most unfortunate of all consequences, to avert which all partial and temporary evils should be yielded. I proposed to him, however, to dine with me the next day, and I would invite another friend or two, bring them into conference together, and I thought it impossible that reasonable men, consulting together coolly, could fail, by some mutual sacrifices of opinion, to form a compromise which was to save the Union.

The discussion took place. I could take no part in it but an exhortatory one, because I was a stranger to the circumstances which should govern it. But it was finally agreed, that whatever importance had been attached to the rejection of this proposition, the preservation of the Union and of concord among the States was more important, and that therefore it would be better that the vote of rejection should be rescinded, to effect which, some members should change their votes. But it was observed that this [p. 276] pill would be peculiarly bitter to the southern States, and that some concomitant measure should be adopted, to sweeten it a little to them. There had before been propositions to fix the seat of government either at Philadelphia, or at Georgetown on the Potomac; and it was thought that by giving it to Philadelphia for ten years, and to Georgetown permanently afterwards, this might, as an anodyne, calm in some degree the ferment which might be excited by the other measure alone. So two of the Potomac members (White and Lee, but White with a revulsion of stomach almost convulsive,) agreed to change their votes, and Hamilton undertook to carry the other point. In doing this, the influence he had established over the eastern members, with the agency of Robert Morris with those of the middle States, effected his side of the engagement; and so the Assumption was passed, and twenty millions of stock divided among favored States, and thrown in as a pabulum to the stock-jobbing herd. This added to the number of votaries to the Treasury, and made its chief the master of every vote in the legislature, which might give to the government the direction suited to his political views.

I know well, and so must be understood, that nothing like a majority in Congress had yielded to this corruption. Far from it. But a division, not very unequal, had already taken place in the honest part of that body, between the parties styled republican and federal. The latter being monarchists in [p. 277] principle, adhered to Hamilton of course, as their leader in that principle, and this mercenary phalanx added to them, insured him always a majority in both Houses: so that the whole action of legislature was now under the direction of the Treasury. **Still the machine was not complete.** The effect of the funding system, and of the Assumption, would be temporary; it would be lost with the loss of the individual members whom it has enriched, and some engine of influence more permanent must be contrived, while these myrmidons were yet in place, to carry it through all opposition. **This engine was the Bank of the United States.** All that history is known, so I shall say nothing about it. While the government remained at Philadelphia, a selection of members of both Houses were constantly kept as directors who, on every question interesting to that institution, or to the views of the federal head, voted at the will of that head; and, together with the stock-holding members, could always make the federal vote that of the majority. By this combination, legislative expositions were given to the constitution, and all the administrative laws were shaped on the model of England, and so passed. And from this influence we were not relieved, until the removal from the precincts of the bank, to Washington.

Here then was the real ground of the opposition which was made to the course of administration. Its object was to preserve the legislature pure and [p. 278] independent of the executive, to restrain the administration to republican forms and principles, and not permit the constitution to be construed into a monarchy, and to be warped, in practice, into all the principles and pollutions of their favorite English model. Nor was this an opposition to General Washington. He was true to the republican charge confided to him; and has solemnly and repeatedly protested to me, in our conversations, that he would lose the last drop of his blood in support of it; and he did this the oftener and with the more earnestness, because he knew my suspicions of Hamilton's designs against it, and wished to quiet them. For he was not aware of the drift, or of the effect of Hamilton's schemes. Unversed in financial projects and calculations and budgets, his approbation of them was bottomed on his confidence in the man. *[This last sentence is an important characterization of Washington, and remember, this observation is coming from Jefferson]*

But Hamilton was not only a monarchist, but for a monarchy bottomed on corruption! In proof of this, I will relate an anecdote, for the truth of which I attest the God who made me. Before the President set out on his southern tour in April, 1791, he addressed a letter of the fourth of that month, from Mount Vernon, to the Secretaries of State, Treasury and War, desiring that if any serious and important cases should arise during his absence, they would consult and act on them. And he requested that the Vice President should also be consulted. This was the only occasion on which that officer was ever requested to take part in a cabinet question. Some [p. 279] occasion for consultation arising, I invited those gentlemen (and the Attorney General, as well as I remember,) to dine with me, in order to confer on the subject. After the cloth was removed, and our question agreed and dismissed, conversation began on other matters, and by some circumstance, was led to the British constitution, on which Mr. Adams observed, "purge that constitution of its corruption, and give to its popular branch equality of representation, and it would be the most perfect constitution ever devised by the wit of man." **Hamilton paused and said, "purge it of its corruption, and give to its popular branch equality of representation, and it would become an *impracticable* government: as it stands at present, with all its supposed defects, it is the most perfect government which ever existed."** And this was assuredly the exact line which separated the political creeds of these two gentlemen. The one was for two hereditary branches and an honest elective one: the other, for an hereditary King, with a House of Lords and Commons corrupted to his will, and standing between him and the people.

Hamilton was, indeed, a singular character. Of acute understanding, disinterested, honest, and honorable in all private transactions, amiable in society, and duly valuing virtue in private life, yet so bewitched and perverted by the British example, as to be under thorough conviction that corruption was essential to the government of a nation. Mr. Adams had originally been a republican. The glare [p. 280] of royalty and nobility, during his mission to England, had made him believe their fascination a necessary ingredient in government; and Shay's rebellion, not sufficiently understood where he then was, seemed to prove that the absence of want and oppression, was not a sufficient guarantee of order. His book on the American constitutions having made known his political bias, he was taken up by the monarchical federalists in his absence, and on his return to the United States, he was by them made to believe that the general disposition of our citizens was favorable to monarchy. He here wrote his "Davila," as a supplement to a former work, and his election to the Presidency confirmed him in his errors. Innumerable

addresses too, artfully and industriously poured in upon him, deceived him into a confidence that he was on the pinnacle of popularity, when the gulf was yawning at his feet, which was to swallow up him and his deceivers. For when General Washington was withdrawn, these *energumeni* of royalism, kept in check hitherto by the dread of his honesty, his firmness, his patriotism, and the authority of his name, now mounted on the car of State and free from control, like Phaeton on that of the sun, drove headlong and wild, looking neither to right nor left, nor regarding anything but the objects they were driving at; until, displaying these fully, the eyes of the nation were opened, and a general disbandment of them from the public councils took place.

[p. 281] Mr. Adams, I am sure, has been long since convinced of the treacheries with which he was surrounded during his administration. He has since thoroughly seen, that his constituents were devoted to republican government, and, whether his judgment is re-settled on its ancient basis, or not, he is conformed as a good citizen to the will of the majority, and would now, I am persuaded, maintain its republican structure with the zeal and fidelity belonging to his character. For even an enemy has said, "he is always an honest man, and often a great one." But in the fervor of the fury and follies of those who made him their stalking horse, no man who did not witness it can form an idea of their unbridled madness, and the terrorism with which they surrounded themselves. The horrors of the French revolution, then raging, aided them mainly, and using that as a raw head and bloody bones, they were enabled by their stratagems of X. Y. Z. in which * * * was a leading mountebank, their tales of tub-plots, ocean massacres, bloody buoys, and pulpit lyings and slanderings, and maniacal ravings of their Gardeners, their Osgoods and parishes, to spread alarm into all but the firmest breasts. Their attorney General had the impudence to say to a republican member, that deportation must be resorted to, of which, said he, "you Republicans have set the example;" thus daring to identify us with the murderous Jacobins of France.

These transactions, now recollected but as dreams

**** That marks the end of page 281, and the booklet resumes from page 309. ****
[This next portion is Jefferson writing of his letter to Washington.]

July the 10th 1792. My letter of ----- to the President [*Washington*], directed to him at Mount Vernon, had not found him there, but came to him there. He told me of this, and that he would take an occasion of speaking with me on the subject. He did so this day. He began by observing that he had put it off from day to day, because the subject was painful, to wit, his remaining in office, which that letter solicited. He said that the declaration he had made when he quitted his military command, of never again entering into public life, was sincere. That, however, when he was called on to come forward to set the present government in motion, it appeared to him that circumstances were so changed as to justify a change in his resolution: he was made to believe that in two years all would be well in motion, and he might retire. At the end of two years he found some things still to be done. At the end of the third year, he thought it was not worthwhile to disturb the course of things, as in one year more his office would expire, and he was decided then to retire. Now he was told there would still be danger in it. Certainly, if he thought so, he would conquer his longing for retirement. But he feared it would be said his former professions of retirement had been mere affectation, and that he was like other men, when once in office he could not quit it. He was sensible, too, of a decay of his hearing, perhaps his other faculties might fall off and he not be sensible of it. That with

respect to the existing [p. 310] causes of uneasiness, he thought there were suspicions against a particular party, which had been carried a great deal too far; there might be *desires*, but he did not believe there were *designs* to change the form of government into a monarchy; that there might be a few who wished it in the higher walks of life, particularly in the great cities, but that the main body of the people in the eastern States were as steadily for republicanism as in the southern. That the pieces lately published, and particularly in Freneau's paper, seemed to have in view the exciting opposition to the Government. That this had taken place in Pennsylvania as to the excise law, according to information he had received from General Hand. That they tended to produce a separation of the Union; the most dreadful of all calamities, and that whatever tended to produce anarchy, tended, of course, to produce a resort to monarchical government.

He considered those papers as attacking him directly, for he must be a fool indeed to swallow the little sugar plums here and there thrown out to him. That in condemning the administration of the Government, they condemned him, for if they thought there were measures pursued contrary to his sentiments, they must conceive him too careless to attend to them, or too stupid to understand them. That though, indeed, he had signed many acts which he did not approve in all their parts, yet he had never put his name to one which he did not think, on the whole, was eligible. That as to [p. 311] the bank, which had been an act of so much complaint, until there was some infallible criterion of reason, a difference of opinion must be tolerated. He did not believe the discontents extended far from the seat of Government. He had seen and spoken with many people in Maryland and Virginia in his late journey. He found the people contented and happy. He wished, however, to be better informed on this head. If the discontents were more extensive than he supposed, it might be that the desire that he should remain in the Government was not general.

My observations to him tended principally to enforce the topics of my letter. I will not, therefore, repeat them, except where they produced observations from him. I said that the two great complaints were, that the national debt was unnecessarily increased, and that it had furnished the means of corruption both branches of the legislature; that he must know, and everybody knew, there was a considerable squadron in both, whose votes were devoted to the paper and stock-jobbing interest, that the names of a weighty number were known, and several others suspected on good grounds. That on examining the votes of these men, they would be found uniformly for every Treasury measure, and that as most of these measures had been carried by small majorities, they were carried by these very votes. That, therefore, it was a cause of just uneasiness, when we saw a legislature legislating for their [p. 312] own interests, in opposition to those of the people. He said not a word on the corruption of the legislature, but took up the other point, defended the Assumption, and argued that it had not increased the debt, for that all of it was honest debt. He justified the excise law, as one of the best laws which could be passed, as nobody would pay the tax who did not choose to do it. With respect to the increase of the debt by the Assumption, I observed to him that what was meant and objected to was, that it increased the debt of the General Government, and carried it beyond the possibility of payment. That if the balances had been settled, and the debtor States directed to pay their deficiencies to the creditor States, they would have done it easily, and by resources of taxation in their power, and acceptable to the people; by a direct tax in the south, and an excise in the north. Still, he said, it would be paid by the people. Finding him decided, I avoided entering into argument with him on those points.

September the 30th 1792. The constitution as agreed to till a fortnight before the Convention rose, was such a one as he would have set his hand and heart to.

1st) The President was to be elected for seven years. Then ineligible for seven years more.

2nd) Rotation in the Senate.

3rd) A vote of two-thirds in the legislature on particular subjects, and expressly on that of navigation.

The three New England [p. 313] States were constantly with us in all questions (Rhode Island not there, and New York seldom), so that it was these three States, with the five southern ones, against Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.

With respect to the importation of slaves, it was left to Congress. This disturbed the two southern-most States, who knew that Congress would immediately suppress the importation of slaves. These two States, therefore, struck up a bargain with the three New England States. If they would join to admit slaves for some years, the southernmost States would join in changing the clause which required two-thirds of the legislature in any vote. It was done. These articles were changed accordingly, and from that moment the two southernmost States, and the three northern ones, joined Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, and made the majority eight to three against us, instead of eight to three for us, as it had been through the whole Convention. Under this coalition, the great principles of the constitution were changed in the last days of the convention.

ANECDOTE: Yates, Lawsing, and Hamilton represented New York. Yates and Lawsing never voted in one instance with Hamilton, who was so mortified at it that he went home. When the season for courts came on, Yates, a judge, and Lawsing, a lawyer, went to attend their courts. Then Hamilton returned.

[P. 314] *ANECDOTE:* The constitution as agreed at first was, that amendments might be proposed either by Congress or the legislatures. A committee was appointed to digest and redraw. Gouverneur Morris and King were of the committee. One morning Gouverneur Morris moved an instrument for certain alterations (not one-half the members yet come in). In a hurry and without understanding, it was agreed to. The committee reported so that Congress should have the exclusive power of proposing amendments. George Mason observed it on the report, and opposed it. King denied the construction. Mason demonstrated it, and asked the committee by what authority they had varied what had been agreed. Gouverneur Morris then imprudently got up, and said, by authority of the Convention, and produced the blind instruction before mentioned, which was unknown by one-half of the House, and not till then understood by the other. They then restored it, as it originally stood.

He said he considered Hamilton as having done us more injury than Great Britain and all her fleets and armies. That his (Mason's) plan of settling our debts would have been something in this way. He would have laid as much tax as could be paid without oppressing the people; -- particularly he would have laid an impost of about the amount

of the first, laid by Congress, but somewhat different in several of its articles. He would have suspended all application of it one year, during which an office should have [p. 315] been open to register unalienated certificates. At the end of the year he would have appropriated his revenue;

- 1st, to pay the civil list
- 2nd, the interest of these certificates
- 3rd, installments of the principle
- 4th, a surplus to buy up the alienated certificates, still avoiding to make any other provision for these last.

By the time the unalienated certificates should have been all paid, he supposed half the alienated ones would have been bought up at market. He would then have proceeded to redeem the residue of them.

CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT WASHINGTON

Bladensburg, October the 1st, 1792. This morning, at Mount Vernon, I had the following conversation with the President. He opened it by expressing his regret at the resolution in which I appeared so fixed, in the letter I had written him, of retiring from public affairs. He said, that he should be extremely sorry that I should do it, as long as he was in office, and that he could not see where he should find another character to fill my office: That, as yet, he was quite undecided whether to retire in March or not. His inclinations led him strongly to do it. Nobody disliked more the ceremonies of his office; and he had not the least taste or gratification in the execution of its functions. That he was happy at home alone, and that his presence there was now peculiarly called for by the situation of Major Washington, whom he thought irrecoverable, and should [p. 316] he get well, he would remove into another part of the country, which might better agree with him. That he did not believe his presence necessary; that there were other characters who would do the business as well or better. Still, however, if his aid was thought necessary to save the cause to which he had devoted his life principally, he would make the sacrifice of a longer continuance. That he therefore reserved himself for future decision, as his declaration would be in time if made a month before the day of election. He had desired Mr. Lear to find out from conversation, without appearing to make the inquiry, whether any other person would be desired by anybody. He had informed him, he judged from conversations that it was the universal desire he should continue, and he believed that those who expressed a doubt of his continuance did it in the language of apprehension, and not of desire. But this, said he, is only from the north; it may be very different in the south. I thought this meant as an opening to me to say what was the sentiment in the south, from which quarter I came. I told him, that as far as I knew, there was but one voice there, which, was for his continuance. That as to myself, I had ever preferred the pursuits of private life to those of public, which had nothing in them agreeable to me.

I explained to him the circumstances of the war which had first called me into public life, and those following the war, which had called me from a retirement from a retirement on which I had determined. That I had con- [p. 317] stantly kept my eye on my own home, and could no longer refrain from returning to it. As to himself, his presence was important; that he was the only man in the United States who possessed the confidence of the whole; that government was founded in opinion and confidence, and that the longer he remained, the stronger would become the habits of the people in submitting to the

Government, and in thinking it a thing to be maintained; that there was no other person who would be thought anything more than the head of a party. He then expressed his concern at the difference which he found to subsist between the Secretary of the Treasury and myself, of which he said he had not been aware. He knew, indeed, that there was a marked difference in our political sentiments, but he had never suspected it had gone so far in producing a personal difference, and he wished he could be the mediator to put an end to it. That he thought it important to preserve the check of my opinions in the Administration, in order to keep things in their proper channel, and prevent them from going too far. That as to the idea of transforming this Government into a monarchy, he did not believe there were ten men in the United States whose opinions were worth attention, who entertained such a thought. I told him there were many more than he imagined. I recalled to his memory a dispute at his own table, a little before we left Philadelphia, between General Schuyler on one side and Pinckney and myself on the other, wherein [p. 318] the former maintained the position, that hereditary descent was as likely to produce good magistrates as election. I told him, that though the people were sound, there were a numerous sect who had monarchy in contemplation; that the Secretary of the Treasury was one of these. That I had heard him say that this Constitution was a shilly shally thing, of mere milk and water, which could not last, and was only good as a step to something better. That when we reflected, that he had endeavored in the convention, to make an English constitution of it, and when failing in that, we saw all his measures tending to bring it to the same thing, it was natural for us to be jealous; and particularly, when we saw that these measures had established corruption in the legislature, where there was a squadron devoted to the nod of the Treasury, doing whatever he had directed, and ready to do what he should direct. That if the equilibrium of the three great bodies, legislative, executive and judiciary, could be preserved, if the legislature could be kept independent, I should never fear the result of such a government; but that I could not but be uneasy, when I saw that the executive had swallowed up the legislative branch.

He said, that as to that “interested spirit” in the legislature, it was what could not be avoided in any government, unless we were to exclude particular descriptions of men, such as the holders of the funds, from all office. I told him, there was great differ- [p. 319] ence between the little accidental schemes of self-interest, which would take place in every body of men, and influence their votes, and a regular system for forming a corps of interested persons, who should be steadily at the orders of the Treasury. He touched on the merits of the funding system, observed there was a difference of opinion about it, some thinking it very bad, others very good; that experience was the only criterion of right which he knew, and this alone would decide which opinion was right. That for himself, he had seen our affairs desperate and our credit lost, and that this was in a sudden and extraordinary degree raised to the highest pitch. I told him, all that was ever necessary to establish our credit, was an efficient government and an honest one, declaring it would sacredly pay our debts, laying taxes for this purpose, and applying them to it. I avoided going further into the subject. He finished by another exhortation to me not to decide too positively on retirement, and here we were called to breakfast.

October the 31st, 1792. I had sent to the President, Viar and Jaudenes’s letter of the 29th instant, whereupon he desired a consultation of Hamilton, Knox, E. Randolph, and myself, on these points:

1. What notice was to be taken of Spain?
2. Whether it should make part of the communication to the legislature?

I delivered my opinion, that it

END OF TEXT AT BOTTOM OF PAGE 319; NEXT IS PAGE 325, CONTINUE:

Dr. Shippen, T. Shippen, and one other person whom he cannot recollect. That after dinner political principles became the subject of conversation; that Hamilton declared openly, that “there was no stability, no security in any kind of government but a monarchy.” That Lawrence took him up, and entered the lists of argument against him; that the dispute continued long, and grew warm, remarkably so as between them; that T. Shippen, at length, joined Lawrence in it; and in fine, that it broke up the company. Butler recommended to the company, that the dispute having probably gone farther than was intended, it ought to be considered as confirmed to the company.

December the 10th, 1792. Present: Alexander Hamilton, General Knox, Edmund Randolph, and Th. Jefferson, at the President’s.

It was agreed to reject meeting the Indians at the proposed treaty, rather than to admit a *mediation* by Great Britain; but to admit the presence of Governor Simcoe, not as a *party* (if that was insisted on); and that I should make a verbal communication to Mr. Hammond, in substance as on the back hereof, which I previously read to the President.

December the 12th. I made the communication to Mr. Hammond. He said the attendance of Governor Simcoe was a circumstance only mem

END OF PAGE 325