



Chastellux from a 19th century engraving.

A NOT DISINTERESTED OBSERVER

The use of the title “Enlightenment” for the combined and various scientific, literary, and philosophical movements that sprung up in mid to late 18th century France and Europe is doubtless one of the most ill advised and foolishly chosen of catch phrases or, if you will, catch names. Unlike, say, “Renaissance,” the “Enlightenment” achieved less than its title claims, and as a name (in practical invocation and usage) usually and completely ignores the Revolutionary achievements of the 17th century that preceded it. It is also misleading to imply that intellectual advancement and understanding in the 18th century was equally valid and or uniform. While some thinkers did bring in or invite genuine progress, others ushered in new, or else reintroduced and or made worse prior falsehoods and errors, while replacing new dogmas and superstitions for old ones; seen, for instance, in the setbacks, calamities and bloodbaths of the French Revolution and its 20th century political successors; or in instances, the atheistical throwbacks to Gnosticism and early church schisms, or in materialistic thought or perspective inferior in subtlety and depth to their classical Greek originators (such as that of the Epicureans, or some of the Stoics like Chrysippus.) Moreover, “Enlightenment” suggests a mystical epiphany or revelation quite improper as applied to scientific evolution, and at the same time muddies over that what was actually admirable and worthy about “The Enlightenment;” namely a concern and interest in patient focus, an eye for minute detail, methodical classification, and simple hard work and dogged determination characteristic of true scientists and thinkers deserving of being called innovative. And yet clinical dissection is not always conducive to true benevolence. Nor were humility and piety (natural or otherwise) traits to be attributed to the *philosophes* generally; which, it could be said, argues them to have fallen that much short of healthy wisdom and reasonable maturity.

The grandson of a noted chancellor, François Jean de Beauvoir, Marquis de Chastellux (1734-1788) entered French royal military service at the age of 13, commanded a regiment at 21, and served with distinction in the Seven Years War. At 20 and as an example to others, he submitted to a small pox inoculation at a time when the practice was still feared and controversial. He possessed an avidity for knowledge, and became learned on many topics, including music, history, jurisprudence, agronomy, zoology, botany, manufacturing, trade, engineering, and of course military matters. It is well to remember that some of the most zealous advocates for liberty and rational reform in France came from among the ill-fated aristocracy, and Chastellux was one exemplary representative of such. In 1772 he garnered much fame and applause with his *De la Félicité Publique, ou Considérations Sur Le Sort des Hommes, Dans les différentes de l’histoire* (“On Public Happiness, or Considerations on The Lot of Men In diverse histories.”) Voltaire is said to have preferred the work to Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws*.¹ And in 1775, on the basis of *Public Happiness*, Chastellux was elected a member to the Académie française. In it, and conjoined with an affinity for a free choice and laissez faire outlook, he expressed a belief in the hope of progress over notions and assumptions that the past was always happier than the present. In a passage anticipating Jeremy Bentham, he stated:

¹ As well as Voltaire, Chastellux befriended and corresponded with Buffon, Morellet, Marmontel, and was a frequenter of the salons of Madame Necker (mother of Madame de Staël) and Julie de Lespinasse, the close confidant of d’Alembert.

“We have searched into history, and amidst the number of years which its records have laid open to our view, have but too accurately traced the proportion of causes, to effects; and too fully are we convinced, that the people were not only strangers to real happiness, but that they had never taken the road which might have led to it. Our surprise diminished, but our concern increased, when we felt the conviction that the most esteemed governments, and the most revered legislations have never been directed to that sole end of all government, the acquisition of the greatest welfare of the greatest number of individuals: but in amends for this melancholy picture of the past, enlivening rays of hope arise, as we look forward at the future, whilst our opinion of the present abounds with comfort. If we have admired our ancestors the less, we have esteemed our contemporaries the more, and the more also do we expect from our posterity.”²

In 1780 Chastellux was a Major General with Rochambeau’s expeditionary force that landed in America. Being fluent in English, as well as urbane and erudite, he acted as the latter’s formal liaison with Washington, and performed in this capacity in a manner generally esteemed and appreciated by American and French officers and soldiers alike.³ Like Lafayette, he was pivotal in synchronizing and harmonizing the alliance, becoming a good friend and correspondent of Washington in the process. Before and up to the Yorktown campaign, in which he served as one of Rochambeau’s seconds in command, he kept a journal recording numerous and sundry persons, customs, matters, and concerns he encountered in America; in part to inform curious and interested friends and associates in Europe about how and what people and things were like in the New World. In 1782 and after Yorktown when Rochambeau and his army marched to the Hudson and later Boston to prepare for their departure, Chastellux was granted leave to make trips to Virginia, the back country of Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts to further fill out his account of the country; having prior to that already written extensively on Rhode Island, Connecticut, upstate New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia and vicinity.

Voyage dans l’Amerique Septentrionale dans les années, 1780-2, (1786), later published in English translation, by George Grieve, *Travels in North-America, in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782 (1787)*, first appeared as portions and excerpts that appeared in periodicals in Europe, and Chastellux only came out with his own complete version when, to his chagrin, unauthorized compilations of these extracts were printed as a single work.

It is to be expected that Chastellux would seek confirmation and vindication of his tempered republicanism while in America, and it shows in his writings, though not without an application of skepticism and learned scrutiny to offset blind enthusiasm. To his credit and although himself a noble of the *ancien régime*, he displays a support of the later Revolutionary and Napoleonic notions of advancement based on merit, and here again we see how it was possible for an aristocrat to be a friend, albeit a wary friend, of liberty and seek to further reason based equality.

The ensuing excerpts barely hint at the copious and broad extent Chastellux’s sketches and observations, and which in the midst of which one will find a no little interesting mini-history and examination of the some of the major battles of the revolutionary war -- though, oddly enough, he says fairly little about Yorktown. Although an acute, astute, and often meticulous observer, Chastellux on occasion is acerbic to a point that one is inclined to think that his negative remarks cannot always possibly be just.

And indeed not everyone was entirely pleased with the results of Chastellux’s *Travels*. Rochambeau’s chief commissary, Claude Blanchard, wrote in his journal:

² *De la Félicité Publique*, vol. 2, ch. 3. Bentham, by the way, at the time of 1776 rubbed friendly elbows with barrister John Lind, an avowed opponent of the American revolutionaries, and, as a de facto legal positivist, waxed warmly against ideas of natural rights.

³ Though at one point he became embarrassed (or so Rochambeau claimed) by incurring the dismay and disapproval of Rochambeau for misrepresenting to the French representative at Congress, Chevalier de la Luzerne, Rochambeau’s views respecting the desirability of an attack on New York; a plan Washington was for, but one Rochambeau was far from enthusiastic about. See Rochambeau’s memoirs; bearing in mind that Rochambeau’s charge against Chastellux has been disputed by some, and who assert that it was Rochambeau rather who misrepresents Chastellux’s communication to Luzerne.

“On the 7th [of Jan. 1781], melted snow and rain; on the 8th, wind from the north and sudden cold, very sharp. I saw the Chevalier de Chastellux, who was returning from his journey, with which he appeared satisfied. He told me that the Academy of Philadelphia had chosen him an associate member; that he had collected some notes respecting the American revolution, that he would not content himself with mere observations, and that he would publish a complete work.”

Then a subsequent footnote to his manuscript, Blanchard added: “I do not perceive that he has kept his promise. He has had the account of his journey printed in two volumes, and some agreeable details are to be found in it, but many trifling matters, mediocre pleasantries and eulogiums, often but little deserved, of persons who had flattered him. Brissot de Warville⁴ has sharply criticised this work.”

Still, he is probably more reliable than de Crèvecoeur, and certainly far more so than Chateaubriand, as a commentator on America and Americans of that era.

~~~~~\*\*\*~~~~~

I got on horseback at eight o'clock on the 18th, and at the distance of a mile fell in with the river of Farmington [Connecticut], along which I rode for some time. There was nothing interesting in this part of my journey, except that having fired my pistol at a jay, to my great astonishment the bird fell. This had been for many days an object of curiosity with me, and it is really a most beautiful creature. It is quite blue, but it unites all the various shades of that colour so as to surpass the invention of art, and be very difficult of imitation. I must remark by the bye, that the Americans call it only by the name of the *blue bird*, though it is a real jay; but the Americans are far from being successful in enriching their native language. On every, thing which wanted an English name, they have bestowed only a simple descriptive one: the jay is the blue bird, the cardinal, the red bird; every water bird is a duck, from the teal to the *canard de dois* [sic], and to the large black duck which we have not in Europe. They call them, red ducks, black ducks, wood ducks. It is the same with respect to their trees; the pine, the cypresses, the firs, are all comprehended under the general name of *pine-trees*; and if the people characterize any particular tree, it is from the use to which it is applied, as the *wall-nut* from its serving to the construction of wooden houses. I could cite many other examples, but it is sufficient to observe, that this poverty of language proves how much men's attention has been employed in objects of utility, and how much at the same time it has been circumscribed by the only prevailing interest, the desire of augmenting wealth, rather by dint of labour, than by industry. But to return to my jay; I resolved to make a trophy of it, in the manner of the savages, by scalping it of its skin and feathers; and content with my victory, I pursued my journey, which soon brought me amidst the steepest and most difficult mountains I had yet seen. They are covered with woods as old as the creation, but which do not differ from ours. These hills heaped confusedly one upon another, oblige you to be continually mounting and descending, without your being able to distinguish in this wild region, the summit, which rising above the rest, announces to you a conclusion to your labours. This disorder of nature reminded me of the lessons of him whom she has chosen for her confidant and interpreter. The vision of Mr. de Buffon appeared to me in these ancient deserts. He seemed to be in his proper element, and to point out to me, under a slight crust formed by the destruction of vegetables, the inequality of a globe of glass, which has cooled after a long fusion. The waters said he, have done nothing here; look around you, you will not find a single calcareous stone; every thing is quartz, granite, or flint. I made experiments on the stones with aquafortis, and I could not help concluding, what has not obtained sufficient credit in Europe, not only that he speaks well, but he is always in the right.

While I was meditating on the great process of nature, which employs fifty thousand years in rendering the earth habitable, a new spectacle, well calculated as a contrast to those which I had been contemplating, fixed my attention, and excited my curiosity: this was the work of a single man, who in the space of a year had cut down several arpents [about .85 acres] of wood, and had built himself “a house in the middle of a pretty extensive territory he had already cleared. I saw, for the first time, what I have since observed a hundred times; for in fact, whatever mountains I have climbed, whatever forests I have traversed, whatever bye-paths I have followed, I have never travelled three miles without meeting with a

---

<sup>4</sup> In 1788 (also 1792), Jacques Pierre Brissot de Warville (1754-1793) had published in Philadelphia *New Travels in the United States*, and which took exception to Chastellux's opinions on Quakers, Negroes, “the people, and mankind.”

new settlement, either beginning to take form or already in cultivation. The following is the manner of proceeding in these improvements or new settlements. Any man who is able to procure a capital of five or six hundred livres of our money, or about twenty-five pounds sterling, and who has strength and inclination to work, may go into the woods and purchase a portion of one hundred and fifty or two hundred acres of land, which seldom costs him more than a dollar or four shillings and six-pence an acre, a small part of which only he pays in ready money. There he conducts a cow, some pigs, or a full sow, and two indifferent horses which do not cost him more than four guineas each. To these precautions he adds that of having a provision of flour and cider. Provided with this first capital, he begins by felling all the smaller trees, and some strong branches of the large ones: these he makes use of as fences to the first field he wishes to clear; he next boldly attacks those immense oaks, or pines, which one would take for the ancient lords of the territory he is usurping; he strips them of their bark, or lays them open all round with his axe. These trees mortally wounded, are the next spring robbed of their honours; their leaves no longer spring, their branches fall, and their trunk becomes a hideous skeleton. This trunk still seems to brave the efforts of the new colonist; but where there are the smallest chinks or crevices, it is surrounded by fire, and the flames consume what the iron was unable to destroy. But it is enough for the small trees to be felled, and the great ones to lose their sap. This object completed, the ground is cleared; the air and the sun begin to operate upon that earth which is wholly formed of rotten vegetables, and teems with the latent principles of production. The grass grows rapidly; there is pasturage for the cattle the very first year; after which they are left to increase, or fresh ones are brought, and they are employed in tilling a piece of ground which yields the enormous increase of twenty or thirty fold. The next year the same course is repeated; when, at the end of two years, the planter has wherewithal to subsist, and even to send some articles to market: at the end of four or five years, he completes the payment of his land, and finds himself a comfortable planter. Then his dwelling, which at first was no better than a large hut formed by a square of the trunks of trees, placed one upon another, with the intervals filled by mud, changes into a handsome wooden house, where he contrives more convenient, and certainly much cleaner apartments than those in the greatest part of our small towns. This is the work of three weeks or a month. His first habitation, that of eight and forty hours. I shall be asked, perhaps, how one man or one family can be so quickly lodged; I answer, that in America a man is never alone, never an isolated being. The neighbours, for they are every where to be found, make it a point of hospitality to aid the new farmer. A cask of cider drank in common, and with gaiety, or a gallon of rum, are the only recompense for these services. Such are the means by which North-America, which one hundred years ago was nothing but a vast forest, is peopled with three millions of inhabitants; and such is the immense, and certain benefit of agriculture, that notwithstanding the war, it not only maintains itself where ever it has been established, but it extends to places which seem the least favourable to its introduction. Four years ago, one might have travelled ten miles in the woods I traversed, without seeing a single habitation.<sup>5</sup>

~~~~\*~~~~

[Maj.] General [William] Heath is so well known in our little army, that I should dispense with entering into particulars respecting him, if this Journal, in which I endeavour to recollect what little I have seen in this country, were not destined at the same time to satisfy the curiosity of others who have not crossed the sea', and to whose amusement I am desirous of contributing. This General was one of the first who took up arms, at the blockade of Boston, and having at first joined the army in the quality of Colonel, he was immediately raised to the rank of Major-General. He was at that time a substantial farmer or rich gentleman; for we must not lose sight of the distinction, that in America, *farmer* means cultivator, in opposition to *merchant*, which every man is called who is employed in commerce. Here, as in England, by *gentleman*, is understood a person possessing a considerable *freehold*, or land of his own. General Heath, then, was a farmer or gentleman, and reared, on his estate, a great number of cattle, which he sold for 'ships' provisions. But his natural taste led him to the study of war; to which he has principally applied himself since the period in which his duty has concurred with his inclination; he has read our best authors on tactics, and especially the Tactics of Mr. Guibert, which he holds in particular estimation. His fortune enabling him to continue in the service, notwithstanding the want of pay, which has compelled the less rich to quit it, he has served the whole war; but accident has prevented him from being present on the most important occasions. His countenance is noble and open; and his bald head, as well as his corpulence, give him a striking resemblance to the late Lord Granby. He writes well and with ease; has great sensibility of

⁵ *Travels* (1827 Am. edition and based on the English one of 1787), Part I, ch. II, pp. 33-35.

mind, and a frank and amiable character; in short, if he has not been in the way of displaying his talents in action, it may be at least asserted, that he is well adapted to the business of the cabinet. His estate is near Boston, and he commanded there when Burgoyne's army were brought prisoners thither, it was he who put the English General [William] Philips in arrest, for want of respect to the Congress; his conduct on this occasion was firm and noble. On our arrival at Rhode Island, he was sent there; and soon after, when Clinton was preparing to attack us, he assembled and commanded the militia, who came to our assistance. During his stay at Newport, he lived honourably, and in great friendship with all the French officers. In the month of September, General Washington, on discovering the treason of Arnold, sent for him, and gave him the command of West-Point; a mark of confidence the more honourable, as none but the most honest of men was proper to succeed, in his command, the basest of all traitors.⁶

~~~~\*~~~~

In returning to West-Point, we saw a redoubt that is suffered to go to ruin, as being useless, which in fact it is. It was night when we got home, but what I had to observe did not require daylight. It is a vast souterrain, formed within the fort of West-Point, where not only the powder and ammunition necessary for this post are kept in reserve, but the deposit of the whole army. These magazines completely filled, the numerous artillery one sees in these different fortresses, the prodigious labour necessary to transport, and pile up on steep rocks, huge trunks of trees, and enormous hewn stones, impress the mind with an idea of the Americans very different from that which the English ministry have laboured to give to Parliament. A Frenchman would be surprised that a nation, just rising into notice, should have expended in two years upwards of twelve millions (half a million sterling) in this desert. He would be still more so on learning that these fortifications cost nothing to the state, being built by the soldiers, who received not the smallest gratification, and who did not even receive their stated pay; but he would doubtless feel some satisfaction, in hearing that these beautiful and well contrived works, were planned and executed by two French Engineers, Mr. du Portail, and Mr. du Gouvion, who received no more pay than their workmen.<sup>7</sup>

~~~~\*~~~~

...I was in the utmost impatience to embrace M. de la Fayette, and to see General Washington, but I could not make my horses partake of it. It was proposed to me to proceed directly to head quarters, because, said they, I might perhaps arrive in time for dinner. But seeing the impossibility of that, and being in a country where I was known, I desired some oats for my horses. Whilst they were making this slight repast, I went to see the camp of the *Marquis*, it is thus they call Mr. de la Fayette; the English language being fond of abridgments, and titles uncommon in America. I found this camp placed in an excellent position; it occupied two heights separated by a small bottom, but with an easy communication between them. The river Totohaw or Second river, protects its right, and it is here that it makes a considerable elbow, and turning towards the south, falls at length into the bay of Newark [New Jersey]. The principal part of the front, and all the left flank, to a great distance, are covered by the rivulet which comes from Paramus, and falls into the same river. This position is only twenty miles from New-York island; and was accordingly occupied by the van guard, consisting of light infantry, that is to say, by the picked corps of the American army: the regiments, in fact, which compose it, have no grenadiers, but only a company of light infantry, answering to our *Chasseurs*, and of whom battalions are formed at the beginning of the campaign. This troop made a good appearance, were better clothed than the rest of the army; the uniforms both of the officers and soldiers were smart and military, and each soldier wore a helmet made of hard leather, with a crest of horse hair. The officers are armed with espontoons, or rather with half pikes, and the subalterns with fusils: but both were provided with short and light sabres brought from France, and made a present of to them by M. de la Fayette. The tents agreeably to the American custom, formed only two ranks; they were in regular lines as well as those of the officers; and as the season was advanced, they had good chimneys, but placed differently from ours; for they are all built on the outside, and conceal the entrance of the tents, which produce the double effect of keeping off the wind, and of preserving heat night and day. I saw no piles of arms, and was informed that the Americans made no use of them. When the weather is good, each company places its fusils on a wooden horse; but when it rains, they must be removed into the

⁶ *Travels*, Part I, ch. III, pp. 48-49.

⁷ *Travels*, Part I, ch. III, pp. 50-51.

tents, which is undoubtedly a great inconvenience: this will be remedied when the means of doing it are more abundant, but I fear much, that this will not happen the next year.⁸

~~~~\*~~~~

The rain spared us no more at the camp of the Marquis, than at that of the main army; so that our review being finished, I saw with pleasure General Washington set off in a gallop to regain his quarters. We reached them as soon as the badness of the roads would permit us. At our return we found a good dinner ready, and about twenty guests, among whom were Generals [Robert] Howe and Sinclair [Arthur St. Clair]. The repast was in the English fashion, consisting of eight or ten large dishes of butcher's meat, and poultry, with vegetables of several sorts, followed by a second course of pastry, comprized under the two denominations of pies and puddings. After this the cloth was taken off, and apples and a great quantity of nuts were served, which General Washington usually continues eating for two hours, toasting and conversing all the time. These nuts are small and dry, and have so hard a shell, (hickory nuts) that they can only be broken by the hammer; they are served half open, and the company are never done picking and eating them. The conversation was calm and agreeable; his Excellency was pleased to enter with me into the particulars of some of the principal operations of the war, but always with a modesty and conciseness, which proved that it was from pure complaisance he mentioned it. About half past seven we rose from table, and immediately the servants came to shorten it, and convert it into a round one; for at dinner it was placed diagonally to give more room. I was surprised at this manoeuvre, and asked the reason of it; I was told they were going to lay the cloth for supper. In half an hour I retired to my chamber, fearing lest the General might have business, and that he remained in company only on my account; but at the end of another half hour, I was informed that his Excellency expected me at supper. I returned to the dining-room, protesting against this supper; but the General told me he was accustomed to take something in the evening; that if I would be seated, I should only eat some fruit, and assist in the conversation. I desired nothing better, for there were then no strangers, and nobody remained but the General's family. The supper was composed of three or four light dishes, some fruit, and above all, a great abundance of nuts, which were as well received in the evening as at dinner. The cloth being soon removed, a few bottles of good claret and madeira were placed on the table. Every sensible man will be of my opinion, that being a French officer, under the orders of General Washington, and what is more, a good whig, I could not refuse a glass of wine offered me by him; but, I confess, that I had little merit in this complaisance, and that, less accustomed to drink than any body, I accommodate myself very well to the English mode of *toasting*: you have very small glasses, you pour out yourself the quantity of wine you choose, without being pressed to take more, and the toast is only a sort of check in the conversation, to remind each individual that he forms part of the company, and that the whole form only one society. I observed that there was more solemnity in the toasts at dinner: there were several ceremonious ones; the others were suggested by the General, and given out by his aids-de-camp, who performed the honours of the table at dinner; for one of them is every day seated at the bottom of the table, near the General, to serve the company, and distribute the bottles. The toasts in the evening were given by Colonel Hamilton, without order or ceremony. After supper the guests are generally desired to give a sentiment; that is to say, a lady to whom they are attached by some sentiment, either of love, or friendship, or perhaps from preference only. This supper, or conversation, commonly lasted from nine to eleven, always free, and always agreeable.<sup>9</sup>

~~~~\*~~~~

We now had to visit [the fort at] Redbank [or "Red Bank;" in New Jersey]; for which purpose we had again to cross the Delaware [from Philadelphia], which in this place is a mile wide. The gentleman who was to do the honour there, was impatient to arrive. We had amused ourselves by telling him that the morning being far spent, and the tide about to turn, we should be obliged to omit Redbank, and return directly to Philadelphia. This conductor, whom we diverted ourselves in tormenting, was M. du Plessis Mauduit, who in the double capacity of engineer, and officer of artillery, had the charge of arranging and defending this post, under the orders of Colonel [Christopher] Green. On landing from our boat, he proposed conducting us to a Quaker's, whose house is half a musket shot from the fort, or rather the ruins

⁸ *Travels*, Part I, ch. III, pp. 58-59.

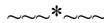
⁹ *Travels*, Part I, ch. IV, pp. 67-69.

of the fort; for it is now destroyed, and there are scarcely any *reliefs* of it remaining. “This man, said M. de Mauduit, is a little of a tory; I was obliged to knock down his barn, and fell his fruit trees; but he will be glad to see M. de la Fayette, and will receive us well.” We took him at his word, but never was expectation more completely deceived. We found our Quaker seated in the chimney comer, busied in cleaning herbs: he recollected M. de Mauduit, who named M. de la Fayette, and me, to him; but he did not deign to lift his eyes, nor to answer any of our introducer’s discourse, which at first was complimentary, and at length jocose. Except *Dido’s* silence, I know nothing more severe, but we had no difficulty in accommodating ourselves to this bad reception, and made our way to the fort. We had not gone a hundred yards before we came to a small elevation, on which a stone was vertically placed, with this short epitaph: *here lies buried Colonel Donop*. M. de Mauduit could not refrain from expressing his regret for this brave man, who died in his arms two days after the action; he assured us that we could not make a step without treading on the remains of some Hessians; for near three hundred were buried in the front of the ditch.

The fort of Redbank was designed, as I have said above, to support the left of the *chevaux de frise* [an oversized contraption, constructed by engineers, and placed in a river or waterway to block the passage of vessels]. The bank of the Delaware at this place is steep; hut even this steepness allowed the enemy to approach the fort, under cover, and without being exposed to the fire of the batteries. To remedy this inconvenience, several galleys armed with cannon, and destined to defend the *chevaux de frise*, were posted the whole length of the escarpement [sic], and took it in reverse. The Americans, little practised in the art of fortifications, and always disposed to take works beyond their strength, had made those of Redbank too extensive. When M. de Mauduit obtained permission to be sent thither with Colonel Green, he immediately set about reducing the fortifications, by intersecting them from east to west, which transformed them into a sort of large redoubt nearly of a pentagonal form. A good earthen rampart, raised to the height of the cordon, a fosse, and an abattis in front of the fosse, constituted the whole strength of this post, in which were placed *three hundred men* [actually some 400], and fourteen pieces of cannon. The 22d of October [1777], in the morning, they received intelligence that a detachment of two thousand five hundred Hessians were advancing; who were soon after perceived on the edge of a wood to the north of Redbank, nearly within cannon shot. Preparations were making for the defence, when a Hessian officer advanced, preceded by a drum; he was suffered to approach, but his harangue was so insolent that it only served to irritate the garrison, and inspire them with more resolution. “*The King of England,*” said he, “*orders his rebellious subjects to lay down their arms, and they are warned, that if they stand, the battle, no quarters whatever will be given.*” The answer was, that they accepted the challenge, and that there should be no quarter on either side. At four o’clock in the afternoon, the Hessians made a very brisk fire from a battery of cannon, and soon after they opened, and marched to the first entrenchment, from which, finding it abandoned, but not destroyed, they *imagined* they had driven the Americans. They then shouted *victoria*, waved their hats in the air, and advanced towards the redoubt. The same drummer, who a few hours before had come to summon the garrison, and had appeared as insolent as his officer, was at their head beating the march; both he, and that officer were knocked on the head by the first fire. The Hessians, however, still kept advancing within the first entrenchment, leaving the river on their right: they had already leached the abattis, and were endeavouring to tear up, or cut away the branches, when they were overwhelmed with a shower of musket shot, which took them in front, and in flank; for as chance would have it, a part of the courtine of the old entrenchment, which had not been destroyed, formed a projection at this very part of the intersection. M. de Mauduit had contrived to form it into a sort of *caponiere*, (or trench with loop-holes) into which he threw some men, who flanked the enemy’s left, and fired on them at close shot. Officers were seen every moment rallying their men, marching back to the abattis, and falling amidst the branches they were endeavouring to cut. Colonel [Carl von] Donop [from Hesse Cassel] was particularly distinguished by the marks of the order he wore, by his handsome figure, and by his courage; he was also seen to fall like the rest. The Hessians, repulsed by the fire of the redoubt, attempted to secure themselves from it by attacking on the side of the escarpement, but the fire from the galleys sent them back with a great loss of men. At length they relinquished the attack, and regained the wood in disorder.

While this was passing on the north side, another column made an attack on the south, and, more fortunate than the other, passed the abattis, traversed the fossé, and mounted the berm; but they were stopped by the fraises, and M. de Mauduit running to this post as soon as he saw the first assailants give way, the others were obliged to follow their example. They still did not dare however to stir out of the fort, fearing a surprise; but M. de Mauduit wishing to replace some palisades which had been torn up; he sallied

out with a few men, and was surprised to find about twenty Hessians standing on the berm, and stuck up against the shelving of the parapet. These soldiers who had been bold enough to advance thus far, sensible that there was more risk in returning, and not thinking proper to expose themselves, were taken and brought into the fort. M. de Mauduit, after fixing the palisades, employed himself in repairing the abattis; he again sallied out with a detachment, and it was then he beheld the deplorable spectacle of the dead and dying, heaped one upon another. A voice arose from amidst these carcasses, and said in English, "whoever you are, draw me hence." It was the voice of Colonel Donop: M. de Mauduit made the soldiers lift him up, and carry him into the fort, where he was soon known. He had his hip broken; but whether they did not consider his wound as mortal, or that they were heated by the battle, and still irritated at the menaces thrown out against them a few hours before, the Americans could not help saying, aloud: "Well! is it determined to give no quarter?" "I am in your hands," replied the colonel, "you may revenge yourselves." M. de Mauduit had no difficulty in imposing silence, and employed himself only in taking care of the wounded officer. The latter, perceiving he spoke bad English, said to him: "you appear to me a foreigner, Sir, who are you?" "A French officer," replied the other. "*Je suis content*," said Donop, making use of our language, "*je meurs entre les mains de l'honneur meme.*" I am content; I die in the hands of honour itself. The next day he was removed to the quaker's house, where he lived three days, during which he conversed frequently with M. de Mauduit. He told him that he had been long in friendship with M. de Saint Germain, that he wished in dying to recommend to him his vanquisher, and benefactor. He asked for paper, and wrote a letter, which he delivered to M. de Mauduit, requiring of him, as the last favour, to acquaint him when he was about to die: the latter was soon under the necessity of acquitting himself of this sad duty: "it is finishing a noble career early," said the colonel; "but I die the victim of my ambition, and of the avarice of my sovereign." Fifteen wounded officers were found, like him, upon the field of battle; M. de Mauduit had the satisfaction to conduct them himself to Philadelphia, where he was very well received by General Howe. By singular accident, it happened that the English that very day received indirect intelligence of the capitulation of Burgoyne, of which he knew more than they. They pretended to give no credit to it: "you who are a Frenchman," said they, "speak freely, do you think it possible?" "I know," replied he, "that the fact is so; explain it as you think proper."¹⁰



...The reader will think it time for me to throw some variety into this journal; but I am obliged to confess that this rendezvous was with Mr. Samuel Adams. We had promised ourselves, at our last interview to set an evening apart for a tranquil tete-a-tete, and this was the day appointed. Our conversation commenced with a topic of which he might have spared himself the discussion; the justice of the cause he was engaged in. I am clearly of opinion that the parliament of England had no right to tax America without her consent, but I am more clearly convinced that when a whole people say *we will be free*, it is difficult to demonstrate they are in the wrong. Be that as it may, Mr. Adams very satisfactorily proved to me, that New-England, comprehending the states of Massachusetts, New-Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode-Island, were not peopled with any view to commerce and aggrandizement, but wholly by individuals who fled from persecution, and sought an asylum at the extremity of the world, where they might be free to live, and follow their opinions; that it was of their own accord, that those new colonists put themselves under the protection of England; that the mutual relationship, springing from this connexion, was expressed in their charters, and that the right of imposing, or exacting a revenue of any kind was not comprised in them.

From this subject we passed to a more interesting one; the form of government which should be given to each state; for it is only on account of the future, that it is necessary to take a retrospect of the past. The revolution has taken place, and the republic is beginning; it is an infant newly born, the question is how to nourish, and rear it to maturity. I expressed to Mr. Adams some anxiety for the foundations on which the new constitutions are formed, and particularly that of Massachusetts. Every citizen, said I, every man who pays taxes, has a right to vote in the election of representatives, who form the legislative body, and who may be called the sovereign power. All this is very well for the present moment, because every citizen is pretty equally at his ease, or may be so in a short time, but the success of commerce, and even of agriculture, will introduce riches among you, and riches will produce inequality of fortunes, and of property. Now, wherever this inequality exists, the real force will invariably be on the side of property; so

¹⁰ *Travels*, Part I, ch. VII, pp. 123-127.

that if the influence in government be not proportioned to that property, there will always be a contrariety, a combat between the form of government, and its natural tendency, the right will be on one side, and the power on the other; the balance then only can exist between the two equally dangerous extremes, of aristocracy and anarchy. Besides, the ideal worth of men must ever be comparative: an individual without property is a discontented citizen, when the state is poor; place a rich man near him, he dwindles into a clown. What will result then, one day, from vesting the right of election in this class of citizens? The source of civil broils, or corruption, perhaps both at the same time. The following was pretty nearly the answer of Mr. Adams. I am very sensible of the force of your objections; we are not what we should be, we should labour rather for the future, than for the present moment. I build a country house, and have infant children; I ought doubtless to construct their apartments with an eye to the time in which they shall be grown up and married: but we have not neglected this precaution. In the first place, I must inform you, that this new constitution was proposed and agreed to in the most legitimate manner of which there is any example since the days of Lycurgus [of Sparta]. A committee chosen from the members of the legislative body, then existing, and which might be considered as a provisional government, was named to prepare a new code of laws. As soon as it was prepared, each county or district was required to name a committee to examine this plan: it was recommended to them to send it back at the expiration of a certain time, with their observations. These observations having been discussed by the committee, and the necessary alterations made, the plan was sent back to each particular committee. When they had all approved it, they received orders to communicate it to the people at large, and to demand their suffrages. If two-thirds of the voters approved it, it was to have the force of law, and be regarded as the work of the people themselves; of two and twenty thousand suffrages, a much greater proportion than two-thirds was in favour of the new constitution. Now these were the principles on which it was established: a state is never free but when each citizen is bound by no law whatever that he has not approved of, either by himself, or by his representatives; but to represent another man, it is necessary to have been elected by him; every citizen therefore should have a part in elections. On the other hand, it would be in vain for the people to possess the right of electing representatives, were they restrained in the choice of them to a particular class: it is necessary therefore not to require too much property as a qualification for the *representative of the people*. Accordingly the house of representatives which form the legislative body, and the true *sovereign*, are the people themselves represented by their delegates. Thus far the government is purely democratical; but it is the permanent and enlightened will of the people which should constitute law, and not the passions and sallies to which they too are subject. It is necessary to moderate their first emotions, and bring them to the test of inquiry and reflection. This is the important business entrusted with the Governor and Senate, who represent with us the negative power, vested in England in the upper-house[^] and even in the crown, with this difference only, that in our new constitution the senate has a right to reject a law, and the governor to suspend the promulgation, and return it for a reconsideration; but these forms complied with, if, after this fresh examination, the people persist in their resolution, and there is then, not as before, a mere majority, but two thirds of the suffrages in favour of the law, the governor and senate are compelled to give it their sanction. Thus this power moderates, without destroying the authority of the people, and such is the organization of our republic, as to prevent the springs from breaking by too rapid a movement, without ever stopping them entirely. Now, it is here we have given all its weight to property. A man must have a pretty considerable property to vote for a member of the senate; he must have a more considerable one to be himself eligible. Thus the democracy is pure and entire in the assembly, which represents the *sovereign*; and the aristocracy, or, if you will, the *optimacy*, is to be found only in the moderating power, where it is the more necessary, as men never watch more carefully over the state than when they have a great interest in its destiny. As to the power of commanding armies, it ought neither to be vested in a great, nor even in a small number of men: the governor alone can employ the forces by sea and land according to the necessity; but the land forces will consist only in the militia, which, as it is composed of the people themselves, can never act against the people.

Such was the idea Mr. Adams gave me of his own work, for it is he who had the greatest part in the formation of the new laws. It is said, however, that before his credit was employed to get them accepted, it was necessary to combat his private opinion, and to make him abandon systems in which he loved to stray, for less sublime, but more practicable projects. This citizen, otherwise so respectable, has been frequently reproached with consulting his library, rather than the present circumstances, and of always beginning by the Greeks and Romans, to get at the whigs and tories; if this be true, I shall only say that study has also its inconveniences, but not such as are important, since Mr. Samuel Adams, heretofore the

enemy of regular troops, and the most extravagant partisan of the democracy, at present employs all his influence to maintain an army, and to establish a mixed government. Be that as it may, I departed well content with this conversation, which was only interrupted by a glass of Madeira, a dish of tea, and an old American General, now a member of Congress, who lodges with Mr. Adams.¹¹

~~~~\*~~~~

...All that I could learn from the Colonel, or from the savages was, that the State gives them rations of meat, and sometimes of flour; that they possess also some land, where they sow Indian corn, and go a hunting for skins, which they exchange for rum. They are sometimes employed in war, and are commended for their bravery and fidelity. Though in subjection to the Americans, they have their chiefs, to whom application is made for justice, when an Indian has committed any crime. Mr. Glen told me, that they submitted to the punishments inflicted on them; but had no idea that it was right to punish them with death, even for homicide. Their number at present is three hundred and fifty; which is constantly diminishing, as well as that of *the five nations*. I do not believe that these five nations can produce four thousand men in arms. The savages of themselves therefore, would not be much to be dreaded, were they not supported by the English, and the American Tories. As an advanced guard, they are formidable, as an army they are nothing. But their cruelty seems to augment in proportion as their numbers diminish; it is such as to render it impossible for the Americans to consent to have them long for neighbours; and a necessary consequence of a peace, it favourable to the Congress, must be their total destruction, or their exclusion at least from all the country within the lakes. Those who are attached to the Americans, and live in some manner under their laws, such as the Mohawks of the environs of Schenectady, and part of the Oneidas, will ultimately become civilized and be confounded with them. This is what every feeling and reasonable man should wish, who, preferring the interests of humanity to those, of his own celebrity, disdains the little artifice so often and so successfully employed, of extolling ignorance and poverty, to extort praises in senates and academies.<sup>12</sup>

~~~~\*~~~~

...The conversation continued and brought us insensibly to the foot of the mountains. On the summit of one of them we discovered the house of Mr. Jefferson, which stands pre-eminent in these retirements; it was himself who built it and preferred this situation; for although he possessed considerable property in the neighbourhood, there was nothing to prevent him from fixing his residence wherever he thought proper. But it was a debt nature owed to a philosopher and a man of taste, that in his own possessions he should find a spot where he might best study and enjoy her. He calls his house Monticello, (in Italian, Little Mountain,) a very modest title, for it is situated upon a very lofty one, but which announces the owner's attachment to the language of Italy; and above all to the fine arts, of which that country was the cradle, and is still the asylum. As I had no farther occasion for a guide, I separated from the Irishman; and after ascending by a tolerably commodious road, for more than half an hour, we arrived at Monticello. This house, of which Mr. Jefferson was the architect, and often one of the workmen, is rather elegant, and in the Italian taste, though not without fault; it consists of one large square pavillion, the entrance of which is by two porticos ornamented with pillars. The ground floor consists chiefly of a very large lofty saloon, which is to be decorated entirely in the antique style: above it is a library of the same form, two small wings, with only a ground floor, and attic story, are joined to this pavillion, and communicate with the kitchen, offices, &c. which will form a kind of basement story over which runs a terrace. My object in this short description is only to show the difference between this, and the other houses of the country; for we may safely aver, that Mr. Jefferson is the first American who has consulted the fine arts to know how he should shelter himself from the weather. But it is on himself alone I ought to bestow my time. Let me describe to you a man, not yet forty, tall, and with a mild and pleasing countenance, but whose mind and understanding are ample substitutes for every exterior grace. An American, who without ever having quitted his own country, is at once a musician, skilled in drawing, a geometrician, an astronomer, a natural philosopher, legislator, and statesman. A senator of America, who sat for two years in

¹¹ *Travels*, Part I, ch. VII, pp. 127-130.

¹² *Travels*, Part I, ch. X, pp. 184-185.

that famous Congress which brought about the revolution; and which is never mentioned without respect, though unhappily not without regret : a governor of Virginia, who filled this difficult station during the invasions of Arnold, of Phillips, and of Cornwallis; a philosopher, in voluntary retirement from the world, and public business, because he loves the world, inasmuch only as he can flatter himself with being useful to mankind; and the minds of his countrymen are not yet in a condition either to bear the light, or to suffer contradiction. A mild and amiable wife, charming children, of whose education he himself takes charge, a house to embellish, great provisions to improve, and the arts and sciences to cultivate; these are what remain to Mr. Jefferson, after having played a principal character on the theatre of the new world, and which he preferred to the honourable commission of Minister Plenipotentiary in Europe. The visit which I made him was not unexpected, for he had long since invited me to come and pass a few days with him, in the centre of the mountains; notwithstanding which I found his first appearance serious, nay even cold; but before I had been two hours with him we were as intimate as if we had passed our whole lives together; walking, books, but above all, a conversation always varied and interesting, always supported by that sweet satisfaction experienced by two persons, who in communicating their sentiments and opinions, are invariably in unison, and who understand each other at the first hint, made four days pass away like so many minutes.

This conformity of sentiments and opinions on which I insist, because it constitutes my own eulogium, (and self-love must somewhere show itself,) this conformity, I say, was so perfect, that not only our taste was similar, but our predilections also, those partialities which cold methodical minds ridicule as enthusiastic, whilst sensible and animated ones cherish and adopt, the glorious appellation. I recollect with pleasure that as we were conversing one evening over a bowl of punch, after Mrs. Jefferson had retired, our conversation turned on the poems of Ossian.¹³ It was a spark of electricity which passed rapidly from one to the other; we recollected the passages in those sublime poems, which particularly struck us, and entertained my fellow travellers, who fortunately knew English well, and were qualified to judge of their merit, though they had never read the poems. In our enthusiasm the book was sent for, and placed near the bowl, where, by their mutual aid, the night far advanced imperceptibly upon us. Sometimes natural philosophy, at others politics or the arts, were the topics of our conversation, for no object ad escaped Mr. Jefferson; and it seemed as if from his youth he had placed his mind, as he has done his house, on an elevated situation, from which he might contemplate the universe.¹⁴



[Having departed Monticello] We walked our horses seventeen miles farther in the defiles of the western mountains, before we could find a place to bait them; at last we stopped at a little lonely house, a Mr. Mac Donnell's, an Irishman, where we found eggs, bacon, chickens, and whiskey, on which we made an excellent repast. He was an honest, obliging man; and his wife, who had a very agreeable and mild countenance, had nothing rustic either in her conversation or her manner. For in the centre of the woods, and wholly occupied in rustic business, a Virginian never resembles an European peasant: he is always a freeman, participates in the government, and has the command of a few negroes. So that uniting in himself the two distinct qualities of citizen and master, he perfectly resembles the bulk of individuals who formed what were called *the people* in the ancient republics; a people very different from that of our days, though they are very improperly confounded, in the frivolous declamations of our half philosophers, who, in comparing ancient with modern times, have invariably mistaken the word *people* for mankind in general; and believing themselves its defenders, have bestowed their praises on the oppressors of humanity. How many ideas have we still to rectify? How many words, the sense of which is yet vague and indeterminate? The dignity of man has been urged a hundred times, and the expression is universally adopted. Yet after all, the dignity of man is relative; if taken in an individual sense, it is in proportion to the inferior classes; the plebeian constitutes the dignity of the noble, the slave that of the plebeian, and the negro that of his white master. If taken in a general acceptance, it may inspire man with sentiments of tyranny and cruelty, in his relative situation with respect to other animals; destroying thus the general beneficence, by counteracting

¹³ [Edit. Note. A series of supposedly ancient Scotch Gaelic epic verses by the bard "Ossian;" actually written by Scottish poet, and member of parliament, James Macpherson (1736-1796). Although later learned to be essentially or something of a hoax, they were extremely popular (Napoleon was another admirer) and influential on literature in the mid to late 18th and early 19th centuries; notably impacting such as Thomas Chatterton, Sir Walter Scott, and Lord Byron.]

¹⁴ *Travels*, Part II, ch. I, pp. 227-229.

the orders and the views of nature. What then is the principle on which reason, escaped from sophists and rhetoricians, may at last rely? The equality of rights; the general interest which actuates all; private interest, connected with the general good; the order of society; as necessary as the symmetry of a beehive, &c. if all this does not furnish matter for eloquence, we must console ourselves, and prefer genuine morality to that which is fallacious. We had reason to be contented with that of Mr. MacDonnell; he presented us with the best he had, did not make us pay too dear, and gave us every instruction necessary to continue our journey; but not being able to set out until half past four o'clock, and having twelve miles to go before we passed the Blue Ridges, we were happy in meeting on the road with an honest traveller, who served us for a guide, and with whom we entered into conversation...¹⁵

Wm. Thomas Sherman
1604 NW 70th St.
Seattle, Washington 98117
206-784-1132
wts@gunjones.com
<http://www.gunjones.com> and http://www.scribd.com/wsherman_1

For Lee's Legion on Face Book:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/LeesLegion/>

¹⁵ *Travels*, Part II, ch. II, pp. 234-135.