

## THE VERDICT OF THE HISTORIANS

“On the subject of the history of the American revolution, you ask who shall write it? who can write it? and who ever will be able to write it? nobody; except merely it’s external facts. all it’s councils, designs and discussions, having been conducted by Congress with closed doors, and no member, as far as I know, having even made notes of them. these, which are the life and soul of history must for ever be unknown.”

~ Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, Aug. 10, 1815

“As to the history of the Revolution, my Ideas may be peculiar, perhaps singular. What do We Mean by the Revolution? The war? That was no part of the Revolution; it was only an Effect and Consequence of it. The Revolution was in the Minds of the People, and this as effected from 1760 to 1775, in the course of fifteen Years, before a drop of blood was shed at Lexington. The Records of thirteen Legislatures, the Pamphlets, Newspapers in all the Colonies, ought [to] be consulted during that Period, to ascertain the Steps by which the public Opinion was enlightened and informed concerning the Authority of Parliament over the Colonies.”

~ Adams to Jefferson, Aug. 24, 1815

Insofar as Adams had his own particular likes, dislikes, and preferences when it came to history, there was nothing in the least peculiar about having likes, dislikes, and preferences. All historians are *peculiar*; inasmuch as all history is to a large degree a matter of *chosen* material. And, yes, while we rightly value attempts at and ourselves strive for “scientific” history (or *more scientific* history), it is a delusion as fictitious as traditions of ancient gods and heroes to imagine that *any* history is wholly without its own hidden motives, agenda, and subjectivity. The historian chooses what is most useful and important to relate. Yet who is all wise and best placed to say what is truly *most* useful and *most* important? Assuredly, there are a number of things can to be assessed more or less objectively about a given history: such as the scope and breadth of the topic taken up; the historian’s vision and grasp of the same; the depth and completeness of his research; the cogency and sharpness of his analysis; and the clarity and eloquence of his writing. And yet which of these factors and criteria might be given a greater priority over another will vary from author to author, and as a result so will also the picture and image of the past that is presented. Granted Thucydides is, at large, decidedly more scientific than Herodotus. Yet it is wholly misleading to lump one into the category of true and the other into category of false. Each brings to his work signal truths and understandings about the past that are both worthwhile, penetrating, and authentic, and it is therefore an intelligent reader’s responsibility to discern such strengths and merits (where such are present); just as they must also be wary of a historian’s short-sightedness, potential misrepresentations, and factual and or philosophical lapses. The positivist and modernist notion that history can and must ever be entirely scientific is no less deceiving and mistaken as the idea that holy writ necessarily implies irreproachable or unqualified factual accuracy.<sup>1</sup> Rightly selected, different dishes can often supply healthful and necessary nutriment that another lacks; so that it is by way of combinations of them that we are most able and likely to secure the most desirable and beneficial results possible. The wisdom of both the historian and reader, therefore, lies in their choice and synthesis of material; much of which and to a significant extent unavoidably involves biased value judgments. As for *truth*? That Pilate answered well enough.

As could be expected, the earliest historical treatments of the American Revolutionary War were varied in both scientific scruple and ideological bent. More surprising to us now, even so, is how often opposing British and American partisans on sundry key points concurred. For instance, both, virtually without exception, viewed Washington with deference and respect. Not only Americans, but some British and Loyalist historians characterized the conflict as revolutionary, historically decisive, and even spoke of the “American Revolution.” Both remarked on the sometimes incompetence of British generals and the sometimes ironic lack of unity and cooperation among the Americans despite the latter’s resounding great victory.

As Arthur H. Shaffer outlines in his *The Politics of History: Writing the History of the American Revolution, 1783-1815* (1975), early Revolutionary War histories took on two forms; those with a national and international emphasis and those with a state and regional focus.<sup>2</sup> In giving his summation, he deems Jeremy Belknap, Samuel Williams, and David Ramsay the best American historians of the conflict, and yet

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<sup>1</sup> It is amusing to observe how relatively rare it is for latter day historians to attribute to 17<sup>th</sup> century and enlightenment thinkers ideas (say, for instance, with respect to the rights of man or the social contract) already introduced and well delved into by the Stoics, Cicero Seneca, and some church Fathers (see, for example, Tertullian on freedom of religion in *To Scapula*, ch. 2, p. 105, or Lactantius on the social contract at *Divine Institutes*, Book VI, ch. 10); as if such ideas were exclusively modern discoveries and inventions.

<sup>2</sup> We omit from consideration here strictly military histories and memoirs of the war.

of the three only Ramsay's was (formally) national in presentation. This is critical to observe because most tend to forget that, prior to the Federal Constitution, people both at home and abroad frequently had unclear and differing conceptions as to quite what the "United Colonies" or "United States" referred to. Although William Gordon's *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution* (1788) was a national history of the war, he viewed the Federal Constitution with disapproval; as, at first at least, did national chronicler Mercy Otis Warren. John Marshall (and here one is reminded of Jefferson's characterization of him as "crafty") got around this political quandary by making George Washington the centerpiece of his history.

Practically all the national and international historians relied heavily or availed themselves freely of John Almon's *Remembrancer*, and the *Annual Register's* accounts of the war; the latter written and or edited by Edmund Burke; and a praiseworthy model of thoroughness and disinterestedness -- though allowing, and as we have observed, no one can be *entirely* disinterested. Regrettably and unless we talk about reading between the lines, neither Gordon<sup>3</sup> nor Marshall takes the occasion of their work to furnish a summary view and wider perspective on the war and what it meant. Five of the early British and American national/international historians, on the other hand, including also in these five Italian Carlo Botta, did so. There has been no lack of interpreters since then about what the American Revolution meant and means, and not so unusually some will foolishly imply or speak as if none among the Revolutionary War contemporaries could possibly have grasped the greater reality and significance of what had taken place. Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, the first historians have insights to offer as, if not more so, revealing, profound, and relevant as any of later generations. Here then is some of what they wrote and said.

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*British author John Andrews' (1736-1809) History of the War with America, France, Spain, and Holland; commencing in 1775 and ending in 1783 (1785-1786), in four volumes, was, after The Annual Register, the first complete and comprehensive account of the war. He concludes this way.*

...Nor did the United States of America appear in the eye of many sagacious observers, to have obtained any real advantages by the alteration of their political system. Whatever might be their future destiny, it was evident that years would pass before they could arrive at a permanent and satisfactory settlement of their internal affairs, and recover from the disorder into which they had been thrown by the violent state of hostilities in which they had so long continued. Their commerce, on which they founded such extensive prospects, would probably long feel the want of the sustaining hand of Britain, and afford them complete proofs that their separation from this country was not attended with those beneficial consequences that had been held out to them with so much confidence.

Britain, on the other hand, though deprived of those Colonies she had planted and reared with so much care, and protected with so much glory, still remained an object of tenor and admiration to all her enemies. With a spirit- superior to all difficulties, and with resources, though deeply tried, yet far from exhausted, she still appeared great and respectable. From their consciousness of the strength and courage she yet possessed, her opponents were no less, if not even more desirous to put an end to the quarrel than herself. They fully saw she was able and determined to continue it, sooner than submit to a degradation of her character, by accepting of such terms as they had proposed in the height of their expectations to impose upon her.

The events of the last campaign dwelt ineffaceably on their reflections. The successes obtained by Great Britain, and the valour through which they were accomplished, had fixed the attention of all Europe, and extorted the applause even of many who had hitherto appeared indifferent to her fate: France, and

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon (1728-1807) was an English Congregationalist minister who served as pastor in Roxbury, Massachusetts, and was active on behalf of the radicals prior to and during the Revolutionary War. He acted as chaplain for the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, but later was discharged from the position for being overly political. He returned to England in 1786; at which time he commenced writing his history. Though as noted, his work contains no summation, he does manifest a certain interest in matters of freedom of conscience and religion. Coit Tyler, as might be expected, helpfully covers him at some length. See *Literary History of the American Revolution*, vol. 2, pp. 423-428.

Spain in particular, were not without apprehensions, that the other European powers not immediately interested in this contest, and beyond the reach of their influence, might at length open their eyes to the danger to which they exposed themselves, by permitting the House of Bourbon to carry on its designs' against England uncontrouled.

Swayed by these considerations, nor less by the domestic distresses arising from the deranged state of their finances, they came to the resolution of desisting from the vast pretensions they had formed, and of contenting themselves with the grant of independence to the Colonists of North America; leaving to these the more arduous task of rendering, if it were possible, this scission of the British empire beneficial to them, and detrimental to Britain.

Whatever strictures may have been pasted upon the terms agreed on between Great Britain and the other belligerent powers, there was a time when it was much doubted by the generality of people, both at home and abroad, whether peace could ever be purchased without making far greater sacrifices. Though the concessions made to the enemies of this country might perhaps have been less, they were by no means considered throughout Europe as disparaging to the British nation. It was thought, on the contrary, that the confederacy, by closing so readily with them, betrayed their apprehensions of what might prove the consequence of continuing hostilities, and from that motive determined to put a conclusion to them, upon the most favourable conditions they could procure.

Such, it was judged, were the reasons that induced them to enter into negociations for peace, under the ostensible mediation of the Emperor of Germany, and the Empress of Russia.

In this manner was terminated the most important war that had been waged since the discovery of the new world. Both hemispheres seemed intimately conscious how deeply they were concerned in its issue. In Europe, at its very commencement it was fully perceived, that were Britain to lose the sovereignty over her Colonies, a new system of politics must necessarily arise, which would probably diffuse itself in process of time to every part of the globe.

In this great revolution, the European states possessed of dominions in America, beheld an immense portion of the earth, hitherto subject to their obedience, and subservient to their designs, animated by the successful example of a numerous proportion of its inhabitants, to throw off this yoke, and claim independence. An event of this kind, by confining them to the limits of their own country, would of course produce an universal alteration of their politics and interests, and oblige them to adopt new maxims of conduct both in their domestic and foreign concerns.

Those powers, on the other hand, who had no territories in America, still would greatly participate in the effects of this mighty change, through the connexions already subsisting, and the new correspondence that would ensue in consequence of it, between the European nations, in every branch of political and commercial intercourse.

Great Britain, in the mean while, though seemingly the most liable to be affected by this immense lose of territory, would probably, through the excellence of her constitution, and the wisdom of her government, but, above all, through the genius, the industry, and the persevering disposition of her people, retain the advantages and consequence that had so long resulted from them, and still maintain the figure she had made among the European powers.

Among those truths which it most concerns mankind to know, the British nation had conspicuously proved, that the splendor and felicity of a state does by no means depend on the extent of its territorial possessions, so much as on the improvement of those opportunities which are derived from nature and situation. These were benefits of which no vicissitudes of fortune could deprive this country; and it was upon the unvarying experience of their past efficacy, the confidence of its future prosperity was founded.

This truth had at no time been so powerfully elucidated, as during this terrible contest. Dispossessed of those Colonies, upon which, it had been repeatedly affirmed, her greatness principally

depended; opposed by them with a force equal in strength and spirit to that of her most formidable enemies; assailed by these in every quarter; attacked by her ancient allies, and abandoned by all the world; in this tremendous situation, cut off from a variety of her former commercial resources, and relying wholly on herself, she still found means to confront the most powerful combination that ever was recorded in history.

She fought her foes by sea and land, wherever she expected to find them. The damages done to them far exceeded those she received. On the sea especially their trade was ruined, and their navies suffered losses incomparably superior to her own. The balance against them at the close of the war amounted to twenty-eight ships of the line, and thirty-seven frigates, carrying altogether near two thousand guns.

Having sustained this dreadful conflict with so much glory, and terminated it so honourably, without the least assistance or interference, against such an host of enemies, she came out of all her difficulties not only without the least blemish to her reputation, but with an increase of fame that raised her character to a higher degree of eminence than it had ever obtained before.<sup>4</sup>

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*In a lesser known letter to Jefferson, John Adams wrote, c.3-5 July 1813, "[I] have constantly expected that a Tory History of the Rise and progress of the Revolution would appear. And wished it. I would give more for it than for Marshall, Gordon, Ramsay and all the rest." In fact, there was such a work; namely, Pennsylvanian Charles Stedman's (1753-1812) The History Of The Origins, Progress And Termination Of The American War (1794.)*

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION is the grandest effect: of combination that has yet been exhibited to the world: A combination formed by popular representation and the art of printing. So vast a force as was exerted by Great Britain had never been sent to so great a distance, nor resisted by any power apparently so unequal to the contest. The military genius of Britain was unimpaired; she rose with elastic force under every blow; and seemed capable, by the immensity of her revenues, of wearying out, by perseverance, the adversity of fortune: But wisdom, vigour, and unanimity, were wanting in her public councils. The eloquence of some legislators in opposition to government; the narrow views of ministers at home; and the misconduct of certain commanders abroad, through a series of pusillanimity, procrastination, discord, and folly; brought this country, in spite of the gallant efforts of the British officers and soldiers by land and sea, the justice of their cause, the firmness of their sovereign, and the general vows of the people, to a crisis, which has not indeed been followed (so limited are our prospects into futurity) by all that calamity which was generally apprehended, but which, nevertheless, although the national character, for spirit and enterprise, was abundantly sustained by individuals, cannot be regarded otherwise than as a disgrace to the British: Since it exhibited, in our public conduct, the triumph of party over genuine patriotism, and a spirit of peculation and pleasure prevailing in too many instances over military discipline, and a sense of military honour. The British minister [Lord North] did not possess that towering genius which is alone fitted, in difficult and turbulent times, to overcome the seditious, and rouse the remiss to their duty. Though a man of fine talents, as well as an amiable disposition, he was constitutionally indolent: And, besides this, there was not that degree of cordiality and perfect unanimity that the minister was led to suppose amongst the friends of his majesty's government in America. It is, perhaps, a matter of doubt whether the loyalists were not, on the whole, too sanguine in their expectations. But it is the nature of men to cherish the hope of relief with an ardour proportioned to the greatness of their misfortunes.

On the whole, the British government did not proceed on any grand system that might control particular circumstances and events; studied to prolong their own authority by temporary expedients. They courted their adversaries at home, by a share of power and profit; and the public enemies of the state, by partial concessions. But these availed much more to the establishment of new claims, than all the declarations of parliamentary rights and royal prerogatives with which they were accompanied, did to maintain the rights of established government: For fads quickly pass into precedents; while manifesto is opposed to manifesto, and argument to argument. Had the measures adopted by Britain, been adopted in time, perhaps they would not have been adopted in vain. Their concessions, as well as their armaments,

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<sup>4</sup> *History of the War with America, France, Spain, and Holland*, vol. 4 (1786), pp. 411-416.

were always too late. Earlier concession, or an earlier application of that mighty force which was at the disposal of the commanders in chief in 1777, might perhaps have prevented or quashed the revolution.

While the natural strength and spirit of Great Britain were embarrassed and encumbered with the disadvantages and errors now enumerated, the Americans, in spite of a thousand difficulties and wants, by the energy of liberty, the contrivance of necessity, and the great advantages arising from the possession of the country, ultimately attained their object. The Americans, indeed, were not fired with that enthusiastic ardour, which nations of a warmer temperament, in all ages, have been wont to display in the cause of freedom. But they were guided by wise councils; they were steady and persevering; and, on all great occasions, not a little animated by the courage of general Washington, who has been proverbially called a Fabius, but in whose character courage, in fact, was a feature still more predominant than prudence. The American generals, having the bulk of the people on their side, were made acquainted with every movement of the British army, and enabled, for the most part, to penetrate their designs: To obtain intelligence, on which so much depends, was to the British commanders a matter of proportionable difficulty. The Americans had neither money nor credit: But they learned to stand in need only of a few things; to be contented with the small allowance that nature requires; to suffer, as well as to act. Their councils, animated by liberty, under the most distressing circumstances, took a grand and high-spirited course, and they were finally triumphant.

The Revolution of America, though predicted by philosophy, was generally considered as a remote contingency, if not a thing wholly ideal and visionary. Its immediate causes were altogether unforeseen and improbable. It came as a surprise upon the world: And men were obliged to conclude, either that the force of Great Britain was ill-directed, or that no invading army, in the present enlightened period, can be successful, in a country where the people are tolerably united.<sup>5</sup>

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*Pennsylvania born, but later South Carolina settled, physician David Ramsay (1749-1815) in 1789 published The History of the American Revolution in two volumes. He also wrote the separate, but related, The Revolution of South Carolina (1785) and a history of the United States (1816-1817).*

...The American revolution, on the one hand, brought forth great vices; but on the other hand, it called forth many virtues, and gave occasion for the display of abilities which, but for that event, would have been lost to the world. When the war began, the Americans were a mass of husbandmen, merchants, mechanics and fishermen; but the necessities of the country gave a spring to the active powers of the inhabitants, and set them on thinking, speaking and acting, in a line far beyond that to which they had been accustomed. The difference between nations is not so much owing to nature, as to education and circumstances. While the Americans were guided by the leading strings of the mother country, they had no scope nor encouragement for exertion. All the departments of government were established and executed for them, but not by them. In the years 1775 and 1776 the country, being suddenly thrown into a situation that needed the abilities of all its sons, these generally took their places, each according to the bent of his inclination. As they severally pursued their objects with ardor, a vast expansion of the human mind speedily followed. This displayed itself in a variety of ways. It was found that the talents for great stations did not differ in kind, but only in degree, from those which were necessary for the proper discharge of the ordinary business of civil society. In the bustle that was occasioned by the war, few instances could be produced of any persons who made a figure, or who rendered essential services, but from among those who had given specimens of similar talents in their respective professions. Those who from indolence or dissipation, had been of little service to the community in time of peace, were found equally unserviceable in war. A few young men were exceptions to this general rule. Some of these, who had indulged in youthful follies, broke off from their vicious courses, and on the pressing call of their country became useful servants of the public: but the great bulk of those, who were the active instruments of carrying on the revolution, were self-made, industrious men. These who by their own exertions, had established or laid a foundation for establishing personal independence, were most generally trusted, and most successfully

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<sup>5</sup> *The History Of The Origins, Progress And Termination Of The American War* (1794), ch. 46, pp. 446-449.

employed in establishing that of their country. In these times of action, classical education was found of less service than good natural parts, guided by common sense and sound judgement.

Several names could be mentioned of individuals who, without the knowledge of any other language than their mother tongue, wrote not only accurately, but elegantly, on public business. It seemed as if the war not only required, but created talents. Men whose minds were warmed with the love of liberty, and whose abilities were improved by daily exercise, and sharpened with a laudable ambition to serve their distressed country, spoke, wrote, and acted, with an energy far surpassing all expectations which could be reasonably founded on their previous acquirements. The Americans knew but little of one another, previous to the revolution. Trade and business had brought the inhabitants of their seaports acquainted with each other, but the bulk of the people in the interior country were unacquainted with their fellow citizens. A continental army, and Congress composed of men from all the States, by freely mixing together, were assimilated into one mass. Individuals of both, mingling with the citizens, disseminated principles of union among them. Local prejudices abated. By frequent collision asperities were worn off, and a foundation was laid for the establishment of a nation, out of discordant materials. Intermarriages between men and women of different States were much more common than before the war, and became an additional cement to the union. Unreasonable jealousies had existed between the inhabitants of the eastern and of the southern States: but on becoming better acquainted with each other, these in a great measure subsided. A wiser policy prevailed. Men of liberal minds led the way in discouraging local distinctions, and the great body of the people, as soon as reason got the better of prejudice, found that their best interests would be most effectually promoted by such practices and sentiments as were favourable to union. Religious bigotry had broken in upon the peace of various sects, before the American war. This was kept up by partial establishments, and by a dread that the church of England through the power of the mother country, would be made to triumph over all other denominations. These apprehensions were done away by the revolution. The different sects, having nothing to fear from each other, dismissed all religious controversy. A proposal for introducing bishops into America before the war, had kindled a flame among the dissenters; but the revolution was no sooner accomplished, than a scheme for that purpose was perfected, with the consent and approbation of all those sects who had previously opposed it. Pulpits which had formerly been shut to worthy men, because their heads had not been consecrated by the imposition of the hands of a Bishop or of a Presbytery, have since the establishment of independence, been reciprocally opened to each other, whensoever the public convenience required it. The world will soon see the result of an experiment in politics, and be able to determine whether the happiness of society is increased by religious establishments, or diminished by the want of them.

Though schools and colleges were generally shut up during the war, yet many of the arts and sciences were promoted by it. The geography of the United States before the revolution was but little known; but the marches of armies, and the operations of war, gave birth to many geographical enquiries and discoveries, which otherwise would not have been made. A passionate fondness for studies of this kind, and the growing importance of the country, excited one of its sons, the Rev. Mr. Morse, to travel through every State of the Union, and amass a fund of topographical knowledge, far exceeding any thing heretofore communicated to the public. The necessities of the States led to the study of Tactics, Fortification, Gunnery, and a variety of other arts connected with war, and diffused a knowledge of them among a peaceable people, who would otherwise have had no inducement to study them.

The abilities of ingenious men were directed to make farther improvements in the art of destroying an enemy. Among these, David Bushnell of Connecticut invented a machine for submarine navigation, which was found to answer the purpose of rowing horizontally, at any given depth under water, and of rising or sinking at pleasure. To this was attached a magazine of powder, and the whole was contrived in such a manner, as to make it practicable to blow up vessels by machinery under them. Mr. Bushnell also contrived sundry other curious machines for the annoyance of British shipping; but from accident they only succeeded in part. He destroyed one vessel in charge of Commodore Symonds, and a second one near the shore of Long-Island.

Surgery was one of the arts which was promoted by the war. From the want of hospitals and other aids, the medical men of America, had few opportunities of perfecting themselves in this art, the thorough knowledge of which can only be acquired by practice and observation. The melancholy events of battles,

gave the American students an opportunity of seeing, and learning more in one day, than they could have acquired in years of peace. It was in the hospitals of the United States, that Dr. Rush first discovered the method of curing the lock jaw by bark and wine, added to other invigorating remedies, which has since been adopted with success in Europe, as well as in the United States.

The science of government, has been more generally diffused among the Americans by means of the revolution. The policy of Great Britain, in throwing them out of her protection, induced a necessity of establishing independent constitutions. This led to reading and reasoning on the subject. The many errors that were at first committed by unexperienced statesmen, have been a practical comment on the folly of unbalanced constitutions, and injudicious laws. The discussions concerning the new constitution, gave birth to much reasoning on the subject of government, and particularly to a series of letters signed Publius, but really the work of Alexander Hamilton, in which much political knowledge and wisdom were displayed, and which will long remain a monument of the strength and acuteness of the human understanding in investigating truth.

When Great Britain first began her encroachments on the colonies there were few natives of America who had distinguished themselves as speakers or writers, but the controversy between the two countries multiplied their number.

The stamp act, which was to have taken place in 1765, employed the pens and tongues of many of the colonists, and by repeated exercise improved their ability to serve their country. The duties imposed in 1767, called forth the pen of John Dickinson, who in a series of letters signed a Pennsylvania Farmer, may be said to have sown the seeds of the revolution. For being universally read by the colonists, they universally enlightened them on the dangerous consequences, likely to result from their being taxed by the parliament of Great Britain.

In establishing American independence, the pen and the press had merit equal to that of the sword. As the war was the people's war, and was carried on without funds, the exertions of the army would have been insufficient to effect the revolution, unless the great body of the people had been prepared for it, and also kept in a constant disposition to oppose Great Britain. To rouse and unite the inhabitants, and to persuade them to patience for several years, under present sufferings, with the hope of obtaining remote advantages for their posterity, was a work of difficulty: This was effected in a great measure by the tongues and pens of the well informed citizens, and on it depended the success of military operations.

To enumerate the names of all those who were successful labourers in this arduous business, is impossible. The following list contains in nearly alphabetical order, the names of the most distinguished writers in favour of the rights of America.

John Adams, and Samuel Adams, of Boston; Bland, of Virginia; John Dickinson, of Pennsylvania; Daniel Dulany, of Annapolis; William Henry Drayton, of South-Carolina; Dr. Franklin, of Philadelphia; John Jay, and Alexander Hamilton, of New-York; Thomas Jefferson, and Arthur Lee of Virginia; Jonathan Hyman, of Connecticut; Governor Livingston, of New-Jersey; Dr. Mayhew, and James Otis, of Boston; Thomas Paine, Dr. Rush, Charles Thompson, and James Wilson, of Philadelphia; William Tennant, of South-Carolina; Josiah Quincy, and Dr. Warren, of Boston. These and many others laboured in enlightening their countrymen, on the subject of their political interests, and in animating them to a proper line of conduct, in defence of their liberties. To these individuals may be added, the great body of the clergy, especially in New-England. The printers of news-papers, had also much merit in the same way. Particularly Eedes [Edes] and Gill, of Boston; Holt, of New-York; Bradford, of Philadelphia; and Timothy, of South-Carolina.

The early attention which had been paid to literature in New-England, was also eminently conducive to the success of the Americans in resisting Great Britain. The university of Cambridge was founded as early as 1636, and Yale college in 1700. It has been computed, that in the year the Boston port act was passed, there were in the four eastern colonies, upwards of two thousand graduates of their colleges dispersed through their several towns, who by their knowledge and abilities, were able to influence and direct the great body of the people to a proper line of conduct, for opposing the encroachments of Great

Britain on their liberties. The colleges to the southward of New-England, except that of William and Mary in Virginia, were but of modern date; but they had been of a standing sufficiently long, to have trained for public service, a considerable number of the youth of the country. The college of New-Jersey, which was incorporated about 28 years before the revolution, had in that time educated upwards of 300 persons, who, with a few exceptions, were active and useful friends of independence. From the influence which knowledge had in securing and preserving the liberties of America, the present generation may trace the wise policy of their fathers, in erecting schools and colleges. They may also learn that it is their duty to found more, and support all such institutions. Without the advantages derived from these lights of this new world, the United States would probably have fallen in their unequal contest with Great Britain. Union which was essential to the success of their resistance, could scarcely have taken place, in the measures adopted by an ignorant multitude. Much less could wisdom in council, unity in system, or perseverance in the prosecution of a long and self denying war, be expected from an uninformed people. It is a well known fact, that persons unfriendly to the revolution, were always most numerous in those parts of the United States, which had either never been illuminated, or but faintly warmed by the rays of science. The uninformed and the misinformed, constituted a great proportion of those Americans, who preferred the leading strings of the Parent State, though encroaching on their liberties, to a government of their own countrymen and fellow citizens.

As literature had in the first instance favoured the revolution, so in its turn, the revolution promoted literature. The study of eloquence and of the Belles lettres, was more successfully prosecuted in America, after the disputes between Great Britain and her colonies began to be serious, than it ever had been before. The various orations, addresses, letters, dissertations and other literary performances which the war made necessary, called forth abilities where they were, and excited the rising generation to study arts, which brought with them their own reward. Many incidents afforded materials for the favourities of the muses, to display their talents. Even burlesquing royal proclamations, by parodies and doggerel poetry, had great effects on the minds of the people. A celebrated historian has remarked, that the song of Lillibullero forwarded the revolution of 1688 in England. It may be truly affirmed, that similar productions produced similar effects in America. Francis Hopkinson rendered essential service to his country, by turning the artillery of wit and ridicule on the enemy. Philip Freneau laboured successfully in the same way. Royal proclamations and other productions which issued from royal printing presses, were by the help of a warm imagination, arrayed in such dresses as rendered them truly ridiculous. Trumbull with a vein of original Hudibrastic humour, diverted his countrymen so much with the follies of their enemies, that for a time they forgot the calamities of war. Humphries [David Humphreys] twined the literary with the military laurel, by superadding the fame of an elegant poet, to that of an accomplished officer. Barlow increased the fame of his country and of the distinguished actors in the revolution, by the bold design of an epic poem ably executed, on the idea that Columbus foresaw in vision, the great scenes that were to be translated on the theatre of that new world, which he had discovered. Dwight struck out in the same line, and at an early period of life finished, an elegant work entitled the conquest of Canaan, on a plan which has rarely been attempted. The principles of their mother tongue, were first unfolded to the Americans since the revolution, by their countryman Webster. Pursuing an unbeaten track, he has made discoveries in the genius and construction of the English language, which had escaped the researches of preceding philologists. These and a group of other literary characters have been brought into view by the revolution. It is remarkable, that of these, Connecticut has produced an unusual proportion. In that truly republican state, every thing conspires to adorn human nature with its highest honours.

From the later periods of the revolution till the present time, schools, colleges, societies and institutions for promoting literature, arts, manufactures, agriculture, and for extending human happiness, have been increased far beyond any thing that ever took place before the declaration of independence. Every state in the union, has done more or less in this way, but Pennsylvania has done the most. The following institutions have been very lately founded in that state, and most of them in the time of the war or since the peace. An university in the city of Philadelphia; a college of physicians in the same place; Dickinson college at Carlisle; Franklin college at Lancaster; the Protestant Episcopal academy in Philadelphia; academies at York-town, at Germantown, at Pittsburgh and Washington; and an academy in Philadelphia for young ladies; societies for promoting political enquiries; for the medical relief of the poor, under the title of the Philadelphia Dispensary; for promoting the abolition of slavery, and the relief of free negroes unlawfully held in bondage; for propagating the gospel among the Indians, under the direction of



the United Brethren; for the encouragement of manufactures and the useful arts; for alleviating the miseries of prisons. Such have been some of the beneficial effects, which have resulted from that expansion of the human mind, which has been produced by the revolution, but these have not been without alloy.

To upset an established government unhinges many of those principles, which bind individuals to each other. A long time, and much prudence, will be necessary to reproduce a spirit of union and that reverence for government, without which society is a rope of sand. The right of the people to resist their rulers, when invading their liberties, forms the corner stone of the American republics. This principle, though just in itself, is not favourable to the tranquility of present establishments. The maxims and measures, which in the years 1774 and 1775 were successfully inculcated and adopted by American patriots, for upsetting the established government, will answer a similar purpose when recurrence is had to them by factious demagogues, for disturbing the freest governments that were ever devised.

War never fails to injure the morals of the people engaged in it. The American war, in particular, had an unhappy influence of this kind. Being begun without funds or regular establishments, it could not be carried on without violating private rights; and in its progress, it involved a necessity for breaking solemn promises; and plighted public faith. The failure of national justice, which was in some degree unavoidable, increased the difficulties of performing private engagements, and weakened that sensibility to the obligations of public and private honor, which is a security for the punctual performance of contracts.

In consequence of the war, the institutions of religion have been deranged, the public worship of the Deity suspended, and a great number of the inhabitants deprived of the ordinary means of obtaining that religious knowledge, which tames the fierceness, and softens the rudeness of human passions and manners. Many of the temples dedicated to the service of the most High, were destroyed, and these from a deficiency of ability and inclination, are not yet rebuilt. The clergy were left to suffer, without proper support. The depreciation of the paper currency was particularly injurious to them. It reduced their salaries to a pittance, so insufficient for their maintenance, that several of them were obliged to lay down their profession, and engage in other pursuits. Public preaching, of which many of the inhabitants were thus deprived, seldom fails of rendering essential service to society, by civilising the multitude and forming them to union. No class of citizens have contributed more to the revolution than the clergy, and none have hitherto suffered more in consequence of it. From the diminution of their number, and the penury to which they have been subjected, civil government has lost many of the advantages it formerly derived from the public instructions of that useful order of men.

On the whole, the literary, political, and military talents of the citizens of the United States have been improved by the revolution, but their moral character is inferior to what it formerly was. So great is the change for the worse, that the friends of public order are fondly called upon to exert their utmost abilities, in extirpating the vicious principles and habits, which have taken deep root during the late convulsions.<sup>6</sup>

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*Notwithstanding he was well aware of her work, John Adams did not mention Mercy Otis Warren (1728-1814) in his earlier quoted letter to Jefferson of 1813; evidently, at least in part, because he took offense at her having insinuated in her 1805 history that he was a monarchist. The following of hers emanates from the same.*

America has fought for the boon of liberty; she has successfully and honorably obtained it: she has now a rank among the nations: it was now the duty of the wife and patriotic characters who had by inconceivable labor and exertion obtained the prize, to guard on every side that it might not be sported away by the folly of the people, or the intrigue or deception of their rulers. They had to watch at all points, that her dignity was not endangered, nor her independence renounced, by too servilely copying either the fashionable vices or the political errors of those countries, where the inhabitants are become unfit for any character but that of master and slave.

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<sup>6</sup> *The History of the American Revolution* (1789), vol. II, Appendix no. IV, pp. 315-325.

Thus, after the dissolution of the American army, the withdrawing of the French troops, the retirement of general Washington, and the retreat of the fleets and armies of the king of Great Britain, a solemnity and stillness appeared, which was like the general pause of nature before the concussion of an earthquake. The state of men's minds seemed for a short time to be palsied by the retrospect of dangers encountered to break off the fetters, and the hazards surmounted to sweep away the claims, and cut the leading strings in which they had been held by the crown of Britain.

But though the connexion was now dissolved, and the gordian knot of union between Great Britain and America cut in sunder; though the independence of the United States was, by the treaty, clearly established on the broad basis of liberty; yet the Americans felt themselves in such a state of infancy, that as a child just learning to walk, they were afraid of their own movements. Their debts were unpaid, their governments unsettled, and the people out of breath by their long struggle for the freedom and independence of their country. They were become poor from the loss of trade, the neglect of their usual occupations, and the drains from every quarter for the support of a long and expensive war.

From the versatility of human affairs, and the encroaching spirit of man, it was yet uncertain when and how the states would be tranquillized, and the union consolidated, under wise, energetic, and free modes of government; or whether such, if established, would be administered agreeable to laws founded on the beautiful theory of republicanism, depicted in the closets of philosophers, and idolized in the imagination of most of the inhabitants of America.

It is indeed true, that from a general attention to early education, the people of the United States were better informed in many branches of literature, than the common classes of men in most other countries. Yet many of them had but a superficial knowledge of mankind; they were ignorant of the intrigues of courts, and though convinced of the necessity of government, did not fully understand its nature or origin; they had generally supposed there was little to do, but to shake off the yoke of foreign domination, and annihilate the name of *king*.

They were not generally sensible, that most established modes of strong government are usually the consequences of fraud or violence, against the systems of democratic theorists. They were not sensible, that from age to age the people are flattered, deceived, or threatened, until the hood-winked multitude set their own seals to a renunciation of their privileges, and with their own hands rivet the chains of servitude on their posterity. They were totally fearless of the intrigues or the ambition of their own countrymen, which might in time render fruitless the expense of their blood and their treasures. These they had freely lavished to secure their equality of condition, their easy modes of subsistence, and their exemption from public burdens beyond the necessary demands for the support of a free and equal government. But it was not long before they were awakened to new energies, by convulsions both at home and abroad.

New created exigencies, or more splendid modes of government that might hereafter be adopted, had not yet come within the reach of their calculations. Of these, few had yet formed any adequate ideas, and fewer indeed were sensible, that though the name of liberty delights the ear, and tickles the fond pride of man, it is a jewel much oftener the play-thing of his imagination, than a possession of real stability: it may be acquired to-day in all the triumph of independent feelings, but perhaps to-morrow the world may be convinced, that mankind know not how to make a proper use of the prize, generally bartered in a short time, as a useless bauble, to the first officious master that will take the burden from the mind, by laying another on the shoulders of ten-fold weight.

This is the usual course of human conduct, however painful the reflection may be to the patriot in retirement, and to the philosopher absorbed in theoretic disquisitions on human liberty, or the portion of natural and political freedom to which man has a claim. The game of deception is played over and over to mislead the judgment of men, and work on their enthusiasm, until by their own consent, hereditary crowns and distinctions are fixed, and some scion of royal descent is entailed upon them forever. Thus by habit they are ready to believe, that mankind in general are incapable of the enjoyment of that liberty which nature seems to prescribe, and that the mass of the people have not the capacity nor the right to choose their own masters.

The generous and disinterested of all nations must, however, wish to see the American republic fixed on such a stable basis, as to become the admiration of the world. Future generations will then look back with gratitude, on the era which wafted their ancestors from the European shores: they will never forget the energetic struggles of their fathers, to secure the natural rights of men. These are improved in society, and strengthened by civil compacts: these have been established in the United States by a race of independent spirits, who have freed their posterity from the feudal vassalage of hereditary lords. It is to be hoped, that the grim shades of despotic kings will never hover in the clouds of the American hemisphere, to bedizen the heads of the sons of Columbia, by imaginary ideas of the splendid beams of royalty.

Let it never be said of such a favored nation as America has been, as was observed by an ancient historian, on the rise, the glory, and the fall of the republic of Athens, that “the inconstancy of the people was the most striking characteristic of its history.” We have, with the historian who depicted the Athenian character, viewed with equal astonishment, the valor of our soldiers and the penetration of the statesmen of America. We wish for the duration of her virtue; we sigh at every appearance of decline; and perhaps, from a dread of deviations, we may be suspicious of their approach when none are designed.

It is a more agreeable anticipation to every humane mind, to contemplate the glory, the happiness, the freedom, and peace, which may for ages to come pervade this new-born nation, emancipated by the uncommon vigor, valor, fortitude, and patriotism of her soldiers and statesmen. They seemed to have been remarkably directed by the singer of Divine Providence, and led on from step to step beyond their own expectations, to exhibit to the view of distant nations, millions freed from the bondage of a foreign yoke, by that spirit of freedom, virtue, and perseverance, which they had generally displayed from their first emigrations to the wilderness, to the present day.

Let us here pause a few moments, and survey the vast continent of America, where the reflecting mind retrospects and realizes the beautiful description of the wide wilderness, before it became a fruitful field; before “the rivers were open in high places, and fountains in the midst of the vallies;” when He who created them pronounced, -- “I will plant the cedar, the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the sir-tree, and the pine, and the box-tree together; that all may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done. “this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.”\*<sup>7</sup>

Let the striking contrast, since the forest has been made to blossom as the rose, be viewed in such an impressive light, as to operate on the mind of every son and daughter of America, and lead to the uniform practice of public and private virtue.

From the education, the habits, and the general law of kindness, which has been nurtured among the children of those pious worthies who first left the pleasant and prolific shores of Europe, and took up their residence in the bosom of a wilderness, to secure the peaceful enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, it may reasonably be expected, that such a unanimity may long be preserved among their posterity, as to prevent the fatal havoc which dissension and war have brought on most nations found in the records of time.

The mind now rejoices to return from the scenes of war in which it has been immersed, and feels itself sufficiently collected to take an abstracted view of the condition of human nature. Here we might, before we leave the local circumstances of America, survey the contrasts exhibited in their conduct, by a world of beings who boast their rationality: we might indulge some moments of reflection and calm contemplation, on the infinite variety of combinations in the powers of the human mind, as well as the contrarieties that make up the character of man. But amidst the various images which present, in viewing the complex state of man, we will only add in this place, a few observations on their hostile dispositions toward each other.

It must appear among the wonders of Divine Providence, that a creature endowed with reason mould, through all ages and generations, be permitted the wanton destruction of his own species. The

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<sup>7</sup> [Footnote in original. \* Isaiah, 41st chap.]

barbarous butchery of his fellow mortals, exhibits man an absurd and ferocious, instead of a rational and humane being. May it not be among the proofs of some general lapse from the original law of rectitude, that no age or nation since the death of Abel, has been exempt from the havoc of war? Pride, avarice, injustice, and ambition, have set every political wheel in motion, to hurry out of existence one half the species by the hands of the other.

The folly of mankind, in making war on each other, is strongly delineated on the conclusion of almost every hostile dispute; and perhaps this folly was never more clearly exhibited than in that between Great Britain and her former colonies. Each circumstance will in future be weighed, when the world will judge of the great balance of advantage to the one country or the other, on the termination of the struggle.

A full detail of the sufferings of the English nation, in consequence of the absurd war upon their colonies, may be left to more voluminous writers; while we only observe, that Great Britain lost an extensive territory containing millions of subjects, the fruits of whose genius and industry she might have reaped for ages, had she not been avaricious of a revenue by methods, which neither the much boasted constitution of Englishmen, or the laws of prudence or equity, could justify....She lost the extensive commerce of a country growing in arts and population, to an astonishing degree....She lost the friendship of thousands, and created the alienation of millions, that may last forever.... She lost a nursery for seamen, that had replenished her navy from the first settlement of America....She lost, by the best British calculations, an hundred thousand of her best soldiers, either by sickness or the sword, and a proportionate number of most gallant officers\*<sup>8</sup>....She sunk an immensity of her treasures for the support of her armies and navies, for the execution of the chimerical project of subduing the colonies by arms, which by justice, protection, friendship, and a reciprocity of kind offices, would have been her's [sic] for ages.

And what has she gained by the contest? -- surely not an increase of honor or reputation. Corroborative evidence of these truths may be drawn from the testimony of British writers. A very sensible man\*<sup>9</sup> of this class has observed, that -- "Thus ended the most unfortunate war in which England has ever been engaged; a war commenced in the very wantonness of pride and folly, which had for its object to deprive America of the rights for which our ancestors have contended; a war, the professed object of which was, to levy a tax that would not have paid the collectors; a war conducted with the same weakness and incapacity on the part of the British ministry, with which it was commenced; which might in the early stages of the dispute have been avoided by the smallest concession; and which might have been terminated with honor, but for the incorrigible obstinacy and unparalleled folly of the worst administration that ever disgraced the country. This deplorable war has ended in the dismemberment of a considerable part of the British empire, cost the nation more money than the ever memorable campaigns of Marlborough, and the still more glorious war of lord Chatham; more indeed than all the wars in which Great Britain has been engaged since the revolution, to the peace of Aix la Chapelle."

On the other hand, it may be proper here to take a survey of the United States, and to view them on every ground. They have struggled with astonishing success for the rights of mankind, and have emancipated themselves from the shackles of foreign power. America has indeed obtained incalculable advantages by the revolution; but in the innumerable list of evils attendant on a state of war, she, as well as Great Britain, has lost her thousands of brave soldiers, veteran officers, hardy seamen, and meritorious citizens, that perished in the field, or in captivity, in prison-ships, and in the wilderness, since the beginning of the conflict. She has lost an immense property by the conflagration of her cities, and the waste of wealth by various other means. She has in a great measure lost her simplicity of manners, and those ideas of mediocrity which are generally the parent of content; the Americans are already in too many instances hankering after the sudden accumulation of wealth, and the proud distinctions of fortune and title. They have too far lost that general sense of moral obligation, formerly felt by all classes in America. The people have not indeed generally lost their veneration for religion, but it is to be regretted, that in the unlicensed liberality of opinion there have been some instances, where the fundamental principles of truth have been obscured. This may in some measure have arisen from their late connexions with other nations; and this

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<sup>8</sup> [Footnote in original. \* See British Encyclopædia, published 1792.]

<sup>9</sup> [Footnote in original. \* See View of the Reign of George the Third.]

circumstance may account for the readiness of many, to engraft foreign follies and crimes with their own weak propensities to imitation, and to adopt their errors and fierce ambition, instead of making themselves a national character, marked with moderation, justice, benignity, and all the mild virtues of humanity.

But when the feeds of revolution are planted, and the shoots have expanded, the various causes which contribute to their growth, and to the introduction of a change of manners, are too many to recount. The effervescence of party rage sets open the flood-gates of animosity, and renders it impossible to calculate with any degree of accuracy, on subsequent events. Not the most perspicacious human eye can foresee, amidst the imperious spirit of disunion, and the annihilation of former habits and connexions, the benefits that may result from the exertions of virtue, or the evils that may arise from problematic characters which come forward, the new-born offspring of confusion, and assume merit from the novelty of their projects, and the inscrutability of their designs. These are like hot-bed plants, started from extraneous causes; prematurely forced into existence, they are incapable of living but in the sunshine of meridian day. Such characters often hurry into irretrievable mischief, before time has ripened the systems of men of more principle and judgment.

Thus, after the conclusion of peace, and the acknowledgment of the independence of the United States by Great Britain, the situation of America appeared similar to that of a young heir, who had prematurely become possessed of a rich inheritance, while his inexperience and his new felt independence had intoxicated him so far, as to render him incapable of weighing the intrinsic value of his estate, and had left him without discretion or judgment to improve it to the best advantage of his family.

The inhabitants of the United States had much to experiment in the new rank they had taken, and the untrodden ground which they were now to explore, replete with difficulties not yet digested or apprehended by the most sagacious statesmen. They had obtained their independence by a long and perilous struggle against a powerful nation: we now view them just emancipated from a foreign yoke, the blessings of peace restored upon honorable terms, with the liberty of forming their own governments, enacting their own laws, choosing their own magistrates, and adopting manners the most favorable to freedom and happiness. Yet it is possible that their virtue is not sufficiently steadfast, to avail themselves of those superior advantages.

The restless nature of man is forever kindling a fire, and collecting fuel to keep the flame alive, that consumes one half the globe, without the smallest advantage to the other, either in a moral or in a political view. Men profit little by the observations, the sufferings, or the opinions of others: it is with nations as with individuals, they must try their own projects, and frequently learn wisdom only by their own mistakes. It is undoubtedly true, that all mankind learn more from experience than from intuitive wisdom: their foolish passions too generally predominate over their virtues; thus civil liberty, political and private happiness, are frequently bartered away for the gratification of vanity, or the aggrandizement of a few individuals, who have art enough to fascinate the undistinguishing multitude.

If the conduct of the United States should stand upon record, as a striking example of the truth of this observation, it must be remembered that this is not a trait peculiar to the character of America, it is the story of man; past ages bear testimony to its authenticity, and future events will convince the unbelieving. It is an unpleasing part of history, when "corruption begins to prevail, when degeneracy marks the manners of the people, and "weakens the sinews of the state." If this should ever become the deplorable situation of the United States, let some unborn historian, in a far distant day, detail the lapse, and hold up the contrast between a simple, virtuous, and -- free people, and a degenerate, servile race of beings, corrupted by wealth, effeminated by luxury, impoverished by licentiousness, and become the automatons of intoxicated ambition.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution* (1805), vol. III, ch. 30, pp. 322-337.

*Carlo Botta's (1766-1837) Storia della guerra dell'Indipendenza d'America ["History of the War of Independence of America"] (1809) was well known to and thought well of by both Adams and Jefferson; particularly the latter and who corresponded with the Piedmont historian. While not always reliable or else somewhat misinformed or misleading in his presentation of facts -- the deeds of Thomas Sumter and his partisans, for instance, receive peculiar highlighting in his version of the war in the South at the expense of other South Carolina fighters of equal importance -- Botta, a one time a supporter of Napoleon, is interested in applying the significance of the American Revolution to Europe; while making allusions to and comparisons with the French Revolution in the process.*

Such was the issue of a contest which during the course of eight consecutive years, chained the attention of the universe, and drew the most powerful nations of Europe to take a share in it. It is worthy of the observer to investigate the causes which have concurred to the triumph of the Americans, and baffled the efforts of their enemies. In the first place, they had the good fortune not to encounter opposition from foreign nations, and even to find among them benevolence, countenance, and succours. These favorable dispositions, while they inspired them with more confidence in the justice of their cause, redoubled also their spirit and energy. The coalition of several powerful nations, leagued against a single one, on account of some reform it wishes to establish in the frame of its government, and which threatens not only to defeat its object, but to deprive it of liberty and independence, usually causes its rulers to divest themselves of all moderation and prudence, and to have recourse to the most violent and extraordinary measures, which soon exhaust the resources of the country and excite discontent among its inhabitants; till, oppressed and harassed in every form by the officers of government, they are driven at last into civil convulsions, in which the strength of the community is consumed. And besides, these violent measures so disgust the people with the whole enterprise, that confounding the abuse of a thing with the use of it, they choose rather to retreat to the point from which they set out, or even further back, than to continue their progress towards the object originally proposed. Hence it is, that, if that object were liberty, they afterwards rush into despotism, preferring the tyranny of one to that of many. But to these fatal extremities, the Americans were not reduced, as well for the reason at first stated, the general favor of foreign states, as on account of the geographical position of their country, separated by vast seas from nations which keep on foot great standing armies, and defended on all other points by impenetrable forests, immense deserts and inaccessible mountains, and having in all this part no other enemy to fear except the Indian tribes, more capable of infesting and ravaging the frontiers, than of making any permanent encroachments. One of the most powerful causes of the success of the American revolution, should, doubtless, be sought in the little difference which existed between the form of government which they abandoned, and that which they wished to establish. It was not from absolute, but from limited monarchy, that they passed to the freedom of an elective government. Moral things, with men, are subject to the same laws as physical; *the laws of all nature*. Total and sudden changes cannot take place without causing disasters or death.

The royal authority, tempered by the very nature of the government, and still enfeebled by distance, scarcely made itself perceptible in the British colonies. When the Americans had shaken it off entirely, they experienced no considerable change. Royalty alone was effaced; the administration remained the same, and the republic found itself established without shock. Such was the advantage enjoyed by the American insurgents, whereas the people of other countries, who should undertake to pass all at once from absolute monarchy to the republican scheme, would find themselves constrained to overturn not only monarchical institutions, but all others, in order to substitute new ones in their stead. But such a subversion, cannot take place without doing violence to the opinions, usages, manners and customs of the greater number, nor even without grievously wounding their interests. Discontent propagates itself; democratic forms serve as the mere mask of royalty; the people discover that they have complained of imaginary evils; they eagerly embrace the first opportunity to measure back their steps, even to the very point which they started from.

Another material cause of the happy issue of this grand enterprise, will be seen in the circumspect and moderate conduct invariably pursued by that considerate and persevering people by whom it was achieved. Satisfied with having abolished royalty, they paused there, and discreetly continued to respect the ancient laws, which had survived the change. Thus they escaped the chagrin of having made their condition worse in attempting to improve it. They had the good sense to reflect, that versatility in counsels degrades the noblest cause, chills its partisans, and multiplies its opponents. There will always be more alacrity in a

career whose goal is fixed and apparent, than in that where it is concealed in obscurity. The Americans reared the tree, because they suffered it to grow; they gathered its fruit, because they allowed it to ripen. They were not seen to plume themselves on giving every day a new face to the state. Supporting evil with constancy, they never thought of imputing it to the defects of their institutions, nor to the incapacity or treason of those who governed them, but to the empire of circumstances. They were especially indebted for this moderation of character to the simplicity of their hereditary manners; few among them aspired to dignity and power.

They presented not the afflicting spectacle of friends dissolving their ancient intimacies, and even declaring a sudden war upon each other, because one was arrived at the helm of state without calling the other to it. With them patriotism triumphed over ambition. There existed royalists and republicans; but not republicans of different sects, rending with their dissensions the bosom of their country. There might be among them a diversity of opinions, but never did they abandon themselves to sanguinary feuds, proscriptions and confiscations. From their union resulted their victory; they immolated their enmities to the public weal, their ambition to the safety of the state, and they reaped the fruit of it; an ever memorable proof that if precipitate resolutions cause the failure of political enterprises, temper and perseverance conduct them to a glorious issue.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Storia della guerra dell'Indipendenza d'America* ["History of the War of Independence of America"] (1809), Book XIV, pp. 452-454; here translated in 1826 by George Alexander Otis.