

# Carey's Challenge to American Patriots

Here are excerpts from Mathew Carey's *The Olive Branch*, 3rd Edition, printed in February 1815.

Frontispiece

## The Olive Branch

or

Faults on Both Sides,  
Federal and Democratic.  
A serious appeal on the necessity of  
Mutual Forgiveness  
and  
Harmony,  
to save  
Our Common Country from Ruin

This Book,  
(As a mark of gratitude for  
inestimable blessings enjoyed,  
in liberty of person, liberty of property,  
liberty of opinions.  
to a degree never exceeded in the world)  
is respectfully dedicated  
to a beloved but bleeding country,  
torn in pieces  
by  
factious, desperate, convulsive and  
ruinous struggles for power.

\* \* \*

It is likewise dedicated to those  
millions of human beings,  
who neither hold nor seek office,  
but who are made the instruments  
of those who do seek them:  
and who, while a foreign enemy presses  
at their doors,  
are enfeebled, kept from union,  
and exposed to ruin,  
to gratify the ambition of a few men,  
(not one in five thousand of the whole community)  
who have brought to the very verge of destruction,  
the fairest prospect that ever shone on any nation.

—Nov. 8, 1814

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## Chapter I

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The situation of the United States is at the present moment highly critical. Party and faction, the bane and destruction of all the old republics, are carried to such extravagant lengths, as to endanger the public tranquility—and perhaps lead to civil war, the greatest scourge that ever afflicted mankind. Unceasing efforts are and have been used to excite our citizens to open resistance to government. This has principally taken place in the eastern states; but there is hardly a portion of the union in which there are not persons constantly employed in inflaming the public mind, and preparing it for commotions. Thousands and tens of thousands of citizens, upright, honest and honourable in private life, have been so deluded by the madness of party as to believe, that the defeat, the disgrace and the disasters of our armies—the destruction of the public credit—(as leading to the expulsion from their stations of the highest public functionaries duly chosen by the people)—were all “a consummation devoutly to be wished”—and the certain means of procuring a speedy and an honourable peace, which we could not fail to secure, from the magnanimity of Great Britain, provided we removed those public officers, whom, according to them, she has so much reason to execrate.

It is in vain that the uniform voice of history proclaims that the generosity of nations towards each other is a non-entity; that the terms of a treaty will be more or less favorable or injurious in proportion to the relative strength of the parties; that powerful nations have always taken advantage of the feebleness of their adversaries; and that the certain road to a speedy and an honorable peace has ever been to wage war *totis viribus* [with all one's might—ed.].

Were history wholly silent on these topics, the inherent propensities of human nature, properly explored, might satisfy every rational mind of the soundness of those political maxims. They are fair deductions of reason and common sense, in which the universal experience of mankind bears testimony. Every nation in its period of debility has been obliged occasionally to submit to injustice. Every nation possessing the power to do injustice, has more or less availed itself of the opportunity.

I am not ignorant, that my fears of civil war are regarded as visionary, as the wild effusions of a disordered brain. I find myself in a small minority. And if the correctness of opinions were to be tested by the numbers who entertain them, mine would be most miserably erroneous. But this is a conclusion not warranted by history. It has been a thousand times said, and will be as often repeated, that the people of the United States are too enlightened to fall into such a fatal error; that they know too well the value of the blessings they enjoy, to sacrifice them so absurdly. Such a delusion was pardonable a few years back. But our recent, stupendous follies must have wholly dispelled it. We have displayed, in many cases, nearly as much insanity as the history of any nation exhibits.



This wood engraving of 1876 depicts the capture and burning of Washington by the British in 1814. Carey wrote: "The crash of the conflagration at Washington awaked us out of our slumbers, and dispelled the delusion.— We were then aroused to a full sense of our dangerous situation...."

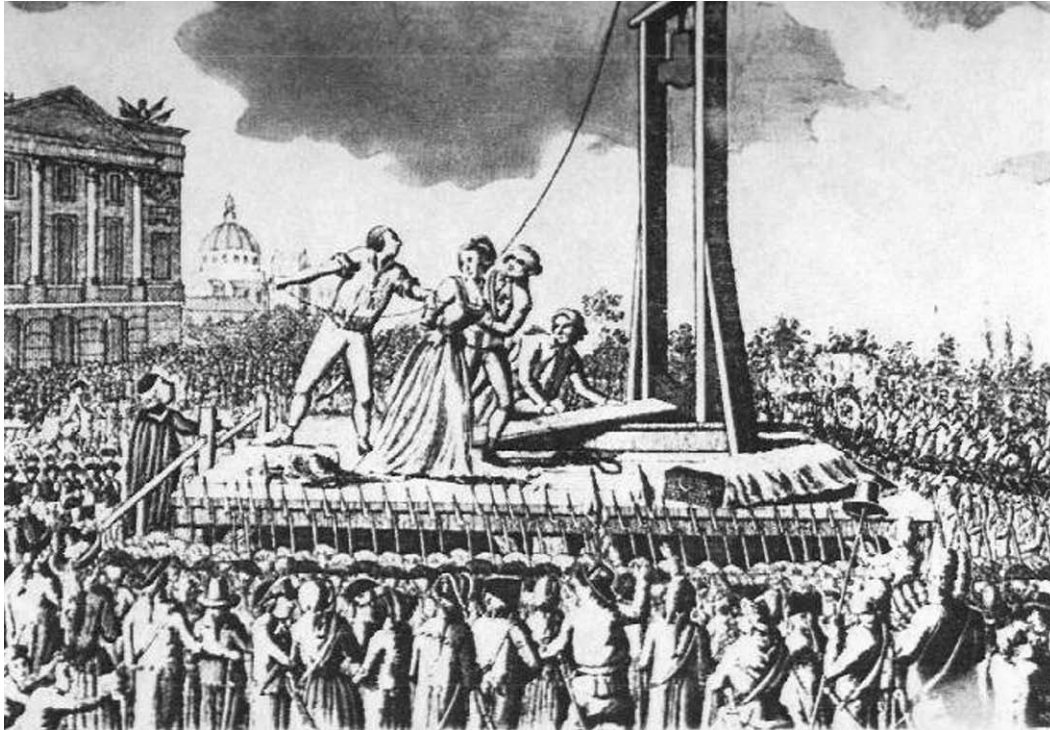
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Danger is not diminished by shutting our eyes against its approach, or by denying its existence. This would be a cheap price to pay for security. But it is not to be purchased thus. And those who seriously weigh the causes that led to the civil wars which desolated France, under the house of Valois; England under Charles I; and Italy for entire centuries, with hardly any intermission; will have reason to believe that our security is very far from being as well founded as is generally supposed. In many points of view, our situation and our proceedings bear a strong analogy to those of the three nations to which I have referred, immediately previous, to their respective civil wars. Whoever reads Davila's history of France, Machiavel's history of Florence, or Clarendon's history of the rebellion under Charles I, with due attention, will be astonished at the near resemblance.

The difference between our situation a few years since, and the present turbid state of the country, is indubitably far greater than from where we now stand to insurrection, and separation, and civil war. While there are so many combustible materials scattered abroad, and such unceasing pains taken to inflame the public mind, very trivial accidents may enkindle a conflagration. Once unhinge a government—once let loose mankind from the restraints of law and constitution—and the human mind cannot readily calculate the terrible result. It is said, that those who have for years urged the propriety, and necessity, and advantages to the eastern states, of a dissolution of the union, do not intend to proceed thus far; and that they hold out these threats *in terrorem* to

awe the administration. There is the strongest possible reason to believe that this is a pernicious, a fatal error—and that the leaders of the malecontents are perfectly serious in their views of a separation. How often have the churches echoed with the insurrectional, the treasonable, the fanatic cry—"Have we no Moses to lead us out of the land of Egypt?" Fatuity itself cannot mistake the meaning here. But even were they merely threatening, it affords us no certainty against the ruinous result. Those who raise the storm of civil commotions are not able at pleasure to allay its violence, and to say with effect, "thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." This theory was fully exemplified in the wars of England between Charles I, and his parliament, and likewise in the French Revolution. The latter, of which nearly all the early leaders perished in jails and on scaffolds, is a very strong case. Very few of these distinguished men contemplated a recourse to arms. They hoped for a bloodless triumph over tyranny. But they were borne down by violent and wicked men who their proceedings put in motion, but whom they could not restrain.

Never have brighter prospects shone on a nation than those that shone on the United States. Never has a nation been more highly blessed. Never has the security of person and property—of liberty, civil and religious, been attained by such easy sacrifices. Never has the weight of government pressed more lightly. Never have the fondest theories of philosophers and lovers of mankind, been more completely realized.



*“Those who raise the storm of civil commotions are not able at pleasure to allay its violence,” warned Carey, citing the French Revolution, in “which nearly all the early leaders perished in jails and on scaffolds.” Here, Queen Marie Antoinette is taken to the guillotine, Oct. 16, 1793.*

Our case is very analogous to that of a youth who inherits a large estate, and, unacquainted with the difficulty of its acquisition, cannot form an estimate of its value, which is only to be done by a due consideration of the condition of those who are destitute of the advantages of fortune. He becomes a prodigal, and lavishes away his treasures, which he only then begins to appreciate, when they are irretrievably squandered. This is precisely our case. We have not sufficiently compared our situation with that of the mass of mankind.—We have never taken a full view of the glorious, the inestimable advantages we possessed. We have had the most noble inheritance that ever fell to the lot of a nation, and have not duly appreciated our happiness; we have jeopardized it most wantonly and fatuously.—We are on the verge of its total loss. A little further progress in folly and madness, and we shall be undone. We have by rapid strides approached the banks of the Rubicon. Whether we shall now plunge in, and ford the stream, or, struck with a due sense of our errors and our danger, shall make a retrograde movement, and regain the elysium whence we started, is yet in the womb of time. May heaven direct us to the blessed alternative! Beyond the stream verges a dreary desert, where anarchy and civil war hold their terrific reign, with all their long train of horrors, and where the devious paths lead directly to ruthless despotism.

It is time, therefore, to make a solemn pause—to retrace our steps—and, since we refuse to profit by the sad experience

of other ages and nations, to avail ourselves of our own. By honest endeavors—by abating the odious violence of party spirit—by mutual compromise—by shaking off the yoke of the violent men whose influence and prosperity depend on public commotions—we may happily regain the ground we have lost—we may dispel the delusion that is leading us to temporal perdition.

To vindicate myself from the charge of folly, in my gloomy apprehensions and anticipations, I shall submit to the reader, in a special chapter, a few of the hundred thousand literary efforts which for years have been making to enkindle the flames of civil war. That we have not yet been involved in it, is not justly chargeable to the want of a due degree of labor and industry. Never was more activity displayed—never was a cause more sedulously or ably advocated. And never was there less scruple about the means provided the end was accomplished.

The language of the writers is pretty plain. It admits of no mistake or misconstruction. That they intend to produce insurrection and dissolution of the union, regardless of the frightful consequences, it would be impudence to deny; it would be folly, or insanity to disbelieve. What may ultimately be their success, it is impossible to foresee. Everything depends on the course that may be pursued by those who have an interest in the public welfare. If they are not wanting to themselves and to their country, we shall rise triumphant over our present difficulties and embarrassments. But if the pre-

vailing wonderful apathy continues; if we remain sluggishly with our arms folded, while our situation grows daily worse and worse; ruin is inevitable. And we shall afford one of the most striking instances to be found in history of premature decay and decrepitude. May the Lord in his mercy avert such an awful fate!

Reliance is placed by those who deny the existence of the danger which I deprecate, upon the sober character of the nation. They deem that character a guarantee against civil war. I am well aware of this circumstance. I allow it a due share of influence and importance. But the strong inference drawn from it is unwarranted by history. And let it be observed once for all, that the only unerring guide in government or politics, is history, to the neglect of whose lessons may be ascribed more than two thirds of our errors and follies. The Athenians were a highly polished, and a refined people. Yet they were occasionally led to the most frightful cruelties by their Cleons and other enragers. They massacred many hundreds of prisoners in cold blood, and long after they were taken. And the proscriptions and butcheries the adverse parties perpetrated on each other, as they gained the ascendancy, are frightful subjects of reflections, and hold out useful warnings to us. No nation of modern Europe excelled France, few equalled her—in courtesy—in mildness—in urbanity. And yet never did man exhibit himself under a more hideous aspect—never did he change nature more completely with wolves, tygers, and hyaenas, than under Marat, Danton, Couthon, and Robespierre. *These are awful lessons, to which those who are lending their aid to tear down the pillars of our government ought to attend.* Man is the same every where, under the same excitements. We have our Cleons, and our Couthons, and our Dantons, who only require suitable occasions to give scope to their energies. The American revolution exhibited in various places, where the parties were rancorously embittered against each other, many terrifying scenes. Prisoners were often hung up without trial by the partizans on both sides. Men and women were treacherously shot down in their houses. And not unfrequently private malice disguised itself under the cloak of public spirit, to sate its rage. Let us ponder well on those circumstances.

To apply a remedy to any evil, moral or physical, it is indispensably necessary to explore its nature—to ascertain its causes—and to trace their consequences. Any other procedure is the result of error and folly, and pregnant with defeat and disappointment.

With this view I respectfully solicit the public attention. I shall take a rapid, retrospective glance at the follies and guilt, which the factious and discordant state of our country has generated. As far as in my power I have divested myself of any party bias, and shall treat the subject as if it belonged to another age or nation. Whatever errors I may fall into, shall not arise from sinister intention—they shall be chargeable to inadvertence and human imperfection. And on my

freedom from partiality, I feel the more reliance, from my unalterable conviction, that both the hostile parties that divide this country, and who regard each other with so much hatred and jealousy, have largely contributed towards the misfortunes that have befallen us—the melancholy change that has taken place in our situation—and the dangers that threaten us. For it is impossible that a candid mind can review the scenes through which we have passed for some years, without a thorough conviction, that each has been guilty of most egregious errors, and follies, and occasionally of something worse than either; and that whenever the interests of the nation and the interests of the party came into collision, the former were too frequently sacrificed by both federalists and democrats to the latter. No man who has any public spirit, can take a review of our history without feeling the deepest regret at the extent of the mischief this miserable system of conduct has produced. It has defeated many of the noblest plans that the wisdom of the country has ever devised. I may be wrong in my calculations, but I believe it has prevailed to a greater extent here than in almost any other country. When the present generation sits for its picture to the historian, it will form a strong contrast to that which is passed and gone—

“O quantum mutatus ab illo!”

[O, how changed from what he once was!—ed.]

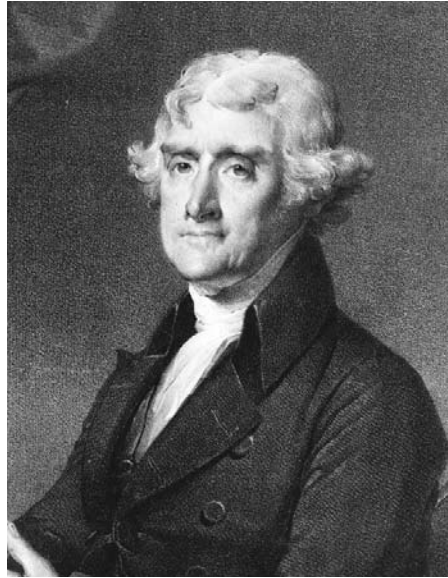
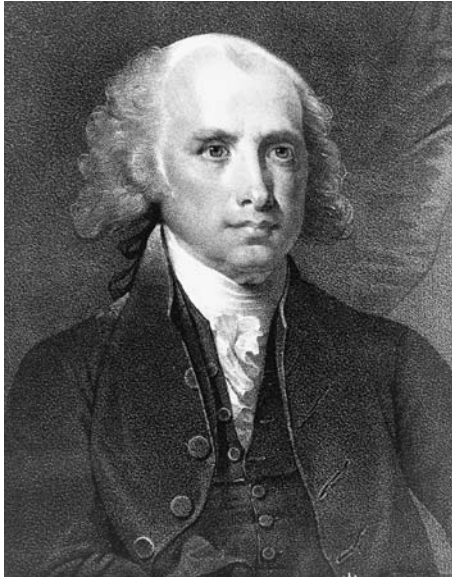
The errors or follies, however, of either party would have produced but little injury comparatively, had not those of the other conspired to give them malignity and effect.

From this exposition of my views, it is obvious I shall steer a course very different from the generality of writers on political topics. With hardly a single exception, their object is, having espoused a party, to justify and emblazon its supporters, whether right or wrong; and, it needs be,

“To make the worse appear the better cause.”

In pursuit of this object, their own partizans are all angels of light,—whose sublime and magnificent plans of policy are calculated to produce a political millennium; and their opponents, demons incarnate, intent on the destruction of the best interests of the country. These portraits are equally unjust and incorrect. One is all beauty, with little resemblance of the pretended original—the other a hideous caricature, equally foreign from honor, truth and justice.

Among the frightful consequences resulting from this odious practice, a plain and palpable one presents itself. These horrible portraits engender a satanical spirit of hatred, malice, and abhorrence in the parties towards each other. Men on both sides, whose views are perfectly pure and public spirited, are to each other objects of distrust and jealousy. We attach all possible guilt and wickedness—political at least—to our op-



Presidents Thomas Jefferson (right) (1801-09) and James Madison (1809-17), both Democratic-Republicans, took severe measures against the British, including in the War of 1812. They were “strenuously opposed” by the Federalists, “although the resistance of the two latter presidents has been among the strongest accusations alleged against them by their political adversaries,” wrote Carey. “It is impossible to reflect on these topics without sighing over human weakness and folly.”

ponents—and then detest the hobgoblins which we have ourselves created.

It is not thus society is constituted. The mass of mankind of all parties, and perhaps in all ages, have meant well, except in very corrupt states of society. And little more is necessary to produce harmony between them, than to understand each other correctly. But they are kept in hostility by the intrigues and management of demagogues, whose influence and consequence depend on fomenting discord, and who would sink into insignificance in times of tranquility. Mankind hate each other, not for real existing differences, but for phantoms, the production of heated imaginations. Experience has frequently evinced that the very plans of policy which parties out of power have reprobated and denounced as pernicious, they have pursued themselves as soon as they had vanquished their opponents, and seized on their places. And I believe every man of reflection will acknowledge that if the federalists had retained the administration in their hands, they would have advocated the rights of their country as firmly as their successors have done, and would probably have adopted measures to resist the pretensions of England, similar to those for which they have so strenuously, though not very honorably or consistently opposed the present administration.

In truth, this is not mere supposition. It is historical fact. It will be seen in the sequel of this work, that the federalists took as high ground on the subject of impressment, and as firmly and patriotically resisted the unjust pretensions of

England in that respect, as Mr. Jefferson or Mr. Madison has done; although the resistance of the two latter presidents has been among the strongest accusations alleged against them by their political adversaries. It is impossible to reflect on these topics without sighing over human weakness and folly. Federalism has in these transactions suffered a stain never to be effaced.

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## Chapter II: Errors of the Democratic Party

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In pursuance of my plan, I proceed to a review of those errors of the democratic party, which have contributed to produce the change in the prospects of this country, and to darken the political horizon; and I trust it will appear that I

have not done them injustice in charging them with having a large portion of the guilt to answer for.

### Federal Constitution

In the convention that formed the federal constitution, this party sowed the seeds of a premature dissolution of that instrument, and of the American confederacy.—Regarding society more as it ought to be, than as it has ever been, or is ever likely to be—led astray by theories more plausible than solid—applying to a free elective government, deriving all its powers and authorities from the voice of the people, maxims, and apprehensions, and precautions, calculated for the meridian of monarchy, they directed all their efforts, and all their views, towards guarding against oppression from the federal government. Whatever of authority or power, they divested it of, to bestow on the state governments, or reserve to the people, was regarded as an important acquisition. Against the federal government their fears and terrors were wholly directed. This was the *monstrum horrendum—ingens—informe* [A monster frightful, formless, immense (Virgil, *Aeneid*)—ed.], which they labored to cripple and chain down, to prevent its ravages.—The state government they regarded with the utmost complaisance, as the public protectors against their dreaded enemy of liberty. Alas! little did they suppose that our greatest dangers would arise from the usurpations of the state governments, some of which are disposed to jeopardize the general government. Unfortunately they were too successful. Their endeavours produced a constitution, which, however

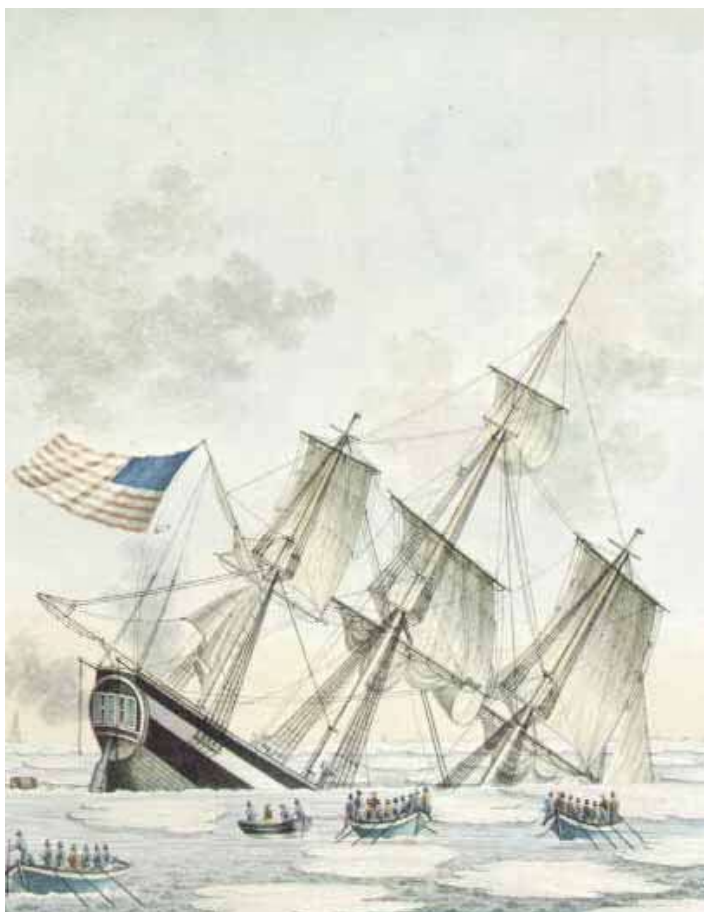
admirably calculated for a period of peace, has been found incompetent in war to call forth, at once and decisively, the energies of the nation, and which has been repeatedly bearded by the state governments. Had the real federalists in the convention succeeded, and made the government somewhat more energetic—endowed it with a small degree more of power—it might endure for centuries. What fate at present awaits it, is not in human wisdom to foresee. I fervently pray, with the celebrated father Paul, *esto perpetua* [Let it be perpetual—ed.].

This error of the *democratic party* arose from a want of due regard to the history of republics, and from a deep study of those political writers who had written under monarchical governments, and whose views were wholly directed to guard against the dangers flowing from the overweening regal power, especially when in the hands of men of powerful talents, and great ambition. The theories whence they derived their views of government were splendid and sublime—the productions of men of great public spirit, and regard for the public welfare and happiness—and had they been duly attempted by maxims drawn from experience, would have been of inestimable value.

### Establishment of a small Navy

The steady and factious opposition made by the democratic party to the establishment of a small navy, adequate at least to the protection of our own coasts, has been proved by the event to have been most wretched and miserable policy. It arose partly from the spirit of hostility toward the party in power, and partly from a sordid and contemptible spirit of economy, which has in many instances disgraced and dishonoured this part, who have frequently proved themselves, to use a very trite but very expressive, proverb, penny wise—pound foolish. When we analyze the boasted spirit of economy to which the opposition to a navy may be in part ascribed, we shall find it arises from two sources; the one, from men of narrow minds carrying into public, the huckstering habits of private life. The other, a base spirit of courting popularity by husbanding the public money, even on occasions when liberality is true economy, which is as frequently the case in public affairs as in private life. Both motives are equally contemptible; but the latter is the more pernicious, and produced the most ruinous consequences. It starves and smothers public undertakings, and public spirit, and often defrauds illustrious men of their due rewards. . . .

I feel confident, that the nation has lost ten times as much through want of a small navy, as it would have cost. Numbers of instances have occurred, of valuable merchantmen having been captured by petty pickaroons or pirates, with one or two guns. Our ports have been insulted and outraged by privateers and sloops of war, which a few vessels would have forced to keep a respectful distance. There is none of the points on



*The factional opposition by the Democratic Party to the establishment of a navy, to protect the U.S. coasts, “proved . . . to have been most wretched and miserable policy,” Carey wrote. “The nation has lost ten times as much through want of a small navy, as it would have cost.” Here, the U.S. schooner General Armstrong is sunk by the British, on Sept. 26, 1814.*

which the two hostile parties have differed, in which the democrats are so very far below their adversaries in consulting the real, the permanent honour and interest of the country, as in the establishment of a naval force. The policy of the federalists in this respect was dignified and honorable; that of the democrats miserably contracted.

### Alien and Sedition laws, and Eight per Cent Loan

The factious clamour excited against the sedition and alien laws, against the eight per cent. loan—which clamour was the principal means of changing the administration, and taking it from the hands of the federalists, to place it in those of the democrats—may be justly reckoned among the sins of the latter party. A candid review of the so-stiled [sic] sedition law, at the present hour, when the public ferment to which it gave rise, has wholly subsided, will satisfy any reasonable man, that so far from being an outrageous infringement of liberty, as was asserted, it was a measure not merely defensible;



*“Among the great sins of the democratic party, must be numbered the non-renewal of the charter of the bank of the United States,” charged Carey. The Bank (shown here), established by Hamilton, placed sovereignty over credit and money in the hands of the Federal government.*

but absolutely necessary and indispensable towards the support of government. [In a footnote, Carey admits he himself adapted to public opinion and opposed the sedition law at the time]. . . .

I have little to say respecting the alien law. It was liable to strong objections. It invested the president with powers that might be much abused. But it certainly never warranted the awful outcry that was raised against it. . . .

The eight per cent. loan remains. It was united with, and increased the clamour against the alien and sedition laws; and these three obnoxious measures, as I have already observed, precipitated the federalists from power. Yet we have since found that their successors, the democrats, have themselves given a greater interest than eight per cent. This would afford a glorious triumph to federalism over her inveterate rival, democracy, were it not that the annals of the former can furnish many instances of similar frailty, and inconsistency, and departure from professions. . . .

### Jay’s Treaty

The opposition to this instrument, which pervaded the union, and greatly disturbed the administration of Gen. Washington, was a factious procedure on the part of the democrats, who were led away by objections, plausible but not substantial—hardly one of which has been realized. This affair evinces the folly and danger of yielding to the sudden impulses of national feeling, which bear down every thing before them, and which wholly overpower the reason and understanding of even the wise and good, who *quoad hoc* [to this extent—ed.]

are only on a level with the much uninformed and uncultivated part of the community. . . .

### Of the errors of Mr. Jefferson’s Administration

It is unnecessary to mention more than three, denoting two very opposite extremes of character—the one highly bold and daring—the others displaying an equal degree of feebleness. . . .

[These are the Treaty with England, the Separation of the States, i.e., the right to secession, and the Embargo—ed.]

### Proffered Armistice

The first of the errors of Mr. Madison’s administration, that I shall notice, will be the refusal of the armistice offered by admiral Warren, on the 12th of September, 1812, nearly three months after the declaration. . . .

[Carey goes on to say that the war was totally just but that its expediency, given the chances of success, was not very clear.—ed.]

### The Appointment of Mr. Gallatin,

As minister to treat with England, was a very considerable error. . . .

### Recent neglect of due Preparations

Under this head, the president and the heads of departments are still more culpable than under any of the former ones.

From the period of the downfall of Bonaparte, and the

complete triumph of Great Britain and her allies, it was obvious to the meanest capacity that her powers of annoyance had increased prodigiously. The immense forces raised to aid the coalition against France were liberated from all employment but against us. And of the disposition of England to continue the war, we had the most convincing indications....

During all this deceitful calm, through which every man of discernment might readily and unerringly foresee the approaches of a fearful storm—as every indication from England, deserving of credit, portended a long, a desperate, and a vindictive warfare; the government of the United States took no measures to dispel the delusion. In vain the public looked to Washington for information on the prospect of affairs....

This conduct on the part of the administration was to the last degree culpable. It was a dereliction of duty that exposed our citizens to ruinous consequences....

The crash of the conflagration at Washington awakened us out of our slumbers, and dispelled the delusion.—We were then aroused to a full sense of our dangerous situation, and of the folly and supineness that had caused it. We went manfully to work—and in a few weeks made such preparations as renewed public confidence and promised fair to enable us to repel the enemy, should he make his appearance.

### Bank of the United States

Among the great sins of the democratic party, must be numbered the non-renewal of the charter of the bank of the United States. This circumstance injuriously affected the credit and character of this country abroad—produced a great deal of stagnation, distress, and difficulty at home—and is among the causes of the existing embarrassments and difficulties of the pecuniary concerns of the country. Were it now in existence, its capital might readily at any time be increased by congress, 10, 12, 30, or 40 millions, so as to aid the government most effectually, and support the national credit.

To the renewal of the charter there were various objections made, on the ground of inexpediency: but these had not much influence—nor were they entertained by many of the members. The grand difficulty arose from the idea so steadily maintained by the democratic party, that the constitution imparted no power to grant charters of incorporation. Many of the members who on this ground voted in the negative, most unequivocally admitted the *expediency* of a renewal of the charter.

This constitutional objection was obviated, it would appear, unanswerably. All the departments of the government, legislative, executive, and judiciary, had recognized the institution, at various times during the twenty years of its existence.

The courts of different states and *of the United States had sustained various suits brought by the bank in its corporate capacity*—by which so far as depended upon the judiciary, it had the seal of constitutionality stamped on it. This was a very serious, important, and decisive circumstance.

In addition to this, a democratic legislature of the United States had given it a most solemn sanction. In March 1804, an act had passed to authorize the institution to establish branches in the territories of the United States, which power was not embraced by the original charter. *This act was passed without a division, when nearly all the members were present.* No constitutional objection could have been then suggested; for such members as believed the measures unconstitutional, would indubitably have called for the ayes and nays in order to record their dissent....

These cases, with others which might be cited, produced this dilemma. They either, as I have stated, afford a complete recognition of the constitutionality of the charter, or a gross, palpable violation of the constitution, by the three several grand departments of the government....

It therefore follows irresistibly that every member who voted for the act of March 1804, and afterwards voted against a renewal of the charter, merely on the ground of unconstitutionality, was guilty of a manifest, if not a criminal inconsistency....

### The Capture of Washington

... It is not for me to decide on whom the censure ought to fall, on the president—the secretary at war—or the district general, Winder—or on the whole together. But let that point be determined as it may, it cannot be denied, that nothing but the most culpable neglect could have led to the results that took place....

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This detail of misconduct has been a painful talk. Far more agreeable would it have been to have descanted on the merits and talents of the president and the other public functionaries. To a man of a liberal mind it is infinitely more agreeable to bestow the meed of praise, than to deal out censure. But a rough truth is preferable to a smooth falsehood. And whatever chance we have of arriving at the haven of peace and happiness, depends upon a fair and candid examination of ourselves, which must infallibly result in a conviction that, so great have been the errors, the follies, and the madness on both sides, that mutual forgiveness requires no effort of generosity—it is merely an act of simple justice.

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Before I quit this branch of my subject, it is but proper to observe, that it is hardly possible to conceive of a more difficult and arduous situation than Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison have been placed in. They have had to struggle with two belligerents, one supremely powerful by land, and on that element holding in awe the chief part of the civilized world—the other equally powerful by sea;—and each in his rage against the other, violating the clearest and most indisputable rights of neutrals, and inflicting upon us, in a time of pretended peace, nearly as much injury as if we were ranked among the belligerents together. The federalists, as I shall shew more fully in



the sequel, after goading the government into resistance, and vilifying them for not procuring redress, thwarted, opposed, and rendered nugatory every rational effort made to accomplish the very object they professed to seek—a degree of madness and folly never-enough-to-be-deplored.

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## Chapter III: The Federalists

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Having thus taken what I hope will be allowed to be a candid view of the errors and misconduct of the democratic party, it remains to perform the same office for their opponents. And I feel confident, it will appear that the latter have as much need to solicit forgiveness of their injured country, as the former. In the career of madness and folly which the nation has run, they have acted a conspicuous part and may fairly dispute the palm with their competitors.

In the federal convention, this party made every possible exertion to increase the energy and add to the authority of the general government, and to endow it with powers taken from the state governments and from the people. Bearing strongly in mind the disorders and convulsions of some of the very ill-balanced republics of Greece and Italy, their sole object of dread appeared to be the inroads of anarchy. And as mankind too generally find it difficult to steer the middle course, their apprehensions of the Scylla of anarchy effectually blinded them to the dangers of the Charybdis of despotism. Had they possessed a complete ascendancy in the convention, it is probable they would have fallen into the opposite extreme to that which decided the tenor of the constitution.

This party was divided among themselves. A small but very active division were monarchists, and utterly disbelieved [sic] in the efficacy or security of the republican form of government, especially in a territory so extensive, as that of the United States, and embracing so numerous a population as were to be taken into the calculation at no distant period. The remainder were genuine republicans, men of enlightened views, and a high degree of public spirit and patriotism. They differed as widely from the democratic part of that body, as from the monarchists. It is unfortunate that their counsels did not prevail. For it is true in government, as in almost all other human concerns—

“In medio tutissimus ibis.”

Safety lies in the middle course. Violent and impassioned men lead themselves—and it is not wonderful they lead others astray. This party advocated an energetic, but at the same time a republican form of government, which on all proper occasions might be able to command and call forth the force of the nation.

The following letter [to Federalist Timothy Pickering—ed.] sheds considerable light on the views of Alexander Hamilton, who took a distinguished part in the proceedings of that

respectable body.—It is obvious that a president during good behaviour, could hardly be considered other than a president for life.

New York, Sept. 16, 1803

“My Dear Sir,—I will make no apology for my delay in answering your enquiry some time since made, because I could offer none which would satisfy myself—I pray you only to believe that it proceeded from any thing rather than want of respect or regard—I shall now comply with your request.

“The highest toned propositions which I made in the convention were for a president, senate and judges, during good behaviour; a house of representatives for three years. Though I would have enlarged the legislative power of the general government, yet I never contemplated the abolition of the state governments; but on the contrary, they were, in some particulars, constituent parts of my plan.

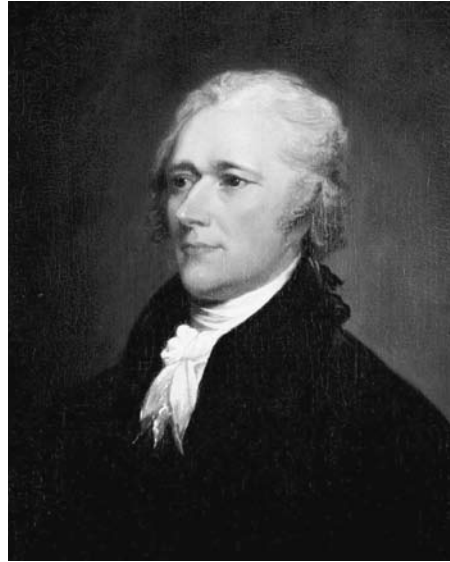
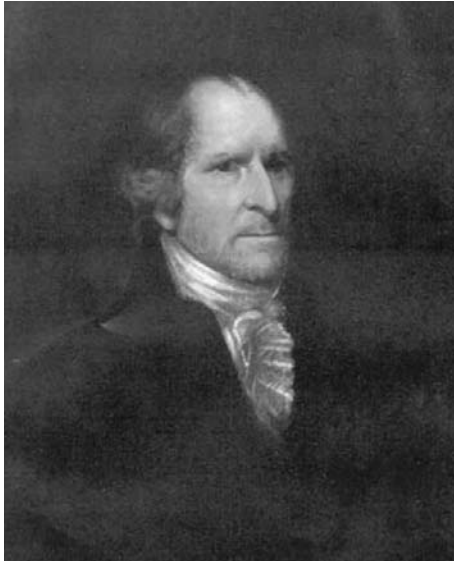
“This plan was, in my conception, conformable with the strict theory of a government purely republican; the essential criteria of which are, that the principal organs of the executive and legislative departments, be elected by the people, and hold their offices by a responsible and temporary or defeasible nature.

“A vote was taken on the proposition respecting the executive. Five states were in favour of it; among these Virginia; and though from the manner of voting by delegations, individuals were not distinguished; it was morally certain, from the known situation of the Virginia members (six in number, two of them Mason and Randolph professing popular doctrines) that Madison must have concurred in the vote of Virginia—thus, if I sinned against republicanism, Mr. Madison is not less guilty.

“I may truly then say that I never proposed either a president or senate for life, and that I neither recommended nor meditated the annihilation of the state governments.

“And I may add, that in the course of the discussions in the convention, neither the propositions thrown out for debate, nor even those voted in the earlier stages of deliberation, were considered as evidence of a definite opinion in the proposer or voter. It appeared to be in some sort understood, that, with a view to free investigation, experimental propositions might be made, which were to be received merely as suggestions for consideration. Accordingly it is a fact, that my final opinion was against an executive during good behaviour, on account of the increased danger to the public tranquility incident to the election of a magistrate of his degree of permanence. In the plan of a constitution which I drew up while the convention was sitting, and which I communicated to Mr. Madison about the close of it, perhaps a day or two after, the office of president has no longer duration than for three years.

“This plan was predicated upon these bases:—1 That the political principles of the people of this country would endure nothing but a republican government. 2 That in the actual situ-



In a September 1803 letter to Federalist Thomas Pickering, a former Secretary of State and Massachusetts Senator, Alexander Hamilton (right), strongly defended his own republican views. The plan for a strong central government adopted by the Constitutional Convention, Hamilton stated, “was, in my conception, conformable with the strict theory of a government purely republican.”

ation of the country, it was right and proper that the republican theory should have a fair and full trial—3 That, to such a trial it was essential that the government should be so constructed as to give it all the energy and the stability reconcilable with the principles of that theory—These were the genuine sentiments of my heart, and upon them I then acted.

“I sincerely hope that it may not hereafter be discovered, that through want of sufficient attention to the last idea, the experiment of republican government, even in this country, has not been as complete, as satisfactory, and as decisive as could be wished.

Very truly, dear sir,  
Your friend and servant,  
A. Hamilton

In the conflict of opinion that took place in the convention, there was a necessity for a spirit of compromise, in order to secure success to their labours—The tenacity of some leading men of adverse opinions had nearly rendered the effort abortive. According to Luther Martin, Esq. one of the Maryland delegates, the convention was several times on the verge of adjournment, *re infecta* [the business being unfinished—ed.]. The good fortune of the nation prevailed, and after a session of about four months, the constitution was finally agreed upon, and submitted to public discussion.

The federal party immediately took the reins, and administered the government of the United States for twelve years. During this period, its want of sufficient energy, and its danger from the state governments, were frequent subjects of impassioned complaint. Every man who opposed the measures of

the administration, of what kind soever they were, or from whatever motives, was stigmatized as a disorganizer and a jacobin, which last terms involved the utmost extent of human atrocity; a jacobin was, in fact an enemy to social order—to the rights of property—to religion—and to morals—and ripe for rapine and spoil.

As far as laws could apply a remedy to the feebleness of the general government, they sedulously endeavoured to remove the defect. They fenced around the constitutional authorities, as I have stated, with an alien and sedition law. By the former, they could banish from our shores obnoxious foreigners whose period of probation had not expired. By the latter, every libel against the government, and every unlawful attempt to oppose its measures, were subject to

punishment, more or less severe, in proportion to its magnitude.

The alien law was not, as far as I can ascertain, ever carried into effect. It was hung up *in terrorem* [in order to frighten—ed.] over the heads of several foreigners, who, in the language of the day, were rank jacobins, and of course enemies of God and man. But the case was far different with the sedition law. Several individuals could bear testimony from experience, to the severity with which its sanctions were enforced. Some cases occurred of a tragicomical kind, particularly one in New Jersey, in which the culprit was found guilty under this law for the simple wish that the wadding of a gun, discharged on a festival day, had made an inroad into, or singed the posteriors of Mr. Adams, then president of the United States.

But every thing in this sublunary world is liable to revolution; and this is proverbially the case with power in a republican government. The people of the United States changed their rulers. By the regular course of election, they withdrew the reins from the hands of the federalists, and placed them in those of the democrats.

This was a most unexpected revolution to the federalists. It wholly changed their views of the government. It has been asserted in England that a tory in place, becomes a whig when out of place—and that a whig when provided with a place, becomes a tory. And it is painful to state that too many among us act the same farce. The government, which, administered by themselves, was regarded as miserably feeble and inefficient, became, on its transition, arbitrary and despotic; notwithstanding that among the earliest acts of the new incumbents, was the repeal not merely of the alien and sedition laws, but of

some of the most obnoxious and oppressive taxes!

Under the effects of these new and improved political views, a virulent warfare was begun against their successors. The gazettes patronized by those devoted to federalism, were unceasing in their efforts to degrade, disgrace, and defame the administration. All its errors were industriously magnified, and ascribed to the most perverse and wicked motives. Allegations wholly unfounded, and utterly improbable, were reiterated in regular succession. A constant and unvarying opposition was maintained to all its measures, and hardly ever was there the slightest allowance made for the unprecedented and convulsed state of the world. And never was there more ardour and energy displayed in a struggle between two hostile nations, than the opposition manifest in their attacks upon the administration. The ruinous consequences of this warfare, and its destruction of the vital interests of the nation, will fully appear in the sequel. . . .

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## Chapter XLI. Address to the Federalists of the United States

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Gentlemen,

An attentive perusal of the preceding pages can, I hope, hardly have failed to place me beyond the suspicion of the despicable vice, flattery—and must give to my commendation at least the merit of sincerity.

After these introductory remarks, I made no scruple to declare my decided conviction, that in private life I know of no party, in ancient or modern history, more entitled to respect, to esteem, to regard, than the American federalists in general—in all the social relations of husbands, parents, brothers, children, and friends.—There are exceptions. But they are as few as apply to any body equally numerous. Political prejudice, or the widest difference of opinions, has never so far obscured my visual ray, as to prevent me from discerning, or my reasoning faculty from acknowledging this strong, this honourable truth—the more decisive in its nature, from being pronounced by a political opponent.

But, fellow citizens, after this frank declaration in your praise as to private life, and for private virtue, let me freely discuss your public conduct. Believe me I mean not to offend. I trust I shall not. I address you the words of truth. The crisis forbids the use of ceremony. I hope you will give the subject a serious consideration—and receive with indulgence what emanates from candor and friendship.

I believe there is not to be found in the widest range of history another instance of a party so enlightened, so intelligent, so respectable, and in private life so virtuous, yielding themselves up so blindly, so submissively, and with so complete an abandonment of the plainest dictates of reason and common sense, into the hands of leaders so undeserving of their confi-

dence. In and after the days of Washington, you stood on a proud eminence—on high and commanding ground. You were the friends of order and good government. You were tremblingly alive to the honour of your country. You identified it with your own. But it is difficult to find a more lamentable change in the conduct of any body of men than has taken place with your leaders. The mind can hardly conceive a greater contrast than between a genuine Washingtonian federalist of 1790, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, and the Bostonian, who, covered with the pretended mantle of Washington federalism, destroys the credit of his own government—and collects the metallic medium of the nation to foster the armies preparing to attack and lay it waste. Never were holy terms so prostituted. Washington from heaven looks down with indignation at such a vile perversion of the authority of his name. . . .

Let me request your attention to a few facts—and to reflections and queries, resulting from them—

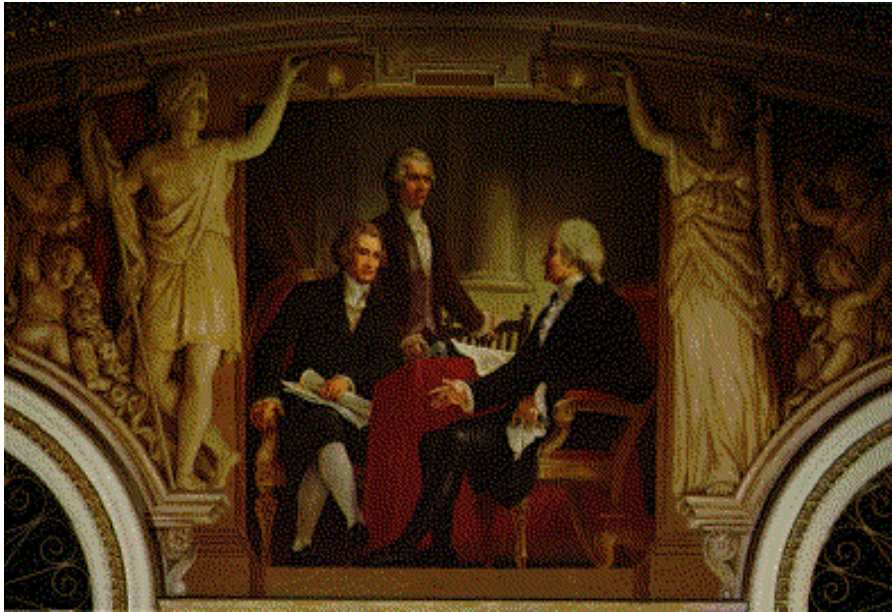
I. Your proceedings and your views are eulogized in Montreal, Quebec, Halifax, London, and Liverpool. The Courier and the Times, and all the other [British] government papers are loud and uniform in your praise.—*This is an awful fact*, and ought to make you pause in your career.

II. *Your party rises as your country sinks. It sinks as your country rises.* This is another awful fact. It cannot fail to rend the heart of every public-spirited man among you. By the love of the God of Peace—by the shade of Washington—by that country which contains all you hold dear, I adjure you to weigh well this sentence—*you sink as your country rises*. Yes, it is indubitably so. It is a terrific and appalling truth. And *you rise as that desponding, lacerated, perishing, betrayed country sinks*. I would rather be a dog, and bay the moon, than stand in this odious predicament.

III. Had there been two or three surrenders like General Hull's [who treacherously surrendered his troops, who were in fact several times the size of the British forces opposing him] . . . or had our [warships] been sunk and our [military and government leaders] been killed or taken prisoners, your leaders would have been crowned with complete success: They would have been wafted on a spring tide to that power which is "the God of their idolatry." *Every event that sheds lustre on the arms of America is to them a defeat.* . . . But every circumstance that entails disgrace or distress on the country, whether it be bankruptcy defeat, treachery, or cowardice, is auspicious to their views. . . .

V. By fulminations from the pulpit—by denunciations from the press—by a profuse use of British government bills—by unusual, unnecessary, hostile, and oppressive drafts for specie on the New York banks, and by various other unholy, treasonable, and wicked means, the leaders of your party in Boston have reduced the government to temporary bankruptcy; have produced the same effect on the banks; have depreciated the stocks and almost every species of property 10 to 20 per cent.

VI. These treasonable operations have served the cause of



*Carey called on his countrymen to put aside partisan wrangling: "By the love of the God of Peace—by the shade of Washington—by that country which contains all you hold dear, I adjure you to weigh well this sentence—you sink as your country rises." Shown, a painting of President Washington in consultation with Cabinet members Jefferson and Hamilton, by Constantino Brumidi (1870-73).*

England more effectually than Lord Wellington could have done with 30,000 of his bravest veterans. They have produced incalculable, and to many, remediless distress.

VII. *After having thus treasonably destroyed credit of the government, one of their strongest accusations is its bankruptcy!*

VIII. A man who ties another, neck and heels, and gags him, might, with equal justice, blow out his brains for not singing Yankee doodle, or dancing a fandango, as those who produce bankruptcy inculcate the bankrupt with his forlorn and desperate circumstances.

IX. There is no other country in the world, where these proceedings would not be punished severely—in many they would be capitally. Their guilt is enormous, clear, and indisputable. They strike at the safety, and even the existence, of society....

XI. While you submit to leaders, whose career is so iniquitous, were you in private life as pure as archangels, you partake largely of the guilt of those whom you uphold; whose power of destruction depends on your support; and who would sink into insignificance, but for your countenance.

XII. If the pretext, or even the strong belief, on the part of the minority, that a war, or any other measure, is unjust, can warrant such a jacobinical, seditious, and treasonable opposition as the present has experienced, no government can exist....

XIII. The most unerring characteristic of a desperate faction, *is an uniform opposition to all the measures proposed by its opponents, whether good or bad, and without offering sub-*

*stitutes.* The more dangerous the crisis, and the more necessary the measures, the more infallible the criterion.

XIV. This characteristic exactly and most indisputably applies to your leaders. This country is on the brink of perdition. Yet they have opposed and defeated every measure devised for our salvation. They appear determined to deliver us tied hand and foot into the power of the enemy, unless they can seize the reins of government....

XIX. Suppose your leaders at Washington succeed in driving Mr. Madison, and the other public functionaries from office, and seize upon the reins of government themselves, what a melancholy disgraceful triumph would it not be, to raise your party on the ruins of your form of government....

XXII. You profess to desire peace. I firmly believe you do. But are divisions, and distractions and envenomed factions, and threatened insurrections,

the seed to sow for a harvest of peace?...

XXIV. ...I plead not, fellow citizens, for democracy; I plead not for federalism. Their differences have sunk into utter insignificance. Were the contest between *them*, I should not have stained a single sheet of paper. I plead against jacobinism; I plead against faction; I plead against attempts to "overawe and control the constituted authorities." I plead the cause of order, of government; of civil and religious liberty. I plead for the best Constitution the world ever saw; I plead for your honor as a party, which is in the utmost jeopardy. I plead for your estates, which are going to ruin. I plead for your bleeding country, which lies prostrate and defenseless, pierced with a thousand wounds. I plead for your aged parents, for your tender children, for your beloved wives, for your posterity, whose fate depends upon your conduct at this momentous crisis.

All, all, loudly implore you to withdraw your support from those who are leagued for their destruction, and who make you instruments to accomplish their unholy purposes. You are on the verge of a gaping vortex, ready to swallow up yourselves and your devoted country.... Aid in extricating your country from danger. And then, if you select calm, and dispassionate, and moderate candidates for public office, there can be no doubt of your success. I am firmly persuaded that nothing but the intemperate and unholy violence of your leaders has prevented you from having that share of influence in the councils of the nation to which your wealth, your numbers, your talents, and your services, give you so fair a claim....