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Declaration of Independence.

As Mr. Jefferson's name will probably live in the remembrance of posterity, it is perfectly proper that his friends should endeavor to accompany it with some degree of reputation. The pitiful figure of a fugitive in Carter's mountain, will offer no favorable portrait of his character as a warrior. The money-borrowing transaction will bespeak little in favor of his morals. His remitting the fine of a convicted public offender, and his repairing a French ship at the public expence in open violation of the law and the constitution, cannot be offered as proofs of his regard for the latter; and his sending Beau Dawson to France to carry a letter in a public ship of war, and the yearly outfits of ministers to foreign courts, can never be added as evidences of his economy. But if the world can be made to believe that he drew the declaration of Independence, he will still have reputation enough to afford some shelter for the opinions and apology for the conduct of his dust licking parasites.

We premise these remarks to draw the attention of our readers to the toast drank here on the 4th of July, which ascribed to Mr. Jefferson the authorship of the Declaration of Independence, which we noticed at the time in such a manner as to make it the subject of controversy. It will be remembered that we denied the fact, and we supported the denial; but we are now enabled to prove more than what we originally intended.

We did not at first intend to deprive Mr. Jefferson of the credit of being the scribe of the committee who drew that instrument, but the officiousness of his friends, who are sometimes unawares, led to make honest confessions of him, which they little intend, have now developed facts which not only disprove his being the author of the Declaration, but go even to deprive him of that empty honor which we were so lately disposed to grant. All, except the most abject flatterers of the President's ridiculous vanity, always considered it as extremely indecorous to ascribe to him exclusively what was done in a committee; and in a committee too, composed of men of such talents that Mr. Jefferson must necessarily have acted a very subordinate part. It is not to be supposed the transcendent talents of John Adams were on such an occasion permitted to remain inactive, and leave that important instrument to be couched in the feeble and incorrect, but soft and tinsel language of Thomas Jefferson. It is no longer left to conjecture: We have proof and such proof that we presume no one who has any regard for truth, or the opinions of the world, will after this ever again undertake so gross, so unmerited a flattery of the idol of Democratic folly, as that which has called forth these remarks.

On the second day of July, 1776, Richard Henry Lee moved a resolution in Congress, and was seconded by John Adams, declaring "That these United Colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent States." And after full debate in which all the reasons in favor of that measure were eloquently urged by Lee, Adams and others, a committee was appointed to draw in form a Declaration of Independence, and of the motives which led to it; and on the following day, (the 3d of July,) the day before the Declaration was reported by the committee and signed by Congress, that venerable patriot John Adams, wrote the following letter to a friend in Boston, which was immediately published in the newspapers.

"Philadelphia July 3, 1776.
"Yesterday the greatest question was decided, which was ever decided in America; and a great one, perhaps, never was, or will be, decided among men. A resolution was passed, without one dissenting colony, 'That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free & independent States.'

"The day is passed. The second day of July, 1776, will be a memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe it will be celebrated by succeeding generations, as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to Al mighty God. It ought to be solemnized with pomp, shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever. You will think me transported with enthusiasm; but I am not. I am well aware of the toil, and blood, and treasure, that it will cost us to maintain this declaration, and to support and defend these states; yet through all the gloom, I can see the rays of light and glory—I can see that the end is more than worth all the means; and that posterity will triumph, although you and I may rue; which I hope we shall not. I am, &c.

"JOHN ADAMS."

Here is conclusive evidence that John Adams was the efficient agent in this glorious transaction; and as he never anywhere appeared as a secondary character, we may suppose he was not an inactive member of the committee which reported the declaration.

But we do not draw conclusions entirely from their relation to other transactions, or from the characters of the members; we have the precious confessions of Harrison Smith, the court printer at Washington, which confirms the position we have assumed and undertaken to maintain. Mr. Smith is known to be a staunch friend of the President, that he follows him through every measure of his infuriated administration, and right or wrong applauds him at every step. If the President commits one of his usual blunders, Smith stands ready with a salvo: If the President has a mind to ruin a powerful adversary by *Geoffry Letters*, Smith pursues the proscribed victim with the tears and the cruelty of a crocodile: If for the high crime of daring to exercise the freedom of opinion, some old companion in arms of Washington, is turned out of office and left with his family to starve, Smith has ready a dissertation to prove him an old Tory: If a vagrant foreigner, who has just nicked the gallows, and has not been long enough in America to get rid of the smell of buttermilk and potatoes, by railing at John Adams and the Federalists, has obtained from the President the reward of a fat office—Smith, pen in hand, stands ready to prove him a patriot of '76: If the President makes a report on weights and measures, or communicates to Congress a plan of a *Dry Dock* to rot vessels in, "*Bravo, bravo, the greatest philosopher upon earth,*" Smith lays on his commendations with a trowel. This is the man whose evidence we make use of against the President. We grant it would be worth nothing on the other side, for his duplicity and jesuitism have become proverbial, and even now we must suppose his story related with many circumstances of falsehood, and a high colouring in the President's favor, and that he has advanced nothing against the great man that he could possibly avoid, yet his confessions furnish us with enough for every purpose we could desire in relation to the present controversy.

Mr. Smith says that as it has been denied that Mr. Jefferson penned the declaration, to satisfy his own curiosity, he had access to the original. "That it was in the hand writing of Mr. Jefferson; that it was revised by his coadjutors and sundry alterations suggested by them; Dr. Franklin and Mr. Adams approved; that he saw these alterations interlined and in the hand writing of those gentlemen. Smith further says these alterations 'in every instance soften the spirit, [observe this] soften the spirit of the first draft.' Probably it softened it by rejecting some of his blundering metaphors, and correcting his flimsy fustian. Smith concludes his account with an acknowledgment that the report, notwithstanding all the amendments of Franklin and Adams in the committee, afterwards underwent an alteration in Congress."

Now in the name of common sense, what degree of credit is Thomas Jefferson entitled to for his share in this transaction. Smith says the first draught was in his hand writing; but it does not appear that he was any thing more than the amanuensis of Livingston or Sherman, and every thing in the declaration had been urged the preceding day in debate. But let it be dictated by whom it might, it was certainly a very faulty thing, or Dr. Franklin, who was not a member of the committee, would not have undertaken to alter it. Besides it was corrected also by John Adams; and after all underwent another alteration in Congress. A ship may be repaired until not three of the original pieces of timber are remaining, yet it is called the same ship still. Smith may in this manner insist that the declaration of independence belongs to Mr. Jefferson, because half a dozen words of the original of the scribe are still remaining, after all the corrections of Franklin and Adams, and the subsequent alterations in Congress. With what shadow of propriety then, can he call it the production of one man. Mr. Jefferson can in no possible view in which the subject can be placed, derive any sort of credit to the labours of his pen. If he was really the author of the first draught, (and of that there is no proof,) he not only derives no credit for the instrument which was finally agreed to, because it was made a different thing, but he has the demerit, the disgrace of proposing one which was

found totally unfit for the purpose intended. It employed the great talents of Dr. Franklin and Mr. Adams, assisted by the whole body of Congress to form that instrument which was adopted. Of that Mr. Adams who acted a conspicuous part in the achievement of our independence, who instructed us in the formation of our excellent constitution, who for four years administered our government upon its true principles, and whose name will fill a distinguished place in history, while this man, this same Jefferson, who attempts to filch from others the credit of penning the declaration of Independence, and who wrote from France advising that the constitution should not be adopted, will be remembered only as an ambitious and unprincipled demagogue, who hired base calumniators to traduce and vilify Mr. Adams, and upon whose murdered reputation he was enabled to raise himself to the Presidency.

Driven from every other point of defence, the democrats may perhaps urge upon us Mr. Jefferson's ability to write, as a strong presumption that he did write the declaration of independence. We ourselves do not presume to offer our opinions to the public upon literary subjects. We pretend to be neither a matter of the elegancies of language, nor to be versed in verbal criticism; but we have an opinion which satisfies ourselves, and the more so as it coincides with the opinions of the best scholars of our country. The President's inaugural speech has been extravagantly extolled by his party, and has by all been considered as the happiest of his productions. It will not therefore be considered ungenerous to bring forward that piece as the standard by which to measure his abilities. We accordingly submit the following strictures upon it by the Editor of the Port Folio, who is justly considered as being one of the politest scholars, and one of the most judicious critics of the age, and who has been aptly styled the American Addison.

From the Port Folio.

The friends & admirers of Mr. Jefferson, have not only extolled him as a great statesman, but also, as a finished scholar. His writings, therefore, may be justly made the subject of criticism.

He seems to be passionately fond of soft language, and flowing periods. To this he sometimes sacrifices correctness of sense. We have an instance of this, in the first paragraph. "When I see the honor, the happiness, and the hopes of this beloved country, committed to the issue and the auspices of this day," &c. The day of the inauguration of a new President, is, by no means, the most auspicious day to America; nor do her honor, happiness, and hopes, depend upon its issue. The day of the election is surely the great and important day, on the auspices of which rests every thing, that is dear to the country. For, on that day, a President is either chosen, or the choice of the house of representatives limited to two specified characters. Nor is there any thing more at issue, on the fourth of March, than a speech, which, although it may elevate the hopes, or excite the fears of the country, may not always contain the leading principles of the new administration, and should it contain the principles, it will hardly ever mark their limitations, upon which the fate of the government may depend.

"During the course of opinion, through which we have passed, the animation of discussion and of exertions," &c. It remains yet to be decided, whether it was a contest merely of opinion. That the discussions and exertions, exhibited something more than animation, is undeniable. And, although every good man would wish to consign these things to oblivion, yet it cannot be correct to say, that they were, what they were not. The word *passed*, is here improper. It ought to have been *passed*. *Passed* is an adjective. *Passed* is the participle of the word *pass*. "But this being now decided by the voice of the nation," &c. This, has no antecedent. It refers to nothing in the preceding part of the sentence, but alludes to the election of President. And if Mr. Jefferson's modesty would not allow him to mention this, he might have preserved grammatical accuracy, by saying, "the voice of the nation," &c.

"And, let us reflect, that having banished from our land, that religious intolerance, under which mankind so long bled and suffered," &c. For what purpose, this sentence was inserted in the speech, it is not easy to guess: unless it was intended to countenance those calumnious aspersions of religion, that have been disseminated from one end of America to the other. The sentence implies, that there was once in this country, "a religious intolerance, under which mankind long suffered and bled," and, that this intolerance was, at some time or other, banished from the land. When did this bloody intolerance prevail? Was it in the infancy of the colonies, when there were two or three instances of excess, among a mere handful of foolish bigots? Or was it immediately before the revolution, the period, I suppose,

at which it was banished from the land, when the churches in America, were equally as tolerant, as those in England, or in Scotland? And surely, to say, that a bloody intolerance prevailed in either of those countries, would imply something worse than a perversion of language. But this is a subject, which Mr. Jefferson could never contemplate, with the lober imagination of a philosopher. It seemed to prevent nothing to his mind, but racks and tortures. Whereas, faithful history will sufficiently vindicate America from any such charge, and yield matter of great joy, that her religion has never been debased by such aberrations of the human understanding.

"During the throes and convulsions of the ancient world, during the agonizing spasms of infuriated man, seeking, through blood and slaughter, his long lost liberty, it was not wonderful, that the agitation of the billows should reach even this distant and peaceful shore." Before I pass on to the figurative language of this sentence, I shall just remark, that the word *ancient* is here used in a very improper sense. *Ancient* is used in opposition to *modern*; *old* in opposition to *young* or *new*. *Ancient* means any thing that was done or exhibited long ago; *old* signifies any thing that has existed or continued for a long duration of time. The country which Mr. Jefferson intended to designate, must have been Europe. Now, if to Europe he annexed *ancient*, the meaning, that country during the Roman empire. But it is evident, that the intention was to distinguish that country from America. Let us then oppose *ancient* Europe to *modern* America, and we shall hardly be able to comprehend how the throes and convulsions of the one could affect the other. But if we make use of *old* instead of *ancient*, *old* Europe may be, with much propriety, put in opposition to *young* America. And if the general term *world* be substituted, we shall have the *old* and the *new* world, designations by which Europe and America are often designated.

Every kind of figures in composition requires to be managed with a mastery and delicate hand; otherwise, instead of giving elegance to the language, and perspicuity to the sense, they render the former turgid, and the latter obscure. Besides, the too frequent use of figures gives an air of juvenility to writing, and makes it unfit for grave and important subjects. As to metaphors, of which there are three, crowded into the sentence under consideration, they ought to exhibit clear and distinct images of the mind. Consequently, rhetoricians have laid it down as a rule in the use of them, that no more than one ought to be introduced to illustrate one object. Mr. Jefferson's object was the French revolution. To give an adequate idea of its fury, he presents the reader with the image of a woman in child-birth. The word *throes*, without a figure, can be applied to no other object. He then introduces a madman, seeking through blood & slaughter, his long lost liberty; but this madman is obliged to retire immediately to give room to a stormy sea, whose agitated billows may reach this distant shore. Thus there are three metaphors, mixed and confounded together, so as to leave no distinct image on the mind.

Another rule in the management of metaphors is, that they ought to be suited to the nature of the subject. Mr. Jefferson's intention appears to have been, not only to give an idea of the French revolution, but also to show that it affected this country. The first metaphor, therefore, cannot possibly be applicable, unless he could have given his woman an arm long enough to reach over the Atlantic. Nor, indeed, was it any way suited to give an adequate representation of the internal state of that nation. To effect this a metaphor ought to have been adopted, which would have conveyed the idea of something horribly awful, and also unusual. Some of the terrible and rare phenomena of nature would have been more opposite. Even a convulsive madman, in a figurative sense, was below the subject. The last metaphor is the only one that seems nearly just. The storm could have been raised to an unusual degree of fury, and consequently the agitated billows might have reached the American shore.

"Let them stand undisturbed as monuments," &c. From the beauty of this sentence, the word *as* greatly detracts. The figure is metaphor, & not simile: and *as*, or *as it were*, before a metaphor, is extremely awkward, and lessens the strength of the language.

"Kindly separated by nature and a wide ocean," &c. There is a tautology here, which destroys the sense. If it had been by nature or a wide ocean, either expression would have been clear and intelligible. Or if nature had been made the agent, and a wide ocean the instrument, it would have stood thus—Nature having kindly separated us by a wide ocean, and conveyed the meaning early. But to say, that we are separated by nature and by a wide ocean, would certainly seem to imply, that there was some other natural barrier between us and Europe than the Atlantic Ocean.

I shall close my remarks upon this celebrated speech, with observing, that in the same paragraph, and so in the succeeding one, there are some nominatives without verbs, which is a violation of concord, and gives an affected air to composition. Besides, it is an infringement upon the form of language, which ought not to be countenanced, although it is sometimes to be found in modern authors.

D.