

Thomas Paine

LETTER TO GEORGE WASHINGTON
PARIS, July 30, 1796.

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(Book of Wisdom)

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As censure is but awkwardly softened by apology, I shall offer to you no apology for this letter. The eventful crisis to which your double politics have conducted the affairs of your country, requires an investigation uncramped by ceremony.

There was a time when the fame of America, moral and political, stood fair and high in the world. The lustre of her revolution extended itself to every individual; and to be a citizen of America gave a title to respect in Europe. Neither meanness nor ingratitude had been mingled in the composition of her character. Her resistance to the attempted tyranny of England left her unsuspected of the one, and her open acknowledgment of the aid she received from France precluded all suspicion of the other. The Washington of politics had not then appeared.

At the time I left America (April, 1787) the Continental Convention, that formed the Federal Constitution was on the point of meeting. Since that time new schemes of politics, and new distinctions of parties, have arisen. The term *Antifederalist* has been applied to all those who combated the defects of that Constitution, or opposed the measures of your administration.

It was only to the absolute necessity of establishing some federal authority, extending equally over all the states, that an instrument so inconsistent as the present Federal Constitution is, obtained a suffrage. I would have voted for it myself, had I been in America, or even for a worse, rather than have had none, provided it contained the means of remedying its defects by the same appeal to the people by which it was to be established. It is always better policy to leave removable errors to expose themselves, than to hazard too much in contending against them theoretically.

I have introduced these observations, not only to mark the general difference between Antifederalist and Anti-constitutionalist, but to preclude the effect, and even the application, of the former of these terms to myself.

I declare myself opposed to several matters in the Constitution, particularly to the manner in which what is called the Executive is formed, and to the long duration of the Senate; and if I live to return

to America, I will use all my endeavors to have them altered.¹ I also declare myself opposed to almost the whole of your administration; for I know it to have been deceitful, if not perfidious, as I shall show in the course of this letter.

But as to the point of consolidating the states into a Federal Government, it so happens, that the proposition for that purpose came originally from myself. I proposed it in a letter to Chancellor Livingston in the spring of 1782, while that gentleman was Minister for Foreign Affairs. The five per cent duty recommended by Congress had then fallen through, having been adopted by some of the states, altered by others, rejected by Rhode Island, and repealed by Virginia after it had been consented to.

The proposal in the letter I allude to, was to get over the whole difficulty at once, by annexing a Continental legislative body to Congress; for in order to have any law of the Union uniform, the case could only be, that either Congress, as it then stood, must frame the law, and the states severally adopt it without alteration, or the states must erect a Continental legislature for the purpose.

Chancellor Livingston, Robert Morris, Gouverneur Morris, and myself, had a meeting at the house of Robert Morris on the subject of that letter. There was no diversity of opinion on the proposition for a Continental legislature: the only difficulty was on the manner of bringing the proposition forward. For my own part, as I considered it as a remedy in reserve, that could be applied at any time *when the states saw themselves wrong enough to be put right* (which did not appear to be the case at that time), I did not see the propriety of urging it precipitately, and declined being the publisher of it myself.

After this account of a fact, the leaders of your party will scarcely have the hardiness to apply to me the term of Anti-federalist. But I can go to a date and to a fact beyond this; for the proposition for electing a Continental convention to form the Continental Government is one of the subjects treated of in the pamphlet *Common Sense*.

¹ I have always been opposed to the mode of refining government up to an individual, or what is called a single executive. Such a man will always be the chief of a party. A plurality is far better: It combines the mass of a nation better together: And besides this, it is necessary to the manly mind of a republic that it loses the debasing idea of obeying an individual.

Having thus cleared away a little of the rubbish that might otherwise have lain in my way, I return to the point of time at which the present Federal Constitution and your administration began.

It was very well said by an anonymous writer in Philadelphia, about a year before that period, that *thirteen staves and ne'er a hoop will not make a barrel*, and as any kind of hooping the barrel, however defectively executed, would be better than none, it was scarcely possible but that considerable advantages must arise from the Federal hooping of the states. It was with pleasure that every sincere friend of America beheld, as the natural effect of union, her rising prosperity; and it was with grief they saw that prosperity mixed, even in the blossom, with the germ of corruption.

Monopolies of every kind marked your administration almost in the moment of its commencement. The lands obtained by the Revolution were lavished upon partisans; the interest of the disbanded soldier was sold to the speculator; injustice was acted under the pretense of faith; and the chief of the army became the patron of the fraud. From such a beginning what else could be expected, than what has happened? A mean and servile submission to the insults of one nation; treachery and ingratitude to another.

Some vices make their approach with such a splendid appearance, that we scarcely know to what class of moral distinctions they belong. They are rather virtues corrupted than vices, originally. But meanness and ingratitude have nothing equivocal in their character. There is not a trait in them that renders them doubtful. They are so originally vice, that they are generated in the dung of other vices, and crawl into existence with the filth upon their back. The fugitives have found protection in you, and the levee-room is their place of rendezvous.

As the Federal Constitution is a copy, though not quite so base as the original, of the form of the British Government, an imitation of its vices was naturally to be expected. So intimate is the connection between form and practice, that to adopt the one is to invite the other. Imitation is naturally progressive, and is rapidly so in matters that are vicious.

Soon after the Federal Constitution arrived in England, I received a letter from a female literary correspondent (a native of New York), very well mixed with friendship, sentiment, and politics. In my an-

swer to that letter, I permitted myself to ramble into the wilderness of imagination, and to anticipate what might hereafter be the condition of America. I had no idea that the picture I then drew was realizing so fast, and still less that Mr. Washington was hurrying it on. As the extract I allude to is congenial with the subject I am upon, I here transcribe it:

[The extract is the same as that given in a footnote, in the Memorial to Monroe.]

Impressed, as I was, with apprehensions of this kind, I had America constantly in my mind in all the publications I afterwards made. The first, and still more the second part of the *Rights of Man*, bear evident marks of this watchfulness; and the *Dissertation on First Principles of Government* [XXIV] goes more directly to the point than either of the former. I now pass on to other subjects.

It will be supposed by those into whose hands this letter may fall, that I have some personal resentment against you; I will therefore settle this point before I proceed further.

If I have any resentment, you must acknowledge that I have not been hasty in declaring it; neither would it now be declared (for what are private resentments to the public) if the cause of it did not unite itself as well with your public as with your private character, and with the motives of your political conduct.

The part I acted in the American Revolution is well known; I shall not here repeat it. I know also that had it not been for the aid received from France, in men, money and ships, that your cold and unmilitary conduct (as I shall show in the course of this letter) would in all probability have lost America; at least she would not have been the independent nation she now is. You slept away your time in the field, till the finances of the country were completely exhausted, and you have but little share in the glory of the final event. It is time, Sir, to speak the undisguised language of historical truth.

Elevated to the chair of the Presidency, you assumed the merit of everything to yourself, and the natural ingratitude of your constitution began to appear. You commenced your Presidential career by encouraging and swallowing the grossest adulation, and you traveled America from one end to the other to put yourself in the way of receiving it. You have as many addresses in your chest as James II. As

to what were your views, for if you are not great enough to have ambition you are little enough to have vanity, they cannot be directly inferred from expressions of your own; but the partisans of your politics have divulged the secret.

John Adams has said (and John it is known was always a speller after places and offices, and never thought his little services were highly enough paid) John has said, that as Mr. Washington had no child, the Presidency should be made hereditary in the family of Lund Washington. John might then have counted upon some sinecure himself, and a provision for his descendants. He did not go so far as to say, also, that the vice-presidency should be hereditary in the family of John Adams. He prudently left that to stand on the ground that one good turn deserves another.²

John Adams is one of those men who never contemplated the origin of government, or comprehended anything of first principles. If he had, he might have seen, that the right to set up and establish hereditary government, never did, and never can, exist in any generation at any time whatever; that it is of the nature of treason; because it is an attempt to take away the rights of all the minors living at that time, and of all succeeding generations. It is of a degree beyond common treason. It is a sin against nature. The equal right of every generation is a right fixed in the nature of things. It belongs to the son when of age, as it belonged to the father before him.

John Adams would himself deny the right that any former deceased generation could have to decree authoritatively a succession of governors over him, or over his children; and yet he assumes the pretended right, treasonable as it is, of acting it himself. His ignorance is his best excuse.

John Jay has said (and this John was always the sycophant of everything in power, from Mr. Girard in America, to Grenville in England) John Jay has said, that the Senate should have been appointed for life. He would then have been sure of never wanting a lucrative appointment for himself, and have had no fears about im-

² Two persons to whom John Adams said this, told me of it. The secretary of Mr. Jay was present when it was told to me.

peachment. These are the disguised traitors that call themselves Federalists.³

Could I have known to what degree of corruption and perfidy the administrative part of the Government of America had descended, I could have been at no loss to have understood the reservedness of Mr. Washington toward me, during my imprisonment in the Luxembourg. There are cases in which silence is a loud language. I will here explain the cause of that imprisonment, and return to Mr. Washington afterwards.

In the course of that rage, terror and suspicion, which the brutal letter of the Duke of Brunswick first started into existence in France, it happened that almost every man who was opposed to violence, or who was not violent himself, became suspected. I had constantly been opposed to everything which was of the nature or of the appearance of violence; but as I had always done it in a manner that showed it to be a principle founded in my heart, and not a political maneuver, it precluded the pretense of accusing me. I was reached, however, under another pretense.

A decree was passed to imprison all persons born in England; but as I was a member of the Convention, and had been complimented with the honorary style of Citizen of France, as Mr. Washington and some other Americans had been, this decree fell short of reaching me. A motion was afterwards made and carried, supported chiefly by Bourdon de l'Oise, for expelling foreigners from the Convention. My expulsion being thus effected, the two committees of Public Safety and of General Surety, of which Robespierre was the dictator, put me in arrestation under the former decree for imprisoning persons born in England. Having thus shown under what pretense the imprisonment was effected, I come to speak of such parts of the case as apply between me and Mr. Washington, either as a President or as an individual. I have always considered that a foreigner, such as I was in fact, with respect to France, might be a member of a convention for framing a constitution, without affecting his right of citizenship in the country to which he belongs, but not a member of a government after a constitution is formed; and I have uniformly acted upon this

³ If Mr. John Jay desires to know on what authority I say this, I will give that authority publicly when he chooses to call for it.

distinction. To be a member of a government requires that a person be in allegiance to that government and to the country locally. But a constitution, being a thing of principle, and not of action, and which, after it is formed, is to be referred to the people for their approbation or rejection, does not require allegiance in the persons forming and proposing it; and besides this, it is only to the thing after it be formed and established, and to the country after its governmental character is fixed by the adoption of a constitution, that the allegiance can be given.

No oath of allegiance or of citizenship was required of the members who composed the Convention: there was nothing existing in form to swear allegiance to. If any such condition had been required, I could not, as citizen of America in fact, though citizen of France by compliment, have accepted a seat in the Convention.

As my citizenship in America was not altered or diminished by anything I had done in Europe (on the contrary, it ought to be considered as strengthened, for it was the American principle of government that I was endeavoring to spread in Europe), and as it is the duty of every government to charge itself with the care of any of its citizens who may happen to fall under an arbitrary persecution abroad, and is also one of the reasons for which ambassadors or ministers are appointed—it was the duty of the Executive Department in America, to have made (at least) some inquiries about me, as soon as it heard of my imprisonment.

But if this had not been the case, that government owed it to me on every ground and principle of honor and gratitude. Mr. Washington owed it to me on every score of private acquaintance, I will not now say, friendship; for it has some time been known by those who know him, that he has no friendships; that he is incapable of forming any; he can serve or desert a man, or a cause, with constitutional indifference; and it is this cold, hermaphrodite faculty that imposed itself upon the world, and was credited for a while by enemies as by friends, for prudence, moderation and impartiality.

Soon after I was put into arrestation, and imprisonment in the Luxembourg, the Americans who were then in Paris went in a body to the bar of the Convention to reclaim me. They were answered by the then President Vadier, who has since absconded, that I was born in England, and it was signified to them, by some of the Committee

of General Surety, to whom they were referred (I have been told it was Billaud Varennes), that their reclamation of me was only the act of individuals, without any authority from the American Government.

A few days after this, all communication from persons imprisoned to any person without the prison was cut off by an order of the police. I neither saw, nor heard from, anybody for six months; and the only hope that remained to me was, that a new minister would arrive from America, to supersede Morris, and that he would be authorized to inquire into the cause of my imprisonment. But even this hope, in the state to which matters were daily arriving, was too remote to have any consolatory effect, and I contented myself with the thought that I might be remembered when it would be too late.

There is perhaps no condition from which a man conscious of his own uprightness cannot derive consolation; for it is in itself a consolation for him to find, that he can bear that condition with calmness and fortitude.

From about the middle of March (1794) to the fall of Robespierre July twenty-ninth (9th of Thermidor), the state of things in the prisons was a continued scene of horror. No man could count upon life for twenty-four hours. To such a pitch of rage and suspicion were Robespierre and his committee arrived, that it seemed as if they feared to leave a man living. Scarcely a night passed in which ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or more, were not taken out of the prison, carried before a pretended tribunal in the morning, and guillotined before night.

One hundred and sixty-nine were taken out of the Luxembourg one night, in the month of July, and one hundred and sixty of them guillotined. A list of two hundred more, according to the report in the prison, was preparing a few days before Robespierre fell. In this last list I have good reason to believe I was included. A memorandum in the hand-writing of Robespierre was afterwards produced in the Convention, by the committee to whom the papers of Robespierre were referred, in these words:

Demander que Thomas Payne soit décrète d'accusation pour les intérêts de l'Amérique, autant que de la France.

Demand that Thomas Paine be decreed of Accusation for the interests of America as well as of France.

I had then been imprisoned seven months, and the silence of the Executive part of the Government of America (Mr. Washington) upon the case, and upon everything respecting me, was explanation enough to Robespierre that he might proceed to extremities.

A violent fever which had nearly terminated my existence, was, I believe, the circumstance that preserved it. I was not in a condition to be removed, or to know of what was passing, or of what had passed, for more than a month. It makes a blank in my remembrance of life. The first thing I was informed of was the fall of Robespierre.

About a week after this, Mr. Monroe arrived to supersede Gouverneur Morris, and as soon as I was able to write a note legible enough to be read, I found a way to convey one to him by means of the man who lighted the lamps in the prison; and whose unabated friendship to me, from whom he had never received any service, and with difficulty accepted any recompense, puts the character of Mr. Washington to shame.

In a few days I received a message from Mr. Monroe, conveyed to me in a note from an intermediate person, with assurance of his friendship, and expressing a desire that I would rest the case in his hands. After a fortnight or more had passed, and hearing nothing further, I wrote to a friend who was then in Paris, a citizen of Philadelphia, requesting him to inform me what was the true situation of things with respect to me. I was sure that something was the matter; I began to have hard thoughts of Mr. Washington, but I was unwilling to encourage them.

In about ten days, I received an answer to my letter, in which the writer says, "Mr. Monroe has told me that he has no order [meaning from the President, Mr. Washington] respecting you, but that he (Mr. Monroe) will do everything in his power to liberate you; but, from what I learn from the Americans lately arrived in Paris, you are not considered, either by the American Government, or by the individuals, as an American citizen."

I was now at no loss to understand Mr. Washington and his new fangled faction, and that their policy was silently to leave me to fall in France. They were rushing as fast as they could venture, without awakening the jealousy of America, into all the vices and corruptions of the British Government; and it was no more consistent with the policy of Mr. Washington, and those who immediately surrounded him, than it was with that of Robespierre or of Pitt, that I should survive. They have, however, missed the mark, and the reaction is upon themselves.

Upon the receipt of the letter just alluded to, I sent a memorial to Mr. Monroe, which the reader will find in the appendix, and I received from him the following answer. It is dated the eighteenth of September, but did not come to hand till about the fourth of October. I was then falling into a relapse, the weather was becoming damp and cold, fuel was not to be had, and the abscess in my side (the consequence of these things, and of the want of air and exercise), was beginning to form, and which has continued immovable ever since. Here follows Mr. Monroe's letter:

Dear Sir:

PARIS, September 18, 1794.

I was favored soon after my arrival here with several letters from you, and more latterly with one in the character of a memorial upon the subject of your confinement; and should have answered them at the times they were respectively written had I not concluded you would have calculated with certainty upon the deep interest I take in your welfare, and the pleasure with which I shall embrace every opportunity in my power to serve you. I should still pursue the same course, and for reasons which must obviously occur, if I did not find that you are disquieted with apprehensions upon interesting points, and which justice to you and our country equally forbid you should entertain.

You mention that you have been informed you are not considered as an American citizen by the Americans, and that you have likewise heard that I had no instructions respecting you by the Government. I doubt not the person who gave you the information meant well, but I suspect he did not even convey accurately his own ideas on the first point: for I presume the most he could say is, that you had likewise become a French citizen, and which by no means deprived you of being an American one.

Even this, however, may be doubted, I mean the acquisition of citizenship in France, and I confess you have said much to show that it has not been made. I really suspect that this was all that the gentleman who wrote to you, and those Americans he heard speak upon the subject meant. It becomes my duty, however, to declare to you, that I consider you as an American citizen, and that you are considered universally in that character by the people of America. As such you are entitled to my attention; and so far as it can be given consistently with those obligations which are mutual between every government and even a transient passenger, you shall receive it.

The Congress have never decided upon the subject of citizenship in a manner to regard the present case. By being with us through the Revolution you are of our country as absolutely as if you had been born there, and you are no more of England, than every native American is. This is the true doctrine in the present case, so far as it becomes complicated with any other consideration. I have mentioned it to make you easy upon the only point which could give you any disquietude.

Is it necessary for me to tell you how much all your countrymen, I speak of the great mass of people, are interested in your welfare? They have not forgotten the history of their own Revolution and the difficult scenes through which they passed; nor do they review its several stages without reviving in their bosoms a due sensibility of the merits of those who served them in that great and arduous conflict. The crime of ingratitude has not yet stained, and I trust never will stain, our national character. You are considered by them as not only having rendered important service in our own Revolution, but as being, on a more extensive scale, the friend of human rights, and a distinguished and able advocate in favor of public liberty. To the welfare of Thomas Paine, the Americans are not, nor can they be, indifferent.

Of the sense which the President has always entertained of your merits, and of his friendly disposition toward you, you are too well assured to require any declaration of it from me. That I forward his wishes in seeking your safety is what I well know, and this will form an additional obligation on me to perform what I should otherwise consider as a duty.

You are, in my opinion, at present menaced by no kind of danger. To liberate you, will be an object of my endeavors, and as soon as possible. But you must, until that event shall be accomplished, bear your situation with patience and fortitude. You will likewise have the justice to recollect, that I am placed here upon a difficult theater,⁴ many important objects to attend to, with few to consult. It becomes me in pursuit of those to regulate my conduct in respect to each, as to the manner and the time, as will, in my judgment, be best calculated to accomplish the whole.

With great esteem and respect consider me personally your friend,

JAMES MONROE.

The part in Mr. Monroe's letter, in which he speaks of the President (Mr. Washington), is put in soft language. Mr. Monroe knew what Mr. Washington had said formerly, and he was willing to keep that in view. But the fact is, not only that Mr. Washington had given no orders to Mr. Monroe, as the letter [of Whiteside] stated, but he did not so much as say to him, inquire if Mr. Paine be dead or alive, in prison or out, or see if there be any assistance we can give him.

While these matters were passing, the liberations from the prisons were numerous; from twenty to forty in the course of almost every twenty-four hours. The continuance of my imprisonment after a new minister had arrived immediately from America, which was now more than two months, was a matter so obviously strange, that I found the character of the American Government spoken of in very unqualified terms of reproach; not only by those who still remained in prison, but by those who were liberated, and by persons who had access to the prison from without. Under these circumstances I wrote again to Mr. Monroe, and found occasion, among other things, to say: "It will not add to the popularity of Mr. Washington to have it believed in America, as it is believed here, that he connives at my imprisonment."

The case, so far as it respected Mr. Monroe, was, that having to get over the difficulties, which the strange conduct of Gouverneur

⁴ This I presume alludes to the embarrassments which the strange conduct of Gouverneur Morris had occasioned, and which, I well know, had created suspicions of the sincerity of Mr. Washington.

Morris had thrown in the way of a successor, and having no authority from the American Government to speak officially upon anything relating to me, he found himself obliged to proceed by unofficial means with individual members; for though Robespierre was overthrown, the Robespierrian members of the Committee of Public Safety still remained in considerable force, and had they found out that Mr. Monroe had no official authority upon the case, they would have paid little or no regard to his reclamation of me. In the meantime my health was suffering exceedingly, the dreary prospect of winter was coming on, and imprisonment was still a thing of danger.

After the Robespierrian members of the Committee were removed by the expiration of their time of serving, Mr. Monroe reclaimed me, and I was liberated the fourth of November. Mr. Monroe arrived in Paris the beginning of August before. All that period of my imprisonment, at least, I owe not to Robespierre, but to his colleague in projects, George Washington.

Immediately upon my liberation, Mr. Monroe invited me to his house, where I remained more than a year and a half; and I speak of his aid and friendship, as an open-hearted man will always do in such a case, with respect and gratitude.

Soon after my liberation, the Convention passed an unanimous vote to invite me to return to my seat among them. The times were still unsettled and dangerous, as well from without as within, for the coalition was unbroken, and the Constitution not settled. I chose, however, to accept the invitation; for as I undertake nothing but what I believe to be right, I abandon nothing that I undertake; and I was willing also to show, that, as I was not of a cast of mind to be deterred by prospects or retrospects of danger, so neither were my principles to be weakened by misfortune or perverted by disgust.

Being now once more abroad in the world, I began to find that I was not the only one who had conceived an unfavorable opinion of Mr. Washington; it was evident that his character was on the decline as well among Americans as among foreigners of different nations. From being the chief of the government, he had made himself the chief of a party; and his integrity was questioned, for his politics had a doubtful appearance. The mission of Mr. Jay to London, notwithstanding there was an American minister there already, had then taken place, and was beginning to be talked of. It appeared to others,

as it did to me, to be enveloped in mystery, which every day served either to increase or to explain into matter of suspicion.

In the year 1790, or about that time, Mr. Washington, as President, had sent Gouverneur Morris to London, as his secret agent to have some communication with the British Ministry. To cover the agency of Morris it was given out, I know not by whom, that he went as an agent from Robert Morris to borrow money in Europe, and the report was permitted to pass uncontradicted. The event of Morris's negotiation was, that Mr. Hammond was sent Minister from England to America, Pinckney from America to England, and himself Minister to France.

If, while Morris was Minister in France, he was not an emissary of the British Ministry and the coalesced powers, he gave strong reasons to suspect him of it. No one who saw his conduct, and heard his conversation, could doubt his being in their interest; and had he not got off the time he did, after his recall, he would have been in arrestation. Some letters of his had fallen into the hands of the Committee of Public Safety, and inquiry was making after him.

A great bustle had been made by Mr. Washington about the conduct of Genet in America, while that of his own minister, Morris, in France, was infinitely more reproachable. If Genet was imprudent or rash, he was not treacherous; but Morris was all three. He was the enemy of the French Revolution, in every stage of it. But notwithstanding this conduct on the part of Morris, and the known profligacy of his character, Mr. Washington in a letter he wrote to him at the time of recalling him on the complaint and request of the Committee of Public Safety, assures him, that though he had complied with that request, he still retained the same esteem and friendship for him as before.

This letter Morris was foolish enough to tell of; and, as his own character and conduct were notorious, the telling of it could have but one effect, which was that of implicating the character of the writer. Morris still loiters in Europe, chiefly in England; and Mr. Washington is still in correspondence with him. Mr. Washington ought, therefore, to expect, especially since his conduct in the affairs of Jay's Treaty, that France must consider Morris and Washington as men of the same description. The chief difference, however, between the two is (for in politics there is none), that the one is profligate enough to

profess an indifference about moral principles, and the other is prudent enough to conceal the want of them.

About three months after I was at liberty, the official note of Jay to Grenville on the subject of the capture of American vessels by the British cruisers, appeared in the American papers that arrived at Paris. Everything was of a-piece. Everything was mean. The same kind of character went to all circumstances public or private. Disgusted at this national degradation, as well as at the particular conduct of Mr. Washington to me, I wrote to him (Mr. Washington) on the twenty-second of February (1795) under cover to the then Secretary of State (Mr. Randolph), and intrusted the letter to Mr. Letombe, who was appointed French Consul to Philadelphia, and was on the point of taking his departure. When I supposed Mr. Letombe had sailed, I mentioned the letter to Mr. Monroe, and as I was then in his house, I showed it to him. He expressed a wish that I would recall it, which he supposed might be done, as he had learned that Mr. Letombe had not then sailed. I agreed to do so, and it was returned by Mr. Letombe under cover to Mr. Monroe.

The letter, however, will now reach Mr. Washington publicly in the course of this work.

About the month of September following, I had a severe relapse which gave occasion to the report of my death. I had felt it coming on a considerable time before, which occasioned me to hasten the work I had then in hand, the second part of the *Age of Reason*. When I had finished that work, I bestowed another letter on Mr. Washington, which I sent under cover to Mr. Benjamin Franklin Bache of Philadelphia. The letter is as follows:

SIR:

PARIS, September 20, 1795.

I had written you a letter by Mr. Letombe, French Consul, but, at the request of Mr. Monroe, I withdrew it, and the letter is still by me. I was the more easily prevailed upon to do this, as it was then my intention to have returned to America the latter end of the present year, 1795; but the illness I now suffer prevents me. In case I had come, I should have applied to you for such parts of your official letters (and of your private ones, if you had chosen to give them) as contained any instructions or directions either to Mr. Monroe, or to Mr. Morris, or to any other person respecting me;

cannot have been unknown to you, and the guarded silence you have observed upon that circumstance is what I ought not to have expected from you, either as a friend or as President of the United States.

You knew enough of my character to be assured that I could not have deserved imprisonment in France; and, without knowing anything more than this, you had sufficient ground to have taken some interest for my safety. Every motive arising from recollection of times past, ought to have suggested to you the propriety of such a measure. But I cannot find that you have so much as directed any inquiry to be made whether I was in prison or at liberty, dead or alive; what the cause of that imprisonment was, or whether there was any service or assistance you could render. Is this what I ought to have expected from America, after the part I had acted toward her, or will it redound to her honor or to yours, that I tell the story?

I do not hesitate to say, that you have not served America with more disinterestedness, or greater zeal, or more fidelity, than myself, and I know not if with better effect. After the Revolution of America was established I ventured into the new scenes of difficulties to extend the principles which that Revolution had produced, and you rested at home to partake of the advantages. In the progress of events, you beheld yourself a President in America, and me a prisoner in France. You folded your arms, forgot your friend, and became silent.

As everything I have been doing in Europe was connected with my wishes for the prosperity of America, I ought to be the more surprised at this conduct on the part of her Government. It leaves me but one mode of explanation, which is that *everything is not as it ought to be amongst you*, and that the presence of a man who might disapprove, and who had credit enough with the country to be heard and believed, was not wished for. This was the operating motive with the despotic faction that imprisoned me in France (though the pretense was, that I was a foreigner), and those that have been silent and inactive toward me in America, appear to me to have acted from the same motive. It is impossible for me to discover any other.

After the part I have taken in the Revolution of America, it is natural that I feel interested in whatever relates to her character and prosperity. Though I am not on the spot to see what is immediately acting there, I see some part of what she is acting in Europe. For your own sake, as well as for that of America, I was both surprised and concerned at the appointment of Gouverneur Morris to be Minister to France. His conduct has proved that the opinion I had formed of that appointment was well founded. I wrote that opinion to Mr. Jefferson at the time, and I was frank enough to say the same thing to Morris—*that it was an unfortunate appointment*. His prating, insignificant pomposity, rendered him at once offensive, suspected and ridiculous; and his total neglect of all business had so disgusted the Americans, that they proposed drawing up a protest against him.

He carried this neglect to such an extreme that it was necessary to inform him of it; and I asked him one day if he did not feel himself ashamed to take the money of the country, and do nothing for it? But Morris is so fond of profit and voluptuousness that he cares nothing about character. Had he not been removed at the time he was, I think his conduct would have precipitated the two countries into a rupture; and in this case, hated systematically as America is and ever will be by the British Government, and at the same time suspected by France, the commerce of America would have fallen a prey to both countries.

If the inconsistent conduct of Morris exposed the interest of America to some hazard in France, the pusillanimous conduct of Mr. Jay in England has rendered the American Government contemptible in Europe. Is it possible that any man who has contributed to the independence of America, and to free her from tyranny and injustice of the British Government, can read without shame and indignation the note of Jay to Grenville? It is a satire upon the Declaration of Independence, and an encouragement to the British Government to treat America with contempt. At the time this Minister of petitions was acting this miserable part, he had every means in his hands to enable him to have done his business as he ought. The success or failure of his mission depended upon the success or failure of the French arms.

Had France failed, Mr. Jay might have put his humble petition in his pocket and gone home. The case happened to be otherwise, and he has sacrificed the honor and perhaps all the advantages of it, by turning petitioner. I take it for granted that he was sent over to demand indemnification for the captured property; and, in this case, if he thought he wanted a preamble to his demand, he might have said, "That, though the Government of England might suppose itself under the necessity of seizing American property bound to France, yet that supposed necessity could not preclude indemnification to the proprietors, who, acting under the authority of their own government, were not accountable to any other." But Mr. Jay sets out with an implied recognition of the right of the British Government to seize and condemn: for he enters his complaint against the *irregularity* of the seizures and the condemnation, as if they were reprehensible only by not being *conformable* to the *terms* of the proclamation under which they were seized.

Instead of being the envoy of a government, he goes over like a lawyer to demand a new trial. I can hardly help thinking that Grenville wrote that note himself and Jay signed it; for the style of it is domestic and not diplomatic. The term, His Majesty, used without any descriptive epithet, always signifies the King, whom the Minister that speaks represents. If this sinking of the demand into a petition was a juggle between Grenville and Jay, to cover the indemnification, I think it will end in another juggle, that of never paying the money, and be made use of afterwards to preclude the right of demanding it: for Mr. Jay has virtually disowned the right *by appealing to the magnanimity of His Majesty against the capturers*. He has made this magnanimous majesty the umpire in the case, and the Government of the United States must abide by the decision. If, Sir, I turn some part of this business into ridicule, it is to avoid the unpleasant sensation of serious indignation.

Among other things which I confess I do not understand, is the proclamation of neutrality. This has always appeared to me as an assumption on the part of the executive not warranted by the Constitution. But passing this over, as a disputable case, and considering it only as political, the consequence has been that of sustaining the losses of war, without the balance of reprisals. When the profession of neutrality, on the part of America, was answered by

hostilities on the part of Britain, the object and intention of that neutrality existed no longer; and to maintain it after this, was not only to encourage further insults and depredations, but was an informal breach of neutrality toward France, by passively contributing to the aid of her enemy. That the Government of England considered the American Government as pusillanimous, is evident from the increasing insolence of the conduct of the former toward the latter, till the affair of General Wayne. She then saw that it might be possible to kick a government into some degree of spirit.

So far as the proclamation of neutrality was intended to prevent a dissolute spirit of privateering in America under foreign colors, it was undoubtedly laudable; but to continue it as a government neutrality, after the commerce of America was made war upon, was submission and not neutrality. I have heard so much about this thing called neutrality that I know not if the ungenerous and dishonorable silence (for I must call it such) that has been observed by your part of the Government toward me, during my imprisonment, has not in some measure arisen from that policy.

Though I have written you this letter, you ought not to suppose it has been an agreeable undertaking to me. On the contrary, I assure you, it has caused me some disquietude. I am sorry you have given me cause to do it; for, as I have always remembered your former friendship with pleasure, I suffer a loss by your depriving me of that sentiment.

Thomas Paine

That this letter was not written in very good temper, is very evident; but it was just such a letter as his conduct appeared to me to merit, and everything on his part since has served to confirm that opinion. Had I wanted a commentary on his silence, with respect to my imprisonment in France, some of his faction have furnished me with it. What I here allude to, is a publication in a Philadelphia paper, copied afterwards into a New York paper, both under the patronage of the Washington faction, in which the writer, still supposing me in prison in France, wonders at my lengthy respite from the scaffold; and he marks his politics still further, by saying:

It appears, moreover, that the people of England did not relish his (Thomas Paine's) opinions quite so well as he expected, and

that for one of his last pieces, as destructive to the peace and happiness of their country (meaning, I suppose, the *Rights of Man*), they threatened our knight-errant with such serious vengeance, that, to avoid a trip to Botany Bay, he fled over to France, as a less dangerous voyage.

I am not refuting or contradicting the falsehood of this publication, for it is sufficiently notorious; neither am I censuring the writer: on the contrary, I thank him for the explanation he has incautiously given of the principles of the Washington faction. Insignificant, however, as the piece is, it was capable of having some ill effects, had it arrived in France during my imprisonment, and in the time of Robespierre; and I am not uncharitable in supposing that this was one of the intentions of the writer?⁵

I have now done with Mr. Washington on the score of private affairs. It would have been far more agreeable to me, had his conduct been such as not to have merited these reproaches. Errors or caprices of the temper can be pardoned and forgotten; but a cold deliberate crime of the heart, such as Mr. Washington is capable of acting, is not to be washed away. I now proceed to other matter.

After Jay's note to Grenville arrived in Paris from America, the character of everything that was to follow might be easily foreseen; and it was upon this anticipation that my letter of February the twenty-second was founded. The event has proved that I was not mistaken, except that it has been much worse than I expected.

It would naturally occur to Mr. Washington, that the secrecy of Jay's mission to England, where there was already an American minister, could not but create some suspicion in the French Government; especially as the conduct of Morris had been notorious, and the intimacy of Mr. Washington with Morris was known.

The character which Mr. Washington has attempted to act in the world, is a sort of non-describable, chameleon-colored thing, called *prudence*. It is, in many cases, a substitute for principle, and is so nearly allied to hypocrisy that it easily slides into it. His genius for prudence furnished him in this instance with an expedient that

⁵ I know not who the writer of the piece is, but some of the Americans say it is Phineas Bond, an American refugee, but now a British consul; and that he writes under the signature of Peter Skunk or Peter Porcupine, or some such signature.

served, as is the natural and general character of all expedients, to diminish the embarrassments of the moment and multiply them afterwards; for he authorized it to be made known to the French Government, as a confidential matter (Mr. Washington should recollect that I was a member of the Convention, and had the means of knowing what I here state), he authorized it, I say, to be announced, and that for the purpose of preventing any uneasiness to France on the score of Mr. Jay's mission to England, that the object of that mission, and of Mr. Jay's authority, was restricted to that of demanding the surrender of the western posts, and indemnification for the cargoes captured in American vessels.

Mr. Washington knows that this was untrue; and knowing this, he had good reason to himself for refusing to furnish the House of Representatives with copies of the instructions given to Jay, as he might suspect, among other things, that he should also be called upon for copies of instructions given to other ministers, and that, in the contradiction of instructions, his want of integrity would be detected. Mr. Washington may now, perhaps, learn, when it is too late to be of any use to him, that a man will pass better through the world with a thousand open errors upon his back, than in being detected in one sly falsehood. When one is detected, a thousand are suspected.

The first account that arrived in Paris of a treaty being negotiated by Mr. Jay (for nobody suspected any), came in an English newspaper, which announced that a treaty *offensive* and *defensive* had been concluded between the United States of America and England. This was immediately denied by every American in Paris, as an impossible thing; and though it was disbelieved by the French, it imprinted a suspicion that some underhand business was going forward.⁶ At length the treaty itself arrived, and every well-affected American blushed with shame.

⁶ It was the embarrassment into which the affairs and credit of America were thrown at this instant by the report above alluded to, that made it necessary to contradict it, and that by every means arising from opinion or founded upon authority. The Committee of Public Safety, existing at that time, had agreed to the full execution, on their part, of the treaty between America and France notwithstanding some equivocal conduct on the part of the American Government not very consistent with the good faith of an ally; but they were not in a disposition to be imposed upon by a counter-treaty. That Jay had no instructions beyond the points above stated, or

It is curious to observe, how the appearance of characters will change, while the root that produces them remains the same. The Washington faction having waded through the slough of negotiation, and while it amused France with professions of friendship contrived to injure her, immediately throws off the hypocrite, and assumes the swaggering air of a bravado. The party papers of that imbecile administration were on this occasion filled with paragraphs about *Sovereignty*. A poltroon may boast of his sovereign right to let another kick him, and this is the only kind of sovereignty shown in the treaty with England. But those daring paragraphs, as Timothy Pickering well knows, were intended for France; without whose assistance, in men, money, and ships, Mr. Washington would have cut but a poor figure in the American war. But of his military talents I shall speak hereafter.

I mean not to enter into any discussion of any article of Jay's Treaty; I shall speak only upon the whole of it. It is attempted to be justified on the ground of its not being a violation of any article or articles of the treaty pre-existing with France. But the sovereign right of explanation does not lie with George Washington and his man Timothy; France, on her part, has, at least, an equal right: and when nations dispute, it is not so much about words as about things.

A man, such as the world calls a sharper, and versed as Jay must be supposed to be in the quibbles of the law, may find a way to enter into engagements, and make bargains, in such a manner as to cheat some other party, without that party being able, as the phrase is, *to take the law of him*. This often happens in the cabalistical circle of what is called law. But when this is attempted to be acted on the national scale of treaties, it is too despicable to be defended, or to be

none that could possibly be construed to extend to the length the British treaty goes, was a matter believed in America, in England, and in France; and without going to any other source it followed naturally from the message of the President to Congress, when he nominated Jay upon that mission. The secretary of Mr. Jay came to Paris soon after the treaty with England had been concluded, and brought with him a copy of Mr. Jay's instructions, which he offered to show to me as a justification of Jay. I advised him, as a friend, not to show them to anybody, and did not permit him to show them to me. "Who is it," said I to him, "that you intend to implicate as censurable by showing those instructions? Perhaps that implication may fall upon your own government." Though I did not see the instructions, I could not be at a loss to understand that the American Administration had been playing a double game.

permitted to exist. Yet this is the trick upon which Jay's Treaty is founded, so far as it has relation to the treaty pre-existing with France. It is a counter-treaty to that treaty and perverts all the great articles of that treaty to the injury of France, and makes them operate as a bounty to England, with whom France is at war.

The Washington Administration shows great desire that the treaty between France and the United States be preserved. Nobody can doubt their sincerity upon this matter. There is not a British minister, a British merchant, or a British agent or sailor in America, that does not anxiously wish the same thing. The treaty with France serves now as a passport to supply England with naval stores and other articles of American produce, while the same articles, when coming to France, are made contraband or seizable by Jay's Treaty with England. The treaty with France says, that neutral ships make neutral property, and thereby gives protection to English property on board American ships; and Jay's Treaty delivers up French property on board American ships to be seized by the English. It is too paltry to talk of faith, of national honor, and of the preservation of treaties, while such a barefaced treachery as this stares the world in the face.

The Washington Administration may save itself the trouble of proving to the French Government its *most faithful* intentions of preserving the treaty with France; for France has now no desire that it should be preserved. She had nominated an envoy extraordinary to America, to make Mr. Washington and his Government a present of the treaty, and to have no more to do with that, or with him. It was at the same time officially declared to the American Minister at Paris, that *the French Republic had rather have the American Government for an open enemy than a treacherous friend*. This, Sir, together with the internal distractions caused in America, and the loss of character in the world, is the eventful crisis, alluded to in the beginning of this letter, to which your double politics have brought the affairs of your country. It is time that the eyes of America be opened upon you.

How France would have conducted herself toward America and American commerce, after all treaty stipulations had ceased, and under the sense of services rendered and injuries received, I know not. It is, however, an unpleasant reflection, that in all national quarrels, the innocent, and even the friendly part of the community, become involved with the culpable and the unfriendly; and as the ac-

counts that arrived from America continued to manifest an invariable attachment in the general mass of the people to their original ally, in opposition to the newfangled Washington faction—the resolutions that had been taken in France were suspended. It happened also, fortunately enough, that Gouverneur Morris was not minister at this time.

There is, however, one point that still remains in embryo, and which, among other things, serves to show the ignorance of Washington treaty-makers, and their inattention to pre-existing treaties, when they were employing themselves in framing or ratifying the new treaty with England.

The second article of the treaty of commerce between the United States and France says:

The most Christian King and the United States engage mutually, not to grant any particular favor to other nations in respect of commerce and navigation that shall not immediately become common to the other party, who shall enjoy the same favor freely, if the concession was freely made, or on allowing the same compensation if the concession was conditional.

All the concessions, therefore, made to England by Jay's Treaty are, through the medium of this second article in the pre-existing treaty, made to France, and become ingrafted into the treaty with France, and can be exercised by her as a matter of right, the same as by England.

Jay's Treaty makes a concession to England, and that unconditionally, of seizing naval stores in American ships, and condemning them as contraband. It makes also a concession to England to seize provisions and other articles in American ships. Other articles are all other articles, and none but an ignoramus, or something worse, would have put such a phrase into a treaty. The condition annexed in this case is, that the provisions and other articles so seized, are to be paid for at a price to be agreed upon.

Mr. Washington, as President, ratified this treaty after he knew the British Government had recommended an indiscriminate seizure of provisions and all other articles in American ships; and it is now known that those seizures were made to fit out the expedition going

to Quiberon Bay, and it was known beforehand that they would be made.

The evidence goes also a good way to prove that Jay and Grenville understood each other upon that subject. Mr. Pinckney, when he passed through France on his way to Spain, spoke of the recommencement of the seizures as a thing that would take place. The French Government had by some means received information from London to the same purpose, with the addition, that the recommencement of the seizures would cause no misunderstanding between the British and American Governments.

Grenville, in defending himself against the opposition in Parliament, on account of the scarcity of corn, said (see his speech at the opening of the Parliament that met October 29, 1795) that the supplies for the Quiberon expedition were furnished out of the American ships, and all the accounts received at that time from England stated that those seizures were made under the treaty.

After the supplies for the Quiberon expedition had been procured, and the expected success had failed, the seizures were countermanded; and had the French seized provision vessels going to England, it is probable that the Quiberon expedition could not have been attempted.

In one point of view, the treaty with England operates as a loan to the English Government. It gives permission to that Government to take American property at sea, to any amount, and pay for it when it suits her; and besides this, the treaty is in every point of view a surrender of the rights of American commerce and navigation, and a refusal to France of the rights of neutrality. The American flag is not now a neutral flag to France; Jay's Treaty of surrender gives a monopoly of it to England.

On the contrary, the treaty of commerce between America and France was formed on the most liberal principles, and calculated to give the greatest encouragement to the infant commerce of America. France was neither a carrier nor exporter of naval stores or provisions. Those articles belonged wholly to America, and they had all the protection in that treaty which a treaty could give. But so much has that treaty been perverted, that the liberality of it on the part of France, has served to encourage Jay to form a counter-treaty with England; for he must have supposed the hands of France tied up by

her treaty with America, when he was making such large concessions in favor of England.

The injury which Mr. Washington's Administration has done to the character as well as to the commerce of America, is too great to be repaired by him. Foreign nations will be shy of making treaties with a government that has given the faithless example of perverting the liberality of a former treaty to the injury of the party with whom it was made.

In what a fraudulent light must Mr. Washington's character appear in the world, when his declarations and his conduct are compared together! Here follows the letter he wrote to the Committee of Public Safety, while Jay was negotiating in profound secrecy this treacherous treaty:

George Washington, President of the United States of America, to the Representatives of the French people, members of the Committee of Public Safety of the French Republic, the great and good friend and ally of the United States.

On the intimation of the wish of the French Republic that a new Minister should be sent from the United States, I resolved to manifest my sense of the readiness with which my request was fulfilled [that of recalling Genet], by immediately fulfilling the request of your Government [that of recalling Morris].

It was some time before a character could be obtained, worthy of the high office of expressing the attachment of the United States to the happiness of our allies, and drawing closer the bonds of our friendship. I have now made choice of James Monroe, one of our distinguished citizens, to reside near the French Republic, in quality of Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America.

He is instructed to bear to you our *sincere solicitude for your welfare, and to cultivate with zeal the cordiality so happily subsisting between us*. From a knowledge of his fidelity, probity, and good conduct, I have entire confidence that he will render himself acceptable to you, and give effect to your desire of preserving and *advancing, on all occasions, the interest and connection of the two nations*. I beseech you, therefore, to give full credence to whatever he shall say to you on the part of the United States, and *most of all,*

when he shall assure you that your prosperity is an object of our affection. And I pray God to have the French Republic in His holy keeping.

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

Was it by entering into a treaty with England to surrender French property on board American ships to be seized by the English, while English property on board American ships was declared by the French treaty not to be seizable, *that the bonds of friendship between America and France were to be drawn the closer?*

Was it by declaring naval stores contraband when coming to France, while by the French treaty they were not contraband when going to England, *that the connection between France and America was to be advanced?*

Was it by opening the American ports to the British navy in the present war, from which ports the same navy had been expelled by the aid solicited from France in the American war (and that aid gratuitously given) that the gratitude of America was to be shown, and the solicitude spoken of in the letter demonstrated?

As the letter was addressed to the Committee of Public Safety, Mr. Washington did not expect it would get abroad in the world, or be seen by any other eye than that of Robespierre, or be heard by any other ear than that of the Committee; that it would pass as a whisper across the Atlantic, from one dark chamber to the other, and there terminate. It was calculated to remove from the mind of the Committee all suspicion upon Jay's mission to England, and, in this point of view, it was suited to the circumstances of the movement then passing; but as the event of that mission has proved the letter to be hypocritical, it serves no other purpose of the present moment than to show that the writer is not to be credited.

Two circumstances serve to make the reading of the letter necessary in the Convention. The one was, that they who succeeded on the fall of Robespierre, found it most proper to act with publicity; the other, to extinguish the suspicions which the strange conduct of Morris had occasioned in France.

When the British treaty, and the ratification of it by Mr. Washington, was known in France, all further declarations from him of his good disposition as an ally and friend, passed for so many ciphers;

but still it appeared necessary to him to keep up the farce of declarations. It is stipulated in the British treaty, that commissioners are to report at the end of two years, on the case of neutral ships making neutral property. In the meantime, neutral ships do not make neutral property, according to the British treaty, and they do according to the French treaty.

The preservation, therefore, of the French treaty became of great importance to England, as by that means she can employ American ships as carriers, while the same advantage is denied to France. Whether the French treaty could exist as a matter of right after this clandestine perversion of it, could yet but give some apprehensions to the partisans of the British treaty, and it became necessary to them to make up, by fine words, what was wanting in good actions.

An opportunity offered to that purpose. The Convention, on the public reception of Mr. Monroe, ordered the American flag and the French flags to be displayed unitedly in the hall of the Convention. Mr. Monroe made a present of an American flag for the purpose. The Convention returned this compliment by sending a French flag to America, to be presented by their Minister, Mr. Adet, to the American Government. This resolution passed long before Jay's Treaty was known or suspected: it passed in the days of confidence; but the flag was not presented by Mr. Adet till several months after the treaty had been ratified. Mr. Washington made this the occasion of saying some fine things to the French Minister; and the better to get himself into tune to do this, he began by saying the finest things of himself.

Born, Sir (said he), in a land of liberty; having early learned its value; *having* engaged in a perilous conflict to defend it; *having*, in a word, devoted the best years of my life to secure its permanent establishment in my own country; *my* anxious recollections, *my* sympathetic feelings, and *my* best wishes are irresistibly excited, whenever, in any country, I see an oppressed people unfurl the banner of freedom.

Mr. Washington, having expended so many fine phrases upon himself, was obliged to invent a new one for the French, and he calls them "wonderful people!" The coalesced powers acknowledged as much.

It is laughable to hear Mr. Washington talk of his sympathetic feelings, who has always been remarked, even among his friends, for not having any. He has, however, given no proofs of any to me. As to the pompous encomiums he so liberally pays to himself, on the score of the American Revolution, the reality of them may be questioned; and since he has forced them so much into notice, it is fair to examine his pretensions.

A stranger might be led to suppose, from the egotism with which Mr. Washington speaks, that himself, and himself only, had generated, conducted, completed, and established the Revolution: in fine, that it was all his own doing.

In the first place, as to the political part, he had no share in it; and, therefore, the whole of that is out of the question with respect to him. There remains, then, only the military part; and it would have been prudent in Mr. Washington not to have awakened inquiry upon that subject. Fame then was cheap; he enjoyed it cheaply; and nobody was disposed to take away the laurels that, whether they were *acquired* or not, had been *given*.

Mr. Washington's merit consisted in constancy. But constancy was the common virtue of the Revolution. Who was there that was inconstant? I know but of one military defection, that of Arnold; and I know of no political defection, among those who made themselves eminent when the Revolution was formed by the Declaration of Independence. Even Silas Deane, though he attempted to defraud, did not betray.

But when we speak of military character, something more is to be understood than constancy; and something more ought to be understood than the Fabian system of doing nothing. The nothing part can be done by anybody. Old Mrs. Thompson, the housekeeper of headquarters (who threatened to make the sun and the wind shine through Rivington of New York), could have done it as well as Mr. Washington. Deborah would have been as good as Barak.

Mr. Washington had the nominal rank of commander-in-chief, but he was not so in fact. He had, in reality, only a separate command. He had no control over, or direction of, the army to the northward under Gates, that captured Burgoyne; nor of that to the South under [Nathanael] Greene, that recovered the Southern States. The nominal rank, however, of commander-in-chief, served to throw upon him the

lustre of those actions, and to make him appear as the soul and center of all military operations in America.

He commenced his command June, 1775, during the time the Massachusetts army lay before Boston, and after the affair of Bunker Hill. The commencement of his command was the commencement of inactivity. Nothing was afterwards done, or attempted to be done, during the nine months he remained before Boston.

If we may judge from the resistance made at Concord, and afterwards at Bunker Hill, there was a spirit of enterprise at that time, which the presence of Mr. Washington chilled into cold defense. By the advantage of a good exterior he attracts respect, which his habitual silence tends to preserve; but he has not the talent of inspiring ardor in an army. The enemy removed from Boston in March, 1776, to wait for reinforcements from Europe, and to take a more advantageous position at New York.

The inactivity of the campaign of 1775, on the part of General Washington, when the enemy had a less force than in any other future period of the war, and the injudicious choice of positions taken by him in the campaign of 1776, when the enemy had its greatest force, necessarily produced the losses and misfortunes that marked that gloomy campaign. The positions taken were either islands or necks of land. In the former, the enemy, by the aid of their ships, could bring their whole force against a part of General Washington's, as in the affair of Long Island; and in the latter, he might be shut up as in the bottom of a bag.

This had nearly been the case at New York, and it was so in part; it was actually the case at Fort Washington; and it would have been the case at Fort Lee, if General Greene had not moved precipitately off, leaving everything behind, and by gaining Hackensack bridge, got out of the bag of Bergen Neck.

How far Mr. Washington, as general, is blamable for these matters, I am not undertaking to determine; but they are evidently defects in military geography. The successful skirmishes at the close of that campaign (matters that would scarcely be noticed in a better state of things) make the brilliant exploits of General Washington's seven campaigns. No wonder we see so much pusillanimity in the *President*, when we see so little enterprise in the *General*!

The campaign of 1777 became famous, not by anything on the part of General Washington, but by the capture of General Burgoyne, and the army under his command, by the Northern Army at Saratoga, under General Gates. So totally distinct and unconnected were the two armies of Washington and Gates, and so independent was the latter of the authority of the nominal commander-in-chief, that the two generals did not so much as correspond, and it was only by a letter of General (since Governor) Clinton, that General Washington was informed of that event. The British took possession of Philadelphia this year, which they evacuated the next, just time enough to save their heavy baggage and fleet of transports from capture by the French Admiral d'Estaing, who arrived at the mouth of the Delaware soon after.

The capture of Burgoyne gave an eclat in Europe to the American arms, and facilitated the alliance with France. The eclat, however, was not kept up by anything on the part of General Washington. The same unfortunate languor that marked his entrance into the field, continued always. Discontent began to prevail strongly against him, and a party was formed in Congress, while sitting at York Town, in Pennsylvania, for removing him from the command of the army. The hope, however, of better times, the news of the alliance with France, and the unwillingness of showing discontent, dissipated the matter.

Nothing was done in the campaigns of 1778, 1779, 1780, in the part where General Washington commanded, except the taking of Stony Point by General Wayne. The Southern States in the meantime were over-run by the enemy. They were afterwards recovered by General Greene, who had in a very great measure created the army that accomplished that recovery.

In all this General Washington had no share. The Fabian system of war, followed by him, began now to unfold itself with all its evils; but what is Fabian war without Fabian means to support it? The finances of Congress depending wholly on emissions of paper money, were exhausted. Its credit was gone. The Continental treasury was not able to pay the expense of a brigade of wagons to transport the necessary stores to the army, and yet the sole object, the establishment of the Revolution, was a thing of remote distance. The time I am now speaking of is in the latter end of the year 1780.

In this situation of things it was found not only expedient, but absolutely necessary, for Congress to state the whole case to its ally. I knew more of this matter (before it came into Congress or was known to General Washington), of its progress, and its issue, than I choose to state in this letter. Colonel John Laurens was sent to France as an envoy extraordinary on this occasion, and by a private agreement between him and me I accompanied him. We sailed from Boston in the *Alliance* frigate, February 11, 1781. France had already done much in accepting and paying bills drawn by Congress. She was now called upon to do more. The event of Colonel Laurens's mission, with the aid of the venerable minister, Franklin, was, that France gave in money, as a present, six millions of livres, and ten millions more as a loan, and agreed to send a fleet of not less than thirty sail of the line, at her own expense, as an aid to America. Colonel Laurens and myself returned from Brest the first of June following, taking with us two millions and a half of livres (upwards of one hundred thousand pounds sterling) of the money given, and convoying two ships with stores.

We arrived at Boston the twenty-fifth of August following. De Grasse arrived with the French fleet in the Chesapeake at the same time, and was afterwards joined by that of Barras, making thirty-one sail of the line. The money was transported in wagons from Boston to the bank at Philadelphia, of which Mr. Thomas Willing, who has since put himself at the head of the list of petitioners in favor of the British treaty, was then president. And it was by the aid of this money, and this fleet, and of Rochambeau's army, that Cornwallis was taken; the laurels of which have been unjustly given to Mr. Washington. His merit in that affair was no more than that of any other American officer.

I have had, and still have, as much pride in the American Revolution as any man, or as Mr. Washington has a right to have; but that pride has never made me forgetful whence the great aid came that completed the business. Foreign aid (that of France) was calculated upon at the commencement of the Revolution. It is one of the subjects treated of in the pamphlet *Common Sense*, but as a matter that could not be hoped for, unless independence was declared. The aid, however, was greater than could have been expected.

It is as well the ingratitude as the pusillanimity of Mr. Washington, and the Washington faction, that has brought upon America the loss of character she now suffers in the world, and the numerous evils her commerce has undergone, and to which it is yet exposed. The British Ministry soon found out what sort of men they had to deal with, and they dealt with them accordingly; and if further explanation was wanting, it has been fully given since, in the snivelling address of the New York Chamber of Commerce to the President, and in that of sundry merchants of Philadelphia, which was not much better.

When the Revolution of America was finally established by the termination of the war, the world gave her credit for great character; and she had nothing to do but to stand firm upon that ground. The British Ministry had their hands too full of trouble to have provoked a rupture with her, had she shown a proper resolution to defend her rights. But encouraged as they were by the submissive character of the American Administration, they proceeded from insult to insult, till none more were left to be offered. The proposals made by Sweden and Denmark to the American Administration were disregarded. I know not if so much as an answer has been returned to them.

The Minister *penitentiary* (as some of the British prints called him), Mr. Jay, was sent on a pilgrimage to London, to make up all by penance and petition. In the meantime the lengthy and drowsy writer of the pieces signed CAMILLUS held himself in reserve to vindicate everything; and to sound in America the tocsin of terror upon the inexhaustible resources of England. Her resources, says he, are greater than those of all the other powers. This man is so intoxicated with fear and finance, that he knows not the difference between *plus* and *minus*—between a hundred pounds in hand, and a hundred pounds worse than nothing.

The commerce of America, so far as it had been established by all the treaties that had been formed prior to that by Jay, was free, and the principles upon which it was established were good. That ground ought never to have been departed from. It was the justifiable ground of right, and no temporary difficulties ought to have induced an abandonment of it. The case is now otherwise. The ground, the scene, the pretensions, the everything, are changed. The commerce of America is, by Jay's Treaty, put under foreign dominion. The sea

is not free for her. Her right to navigate it is reduced to the right of escaping; that is, until some ship of England or France stops her vessels, and carries them into port. Every article of American produce, whether from the sea or the land, fish, flesh, vegetable, or manufacture, is, by Jay's Treaty, made either contraband or seizable. Nothing is exempt.

In all other treaties of commerce, the article which enumerates the contraband articles, such as firearms, gunpowder, etc., is followed by another article which enumerates the articles not contraband: but it is not so in Jay's Treaty. There is no exempting article. Its place is supplied by the article for seizing and carrying into port; and the sweeping phrase of "provisions and other articles" includes everything. There never was such a base and servile treaty of surrender since treaties began to exist.

This is the ground upon which America now stands. All her rights of commerce and navigation are to begin anew, and that with loss of character to begin with. If there is sense enough left in the heart to call a blush into the cheek, the Washington Administration must be ashamed to appear. And as to you, Sir, treacherous in private friendship (for so you have been to me, and that in the day of danger) and a hypocrite in public life, the world will be puzzled to decide whether you are an apostate or an impostor; whether you have abandoned good principles, or whether you ever had any.

THOMAS PAINE