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Address

To the Electors and the Electors of the Electors of President and Vice-President of the United States.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

TO remove at once all doubt and establish confidence between us, I think it proper to state that I was born an American, and that my forefathers has been born in this country for more than an hundred and fifty years. I add to this, that I have been no indifferent observer of public affairs for near twenty years, & from the result of all I have seen, I am a hearty friend of the present government of my country. Under these circumstances, I take the freedom to lay before you a few, as I think, timely observations upon the most important of all elections; and if the candor and uprightness which I feel, do not sensibly appear in the whole course of them, I shall be more unfortunate than I anticipate.

It is a humiliating thought, and if the rest of the world had not at present abundant cause to be ashamed of itself, it would be, in the eyes of foreign nations, a disgraceful fact, that on every election of any importance among us, we have a struggle which does not at all depend upon the merit of candidates; but upon their supposed principles; and, as if something were necessary to set off and finish this public spectacle to the highest advantage, the bone of contention is our existence as a nation, which one party is willing to preserve, and the other seems to think it best to destroy. This, though we cannot see it, is the figure we make to distinguished foreigners; and the mischief is that by length of time and by taking various names and forms in obedience to all the cravings of individual vanity, and the meanest qualities of our hearts, the true nature of a contest which would have shocked us, had it been abrupt and definite at first, has not only pervaded our whole system even to the minutest ramifications, but by this diffusion it has become so incorporated and imperceptible as even to be denied. It is nothing strange for men to slide into situations of which they are unconscious, and which they themselves detect and deplore; but the insidious nature of this propensity makes it worthy of more frequent notice than it receives, as there is nothing more important to us than that we should be often apprized of what we are least likely to perceive. I envision that a dispute in this country, which at different times has taken all the current and even some antique forms, has usually degenerated, without our being constantly aware of the gradual progression, to a quarrel about our national existence. It is to be hoped that there is honesty enough left to make us shudder at this alarming transition, and to tread back the dizzy path, to some right position, with suitable humility.

It is a pity that there is such a cloud over what is called the public mind at times; at least one cannot but feel sorry for it, though it is the will of Heaven; but I believe a man must be made of extraordinary materials who, at this present time, cannot be impressed with some kind of what I say. There is, however, another disgraceful truth which must lay down before I return to evidence, which is that human nature is a great self-deceiver in the concern which it takes in our public affairs; and that the desire of self-interest is overpowering to a torpid indifference than to any active interest and choice. It is by means of this prevalence and super-natural elevation that we resign ourselves to the direction of chance or design, and having observed that things go right enough a little while, trouble ourselves no more about them. If it were possible to teach the sluggish faculties of this sort of people to the degree of reflection and comparison, still there is more to be done; for it is

to be feared that, after all, our point, who displaced all the old patriotism in general is but a re-mote interest, and that, with the exception of a few, mankind sacrificed to almost any of their baser passions more frequently and with himself, and put in his own fold a better will than to this. But, while that few continue virtuous and active, it is to be hoped that the true faith will be preserved as well in politics as other things.

If four years ago it was suspected that Mr. Jefferson was in full concert with the French revolutionists, that he was at the head of the malcontents in the United States, that their principle was aversion to the constitution, that they had set out to overturn it, and that they had made some progress in the public mind for this purpose; I say, if this was their suspected, it is now certain. Four years silence under such accusations would be enough to imply the difficulty of refuting them. Surely that party have been often enough challenged to the honorable open field. They do not profess to want men of abilities, at least foreigners; and yet they have not and I do not say it at a venture, replied at all to the charges against them, which are quite intelligible & pretty black. Perhaps it is not accurate to say so; for in the course of these four years their writers have so far overcome that fear which made them tremble even at the imputation, as to begin to acknowledge the truth of it, and even avow and prefer for contemplating the destruction of the constitution, and the return of the old confederation. The same liberality which has arrived to say that all religion is false, certainly would make no scruple of a mere civil ordinance; and as there is no sacrifice where there is nothing sacred, neither, I suppose, ought there to be any hanging for rebellion. They do not therefore reply within these four years, but they admit: in four years more, they will not only admit, but they will contend: and so by degrees we shall be cheated of what we took to be strong ground, that they were aiming at the constitution, and be reduced by their effrontery to a mere denial of the expediency of destroying it. And if they can familiarize this question to the public eye and ear, the business, like that of religion, is half done; for what we have once prostituted we no longer respect.

There is in what is called the new philosophy a most mean, unworthy and ignorant procedure. It admits man to be imperfect, and that all which he can do is imperfect, yet it affects to learn the best he can do, and advocate some hidden good. It admits, our nature, and ridicules us for not being above it. It contemns the want of help and means, and it rejects all that is offered or can be devised. These philosophers, in times which they pretend to despise, would have deserved and would have been treated with contempt.

Mr. Jefferson, in his letter to Mazzei, which cannot be too much read and meditated on, fully declares, in 1796, that "WE SHALL BREAK THESE LILLIPUTIAN TIES," meaning, beyond all controversy, and as I fear before, without denial, THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES. Now this declaration is not only a declaration, but a declaration which Mr. Jefferson ought to be known, because this man.—Are we wretched or hides patriot and philosopher? Is there not some other destiny more proper for him than to be President of the United States? May he not very well deprecate the "British form of government?" Surely this is the time when we see the operation of desolation hanging over our government has been so administered, whether you take it for granted in as stormy a season of scripture or wit. As well might a wolf have charge of a lamb, as as to acquire and preserve our own Mr. Jefferson to have any share in good opinion, and that of all nations the government after such a declaration. Certainly instead of it, he ought to be bound to keep the peace, and for the sake of a clearer conception of the thing, let us suppose him President with such principles, and with followers in abundance to provide for. Governor M'Kean might be brought as a case are at the same time, the very things

which the enemies of "the lilliputian ties," presuming on the prejudices of the people, have artfully considered as approaches to monarchy, affecting to view the constitution as no less formidable by its present friends than by themselves, that is, estimating it as nothing at all, on a "lilliputian tie." In the first place, I take it, we shall not be willing to put ourselves on this equal ground of supposing the constitution to be no barrier, but that we intend to maintain it with all firmness and care, and therefore I shall wait to have it shown where in the government have departed from it, taking it for granted that if all we enjoy is coming out with it, there is no more to be said; but what is in the constitution, and that if there is any there, it is very much for our advantage of course.

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The being said, let us recur to the situation of this country before the constitution existed, when we were in an almost hopeless state of adversity and danger. The principal part of those who will decide this election need only be referred to this, though God only knows how those will be convinced who are to judge in future cases, unless by wisdom hardly to be expected, or mercy that is much more certain. The constitution has combined the best of all the states, and of all the individual governments, and produced out of the chaos of warring states, a happy, vigorous and easy condition, which under it we find ourselves capable of any undertaking which the general prosperity may require. We govern ourselves, and can, in some measure, govern external circumstances by means of the preferment of our connection and our unity of action. All our public and private concerns are in a state of safety, and there is no distrust or difficulty of any kind which is not inseparable from the common lot of humanity. The single states may produce their natural wishes and their interests without obstruction and with none to make them afraid. Every individual has the widest possible range of freedom, and constantly enjoys complete security of property and pleasures. The particular acts of government which have produced the several items which altogether compose this singular state of felicity it is not for such an essay as this to enumerate; it is enough for the present purpose that nobody can deny it. We justly, we enjoy, and we can do every thing which a free republic ever did or ever will. What more can be demanded?

Further, Mr. Jefferson, in his letter to Mazzei, speaks of "the republican government which carried us through the dangers of the war." In the present case we have also a republican government which has carried us through dangers of a much more threatening kind, and such as the former one could never resist. The slightest recollection must convince us, that had the confederation remained, we should long before this time have been torn to pieces by the late European convulsions. It must be left to every one to imagine the miseries which we have escaped by virtue of the "lilliputian tie," and which very fairly are to be taken into the sum total of our present happy condition.

Let us now recur to the advantages of perseverance in one political system. If Mr. Jefferson is elected, we must expect he will labour at some radical change of present principles and measures without delay, as an introduction of his more effectual reform. It may be such as to throw all the present supporters of government into the opposition, for he affects to beaverse to all "banks and public funds," and is much pleased with the figure of "the tempestuous sea." It is not at all difficult for a President of the United States of his disappointed temper to do all this, although the Legislature should remain tolerably pure. But we have already a good and beneficent system, and if we re-elect Mr. Adams, it will be pursued, improved, and perfected. This must be better than to suffer the wreck now, and have to begin our fortunes again.

An we know by the example of France what fickleness and partial scepticism are introduced by fish unsteadiness: the fatal consequences of which can no more be exactly calculated than the precise sum of the ruins occasioned by several succeeding earthquakes. It is sufficient to say that we are happy & secure under the late and present administration. It would be worse than children's play, because this would be a sort of suicide, to reverse entirely what gives us so much satisfaction, without even a precious pretence, and without a possibility of forestalling the evil. Are we never to become a people? Shall we never be permitted by ambition or wickedness to acquire some national character or other? Surely there is power in the present constitution to prevent the progress of degeneracy, and we need of a total revolution to effect it as yet. Mr. Adams is rather an ingenious teacher or example. If Americans less he allowed to fasten themselves upon the models of Washington and Adams, I think we shall not be ashamed to look down upon our posterity. Can you predict as much of a new order of things which is begotten in mortification and must be brought forth in infidelity, which is fostered with imaginary thoughts, and riots in giddy pleasure? Is it not madness in great political concerns to put to hazard even a tolerable situation? If there in our unparalleled prosperity, barely as it were for want of employment, we kick away the foundation of all we have or hope for in the world, farewell most heartily to all republican wishes forever and ever!

But are we to suppose that foreign nations will look on with indifference while we make havock of sport with principle as if it were of no value? Our interest must imperiously demands that having at length prevailed to establish a good understanding with the other powers in the world, we should labour to preserve it. Are we yet to learn that there is nothing they will so much oppose or improve as a versatile disposition in us? Shall we ever be trusted again with a single foreign nation influential in our council, if we cannot adhere to some great rational provisions? Not that we have become domesticated with intrigues and deals through the world, and have our governments of kindred from all hands of inferior or inferior pretensions; but cabinets where the nature of men is understood, and where a liberal policy is conducted under the eye of sober reflection, most immediately come to the attitude of self-interest. Our good reception abroad is founded on the promise which our present form of government gives of good behaviour. We have a class of acceptable agents at the several courts. Would it not be the height of wantonness to choose a man who would recall them all, and very possibly send a set selected upon such principles as to excite indignity if not provoke repulse? I think of these things in their whole complicated consequence.

It is wholly inconceivable why it should be desired to place Mr. Jefferson in the President's chair. To all inquiries of this kind we have nothing but weak, inadequate or evasive answers; the sum total of which is nothing in amount, and protected by insignificance. If you ask why Mr. Adams should be dropped, as little satisfactory is any possible reply. Were it possible, then, by any juggle of choosing electors, to effect to great a change against the public sense and against all manner of reason and propriety, what have we not to fear from the inference to be made by an injured and insulted people? It will be evidently done by depriving the minorities in several states of their proportional weight. Were the electors to be chosen as the representatives are, more than twenty of them in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York, would vote for Adams. Is it then any thing more respectable than to demand that general tickets be issued? This precious privilege ought to be put further out of the reach of faction, and ought to be deposited with the