A PEOPLE WHO MEAN TO BE THEIR OWN GOVERNORS MUST ARM THEMSEVES WITH THE POWER WHICH KNOWLEDGE GIVES

THE ESSENTIAL
ABIGAIL ADAMS

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THE FEDERALIST PAPERS PROJECT
A BIOGRAPHY OF ABIGAIL ADAMS

Born:

Place: Weymouth, Massachusetts
Date: 1744, November 11

Father:

William Smith, 1706, January 29, Charlestown, Massachusetts, died 1783, September, Weymouth, Massachusetts. He was a Congregationalist minister.

Mother:

Elizabeth Quincy, born 1721, Braintree, Massachusetts, died 1775, Weymouth, Massachusetts; married in 1740. She was the daughter of John Quincy, a member of the colonial Governor's council and colonel of the militia. Mr. Quincy was also Speaker of the Massachusetts Assembly, a post he held for 40 years until his death at age 77. He died in 1767; three years into his granddaughter Abigail Smith's marriage to John Adams, and his interest in government and his career in public service influenced her.

Ancestry:

English, Welsh; Abigail Adams' paternal great-grandfather, Thomas Smith, was born 1645, May 10, and immigrated to Charleston, Massachusetts from Dartmouth, England. One of her great-great-great-grandmothers came from a Welsh family. Her well-researched ancestral roots precede her birth some six centuries and are traced back to royal lines in France, Germany, Belgium, Hungary, Holland, Spain, Italy, Ireland and Switzerland.

Birth Order and Siblings:

Second born; one brother, three sisters, Mary Smith Cranch (1741-1811), William Smith (1746-1787), Elizabeth Smith Shaw Peabody (1750-1815)
Physical Appearance:
5' 1", brown hair, brown eyes

Religious Affiliation:
Congregationalist; she was buried in the Unitarian faith of her husband.

Education:
Although Abigail Adams was later known for advocating an education in the public schools for girls that was equal to that given to boys, she herself had no formal education. She was taught to read and write at home, and given access to the extensive libraries of her father and maternal grandfather, taking a special interest in philosophy, theology, Shakespeare, the classics, ancient history, government and law.

Occupation before Marriage:
No documentation exists to suggest any involvement of Abigail Adams as a young woman in her father's parsonage activities. She recalled that in her earliest years, she was often in poor health. Reading and corresponding with family and friends occupied most of her time as a young woman. She did not play cards, sing or dance.

Marriage:
19 years old, married 1764, October 25 to John Adams, lawyer (1735-1826), in Smith family home, Weymouth, Massachusetts, wed in matrimony by her father, the Reverend Smith. After the ceremony, they drove in a horse and carriage to a cottage that stood beside the one where John Adams had been born and raised. This became their first home. They moved to Boston in a series of rented homes before buying a large farm, "Peacefield," in 1787, while John Adams was Minister to Great Britain.

Children:
Three sons and two daughters; Abigail "Nabby" Amelia Adams Smith (1765–1813), John Quincy Adams (1767–1848), Susanna Adams (1768–1770), Charles Adams (1770–1800), Thomas Boylston Adams (1772–1832)

**Occupation after Marriage:**

Abigail Adams gave birth to her first child ten days shy of nine months after her marriage, thus working almost immediately as a mother. She also shared with her husband the management of the household finances and the farming of their property for sustenance, while he also practiced law in the nearby city of Boston.

When John Adams went to Philadelphia in 1774 to serve as his colony's delegate to the First Continental Congress, Abigail Adams remained home. The separation prompted the start of a lifelong correspondence between them, forming not only a rich archive that reflected the evolution of a marriage of the Revolutionary and Federal eras, but a chronology of the public issues debated and confronted by the new nation's leaders. The letters reflect not only Abigail Adams' reactive advice to the political contentions and questions that John posed to her, but also her own observant reporting of New England newspapers' and citizens' response to legislation and news events of the American Revolution.

As the colonial fight for independence from the mother country ensued, Abigail Adams was appointed by the Massachusetts Colony General Court in 1775, along with Mercy Warren and the governor's wife Hannah Winthrop to question their fellow Massachusetts women who were charged by their word or action of remaining loyal to the British crown and working against the independence movement. "...you are now a politician and now elected into an important office, that of judges of Tory ladies, which will give you, naturally, an influence with your sex," her husband wrote her in response to the appointment. This was the first instance of a First Lady who held any quasi-official government position.

As the Second Continental Congress drew up and debated the Declaration of Independence through 1776, Abigail Adams began to press the argument in letters to her husband that the creation of a new form of government was an opportunity to make equitable the legal status of women to that of men. Despite her inability to convince him of this, the text of those letters became some of the earliest known writings calling for women's equal rights. Separated from her husband when he left for his diplomatic service as minister to France, and then to England in
1778, she kept him informed of domestic politics while he confided international affairs to her. She joined him in 1783, exploring France and England, received in the latter nation by the king. Upon their return, during John Adams' tenure as the first Vice President (1789-1797), Abigail Adams spent part of the year in the capital cities of New York and Philadelphia, while Congress was in session.

**Presidential Campaign and Inauguration:**

As much of her political role was conducted in correspondence, so too was Abigail Adams's active interest in her husband's two presidential campaigns, in 1796 and 1800, when his primary challenger was their close friend, anti-Federalist Thomas Jefferson. Caring for her husband's dying mother; Abigail Adams was unable to attend his March 4, 1797 inaugural ceremony in Philadelphia. She was highly conscious, however, of how their lives would change that day, with "a sense of the obligations, the important trusts, and numerous duties connected with it."

**First Lady:**

Of the four years her husband served as President, Abigail Adams was actually present in the temporary capital of Philadelphia and then, finally, the permanent "Federal City," of Washington, D.C. for a total of only eighteen months. She nonetheless made a strong impression on the press and public. She was unofficially titled "Lady Adams," and encouraged such recognition by assuming a visible ceremonial role. After touring a New Jersey Army encampment, she reviewed the troops stationed there as "proxy" for the President. Often mentioned in the press, her opinions were even quoted at a New England town hall meeting.

A highly partisan Federalist, Mrs. Adams helped forward the interests of the Administration by writing editorial letters to family and acquaintances, encouraging the publication of the information and viewpoint presented in them. She was sarcastically attacked in the opposition press, her influence over presidential appointments questioned and there were printed suggestions that she was too aged to understand questions of the day. One anti-Federalist derided her as "Mrs. President" for her partisanship. Indeed, Abigail Adams supported the sentiment behind her husband's Alien and Sedition Acts as a legal means of imprisoning those who criticized the President in public print. Fearful of French revolutionary influence on the fledgling United States, she was unsuccessful in her urging the President to declare war with France. She remained an adamant advocate of equal public education for women and emancipation of
African-American slaves.

Highly conscious of her role as the president's wife, Abigail Adams saw her role largely as a hostess for the public and partisan symbol of the Federalist Party. Her entertainments were confined to a relatively small home in Philadelphia, turned into a hotel after the capital was moved from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C. Although she did host a dance for her son and his friends, she received visitors formally, seated like a royal figure as she had witnessed at Buckingham Palace. She also attempted to influence fashion, believing that the more revealing Napoleonic-style clothing then popular were too indecorous. Since presidential families were responsible for covering the costs of their entertainments and the Adamses were enduring financial difficulties at the time of his presidency, Abigail Adams's receptions were somewhat Spartan. The first First Lady to live in the White House, she resided there for four months, arriving in November 1800. During that time she famously hung her family's laundry in the unfinished East Room to dry.

**Post-Presidential Life:**

Embittered at the loss of her husband's re-election to their old friend Thomas Jefferson, now a rabid anti-Federalist, Abigail Adams remained interested in national political issues. Her focus remained primarily on her home and her family. She raised her granddaughter Susanna Adams to maturity. Upon learning of Maria Jefferson Eppes' death, Abigail Adams wrote to the girl's father, President Jefferson, thus initiating a renewal of their contact and while she remained mistrustful of his politics, a new friendship through correspondence opened between Jefferson and John Adams. She corresponded upon at least one occasion with her successor Dolley Madison. Relieved at the return of her son John Quincy Adams from his diplomatic missions in Europe, Abigail Adams had an initially strained relationship with his English-born wife, Louisa Catherine Johnson. She did not live to see her son become President, which occurred six years after her death. When once approached for permission to publish some of her political letters, Abigail Adams refused, considering it improper for a woman's private correspondence to be publicly divulged. However, one of her grandsons arranged for the publication of some of her famous letters in 1848, becoming the first published book pertaining to a First Lady.

**Death:** Her home, Quincy, Massachusetts, October 1818  
**Burial:** First Unitarian Church, Quincy Massachusetts
ABIGAIL ADAMS QUOTES

Letters to John Adams

We have too many high sounding words, and too few actions that correspond with them.

Letter to John Adams, 1774

I wish most sincerely there was not a slave in this province. It always appeared a most iniquitous scheme to me — to fight ourselves for what we are daily robbing and plundering from those who have as good a right to freedom as we have.

Letter to John Adams, September 1774

How difficult the task to quench the fire and the pride of private ambition, and to sacrifice ourselves and all our hopes and expectations to the public weal! How few have souls capable of so noble an undertaking! How often are the laurels worn by those who have had no share in earning them! But there is a future recompense of reward, to which the upright man looks, and which he will most assuredly obtain, provided he perseveres unto the end.

Letter to John Adams, July 1775

I am more and more convinced that man is a dangerous creature; and that power, whether vested in many or a few, is ever grasping, and, like the grave, cries, “Give, give!” The great fish swallow up the small; and he who is most strenuous for the rights of the people, when vested with power, is as eager after the prerogatives of government. You tell me of degrees of perfection to which human nature is capable of arriving, and I believe it, but at the same time lament that our admiration should arise from the scarcity of the instances.

Letter to John Adams, November 1775

The reins of government have been so long slackened, that I fear the people will not quietly submit to those restraints which are necessary for the peace and security of the community.

Letter to John Adams, November 1775

I feel anxious for the fate of our monarchy, or democracy, or whatever is to take place. I soon get lost in a labyrinth of perplexities: but, whatever occurs, may justice and righteousness be the
stability of our times, and order arise out of confusion. Great difficulties may be surmounted by patience and perseverance.

**Letter to John Adams, November 1775**

I long to hear that you have declared an independency. And by the way, in the the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors.

Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

That your Sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend.

Why, then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity? Men of Sense in all Ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your sex; regard us then as Beings placed by Providence under your protection, and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness.

**Letter to John Adams, March 1776**

Shall we be despised by foreign powers for hesitating so long at a word?

**Letter to John Adams, May 1776**

Whilst you are proclaiming peace and good will to men, emancipating all nations, you insist upon retaining an absolute power over wives. But you must remember that arbitrary power is like most other things which are very hard, very liable to be broken — and notwithstanding all your wise laws and maxims we have it in our power not only to free ourselves but to subdue our masters, and without violence throw both your natural and legal authority at our feet.

**Letter to John Adams, May 1776**

Deliver me from your cold phlegmatic preachers, politicians, friends, lovers and husbands.

**Letter to John Adams, August 1776**
If you complain of neglect of Education in sons, what shall I say with regard to daughters, who every day experience the want of it? With regard to the Education of my own children, I find myself soon out of my depth, destitute and deficient in every part of Education.

I most sincerely wish that some more liberal plan might be laid and executed for the Benefit of the rising Generation, and that our new Constitution may be distinguished for encouraging Learning and Virtue.

If we mean to have Heroes Statesmen and Philosophers, we should have learned women. The world perhaps would laugh at me and accuse me of vanity, But you I know have a mind too enlarged and liberal to disregard the Sentiment.

If much depends as is allowed upon the early education of youth and the first principles which are instill’d take the deepest root, great benefit must arise from literary accomplishments in women.

**Letter to John Adams, August 1776**

I regret the narrow contracted education of the females of my own country.

**Letter to John Adams, June 1778**

Luxury, that baneful poison, has unstrung and enfeebled her sons.

**Letter to John Adams, February 1779**

A little of what you call frippery is very necessary towards looking like the rest of the world.

**Letter to John Adams, May 1780**

Patriotism in the female sex is the most disinterested of all virtues. Excluded from honors and from offices, we cannot attach ourselves to the State or Government from having held a place of eminence. Even in the freest countries our property is subject to the control and disposal of our partners, to whom the laws have given a sovereign authority.

Deprived of a voice in legislation, obliged to submit to those laws which are imposed upon us, is it not sufficient to make us indifferent to the public welfare? Yet all history and every age exhibit instances of patriotic virtue in the female sex; which considering our situation equals the most heroic of yours.

**Letter to John Adams 17 June 1782**
Do not grieve, my friend, my dearest friend. I am ready to go. And John, it will not be long.

Last words to John Adams
Letters to John Quincy Adams

The most amiable and most useful disposition in a young mind is diffidence of itself; and this should lead you to seek advice and instruction from him, who is your natural guardian, and will always counsel and direct you in the best manner, both for your present and future happiness.

Improve your understanding by acquiring useful knowledge and virtue, such as will render you an ornament to society, an honor to your country, and a blessing to your parents.

Great learning and superior abilities, should you ever possess them, will be of little value and small estimation, unless virtue, honor, truth, and integrity are added to them.

Adhere to those religious sentiments and principles which were early instilled into your mind, and remember, that you are accountable to your Maker for all your words and actions.

Abigail Adams, to John Quincy Adams, June 1778

For a true patriot must be a religious man. I have been led to think from a late defection, that he who neglects his duty to his Maker, may well be expected to be deficient and insincere in his duty towards the public.

Even suppose him to possess a large share of what is called honor and public spirit, yet, do not these men, by their …bad example, by a loose, immoral conduct, corrupt the minds of youth, and vitiate the morals of the age, and thus injure the public more than they can compensate by intrepidity, generosity, and honor?

Let revenge or ambition, pride, lust, or profit, tempt these men to a base and vile action ; you may as well hope to bind up a hungry tiger with a cobweb, as to hold such debauched patriots in the visionary chains of decency, or to charm them with the intellectual beauty of truth and reason.

Abigail Adams, Letter to John Adams, 5 November, 1775

How difficult the task to quench the fire and the pride of private ambition, and to sacrifice ourselves and all our hopes and expectations to the public weal! How few have souls capable of so noble an undertaking!

How often are the laurels worn by those who have had no share in earning them! But there is a future recompense of reward, to which the upright man looks, and which he will most assuredly obtain, provided he perseveres unto the end.
Abigail Adams, Letter to John Adams, 10 July 1775

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Great learning and superior abilities, should you ever possess them, will be of little value and small estimation, unless virtue, honor, truth, and integrity are added to them. Adhere to those religious sentiments and principles which were early instilled into your mind, and remember, that you are accountable to your Maker for all your words and actions.

Letter to John Quincy Adams, June, 1778.

These are times in which a genius would wish to live. It is not in the still calm of life, or the repose of a pacific station, that great characters are formed. Would Cicero have shone so distinguished an orator if he had not been roused, kindled, and inflamed by the tyranny of Catiline, Verres, and Mark Anthony?

The habits of a vigorous mind are formed in contending with difficulties. All history will convince you of this, and that wisdom and penetration are the fruit of experience, not the lessons of retirement and leisure.

Great necessities call out great virtues. When a mind is raised and animated by scenes that engage the heart, then those qualities, which would otherwise lie dormant, wake into life and form the character of the hero and the statesman.

War, tyranny, and desolation are the scourges of the Almighty, and ought no doubt to be deprecated. Yet it is your lot, my son, to be an eyewitness of these calamities in your own native land, and, at the same time, to owe your existence among a people who have made a glorious defense of their invaded liberties, and who, aided by a generous and powerful ally, with the blessing of Heaven, will transmit this inheritance to ages yet unborn.

Letter to John Quincy Adams, January, 1780

The only sure and permanent foundation of virtue is religion. Let this important truth be engraven upon your heart. And also, that the foundation of religion is the belief of the one only God, and a just sense of his attributes, as a being infinitely wise, just, and good, to whom you
owe the highest reverence, gratitude, and adoration; who superintends and governs all nature, even to clothing the lilies of the field, and hearing the young ravens when they cry; but more particularly regards man, whom he created after his own image, and breathed into him an immortal spirit, capable of a happiness beyond the grave; for the attainment of which he is bound to the performance of certain duties, which all tend to the happiness and welfare of society, and are comprised in one short sentence, expressive of universal benevolence, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

**Letter to John Quincy Adams, January, 1780**

Justice, humanity, and benevolence are the duties you owe to society in general. To your country the same duties are incumbent upon you, with the additional obligation of sacrificing ease, pleasure, wealth, and life itself for its defence and security.

To your parents you owe love, reverence, and obedience to all just and equitable commands. To your self, here, indeed, is a wide field to expatiate upon.

To become what you ought to be, and what a fond mother wishes to see you, attend to some precepts and instructions from the pen of one, who can have no motive but your welfare and happiness, and who wishes in this way to supply to you the personal watchfulness and care, which a separation from you deprived you of at a period of life, when habits are easiest acquired and fixed; and, though the advice may not be new, yet suffer it to obtain a place in your memory, for occasions may offer, and perhaps some concurring circumstances unite, to give it weight and force.

**Letter to John Quincy Adams, January, 1780**

Suffer me to recommend to you one of the most useful lessons of life, the knowledge and study of yourself. There you run the greatest hazard of being deceived. Self-love and partiality cast a mist before the eyes, and there is no knowledge so hard to be acquired, nor of more benefit when once thoroughly understood.

Ungoverned passions have aptly been compared to the boisterous ocean, which is known to produce the most terrible effects. "Passions are the elements of life," but elements which are subject to the control of reason.

 Whoever will candidly examine themselves, will find some degree of passion, peevishness, or obstinacy in their natural tempers. You will seldom find these disagreeable ingredients all united
in one; but the uncontrolled indulgence of either is sufficient to render the possessor unhappy in himself, and disagreeable to all who are so unhappy as to be witnesses of it, or suffer from its effects.

**Letter to John Quincy Adams, January, 1780**

The due government of the passions, has been considered in all ages as a most valuable acquisition. Hence an inspired writer observes, "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city."

This passion, cooperating with power, and unrestrained by reason, has produced the subversion of cities, the desolation of countries, the massacre of nations, and filled the world with injustice and oppression.

Behold your own country, your native land, suffering from the effects of lawless power and malignant passions, and learn betimes, from your own observation and experience, to govern and control yourself. Having once obtained this self-government, you will find a foundation laid for happiness to yourself and usefulness to mankind.

**Letter to John Quincy Adams, January, 1780**

We must struggle hard first, and find many difficulties to encounter, but we may be a great and a powerful nation if we will. Industry and frugality, wisdom and virtue, must make us so. I think America is taking steps towards a reform, and I know her capable of whatever she undertakes. I hope you will never lose sight of her interests; but make her welfare your study, and spend those hours, which others devote to cards and folly, in investigating the great principles by which nations have risen to glory and eminence; for your country will one day call for your services, either in the cabinet or field. Qualify yourself to do honor to her.

**Letter to John Quincy Adams, September, 1785**

If you have a due sense of your preservation, your next consideration will be, for what purpose you are continued in life. It is not to rove from clime to clime, to gratify an idle curiosity; but every new mercy you receive is a new debt upon you, a new obligation to a diligent discharge of the various relations in which you stand connected; in the first place, to your great Preserver; in the next, to society in general; in particular, to your country, to your parents, and to yourself.

**Abigail Adams, Letter to John Quincy Adams, March, 1780**
Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence.

Letter to John Quincy Adams 8 May 1780
Letters to Thomas Jefferson

It has been some time since I conceived that any event in this life could call forth feelings of mutual sympathy. But I know how closely entwined around a parent's heart are those cords which bind the parental to the filial bosom; and when snapped asunder, how agonising the pangs. I have tasted of the bitter cup and bow with reverence and submission before the great Dispenser of it, without whose permission and overruling Providence, not a sparrow falls to the ground. That you may derive comfort and consolation in this day of your sorrow and affliction from that only source calculated to heal the wounded heart, a firm belief in the being, perfections and attributes of God, is the sincere and ardent wish of her, who once took pleasure in subscribing herself your friend

Letter to Thomas Jefferson, May, 1804

In no country have calumny, falsehood and reviling stalked abroad more licentiously than in this. No political character has been secure from its attacks; no reputation so fair as not to be Wounded by it, until truth and falsehood lie in one undistinguished heap. Party spirit is blind, malevolent, uncandid, ungenerous, unjust and unforgiving. It is equally so under federal as under democratic banners, and it would be difficult to decide which is the least guilty.

Letter to Thomas Jefferson, August 1804

I have seen and known that much of the conduct of a public ruler is liable to be misunderstood and misrepresented. Party hatred, by its deadly poison, blinds the eyes and envenoms the heart. It is fatal to the integrity of the moral character it sees not that wisdom dwells with moderation, and that firmness of conduct is seldom united with outrageous violence of sentiment. Thus blame is too often liberally bestowed upon actions, which if fully understood and candidly judged, would merit praise.

Letter to Thomas Jefferson, August 1804

I wish to lead a tranquil and retired life under the administration of the government, disposed to heal the wounds of contention, to cool the raging fury of party animosity, to soften the rugged spirit of resentment, and desirous of seeing my children and grandchildren heirs to that freedom and independence which you and your predecessor united your efforts to obtain

Letter to Thomas Jefferson, August 1804

The heart is long, very long in receiving the conviction that is forced upon it by reason.
Letter to Thomas Jefferson, October, 1804

I cannot accord with you in opinion that the Constitution ever meant to withhold from the National Government the power of self-defense; or that it could be considered an infringement of the Liberty of the Press, to punish the licentiousness of it.

Time must determine, and posterity will judge, with more candor and impartiality, I hope, than the conflicting parties of our day, what measures have best promoted the happiness of the people; what raised them from a state of depression and degradation to wealth, honor and reputation; what has made them affluent at home and respected abroad; and to whomsoever the tribute is due, to them may it be given.

Letter to Thomas Jefferson, October, 1804
Miscellaneous

It is really mortifying, sir, when a woman possessed of a common share of understanding considers the difference of education between the male and female sex, even in those families where education is attended to... Nay why should your sex wish for such a disparity in those whom they one day intend for companions and associates. Pardon me, sir, if I cannot help sometimes suspecting that this neglect arises in some measure from an ungenerous jealousy of rivals near the throne.

Letter to John Thaxter 15 February 1778

If we do not lay out ourselves in the service of mankind whom should we serve?

Letter to John Thaxter 29 September 1778

I begin to think, that a calm is not desirable in any situation in life. Every object is beautiful in motion; a ship under sail, trees gently agitated with the wind, and a fine woman dancing, are three instances in point. Man was made for action and for bustle too, I believe.

Letter to her sister, Mary Smith Cranch 1784

Knowledge is a fine thing, and mother Eve thought so; but she smarted so severely for hers, that most of her daughters have been afraid of it since.

Letter to Elizabeth Shaw 20 March 1791

I feel perhaps too keenly the abuse of party. Washington endured it; but he had the support of the people and their undiminished confidence to the hour of his resignation, and a combination of circumstances which no other man can look for. First, a unanimous choice. Secondly, personally known to more people by having commanded the armies, than any other man. Thirdly, possessed of a large landed estate. Fourthly, refusing all emoluments of office both in his military and civil capacity. Take his character all together, and we shall not look upon his like again; notwithstanding which, he was reviled and abused, his administration perplexed, and his measures impeded.

What is the expected lot of a successor? He must be armed as Washington was with integrity, with firmness, with intrepidity. These must be his shield and his wall of brass; and religion too, or he never will be able to stand sure and steadfast.

Letter to Thomas Adams, November 1797
That religion is of as much use to a statesman as to any individual whatever; for Christian principles will best enable men to devote their time, their lives, their talents, and what is often a greater sacrifice, their characters, to the public good; and in public life, he observes, this will often be in a great measure necessary.

Let a man attain to eminence of any kind, and by whatever means, even the most honorable, he will be exposed to envy and jealousy. And of course he must expect to meet with calumny and abuse.

What principles can enable a man to consult the real good of his fellow citizens without being diverted from his generous purpose by a regard to their opinion concerning him, like those of the Christian who can be satisfied with the approbation of his own mind, and who, though not insensible to due praise, can despise calumny, and steadily overlooking everything which is intermediate, patiently wait for the day of final retribution?"

Thus says the Poet;

“Fame for good deeds is the reward of virtue; Thirst after fame is given us by the gods Both to excite our minds to noble acts, And give a proof of some immortal state, Where we shall know that Fame we leave behind, That highest blessing which the gods bestow."

Letter to Thomas Adams, November 1797