

LETTERS OF SAMUEL TAGGART,
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS, 1803—1814

PART I, 1803—1807

INTRODUCTION BY GEORGE HENRY HAYNES.

THESE letters of Rev. Samuel Taggart were given to the American Antiquarian Society May 31, 1867, by Henry W. Taylor, son of Rev. John Taylor the man to whom all of them were written. They number about one hundred and cover a period of a little more than eleven years.

The writer, Samuel Taggart, was born in Londonderry, New Hampshire in 1754; was graduated from Dartmouth College in 1774; studied theology, was ordained to the Presbyterian ministry, and at the age of twenty-three was installed as pastor of the church in Coleraine, Franklin County, Massachusetts, February 19, 1777. He retained that pastorate nearly forty-two years, until his retirement in 1819. He died in Coleraine, April 24, 1823.

He was elected to the 8th Congress, and held the position of representative from March 4, 1803, to March 4, 1817. To us, familiar with twentieth-century politics, it seems strange that at the age of fifty a Presbyterian parson from a church in a little hill town of 2000 inhabitants should have secured an election to Congress and should have retained his seat for seven terms.

Mr. Taggart was a man of large frame, corpulent and slow of movement. Many stories are told of his marked eccentricities, even in the pulpit. His ministerial contemporaries—in contrast with the inscription on his tombstone—give us the impression

that his ministry was not notably successful. To quote from one of them: "His sermons were evangelical, scriptural, able and long. He once said, he had no short sermons. He was not eloquent but monotonous and dull in delivery. He was not accustomed to visit his people much or be very familiar with them. . . . When one of his sons was at one time in an interesting state of mind, and he wished to have him instructed, he did not feel free to converse with him, but wrote over a sheet of paper to impart counsel and instruction to him, and requested a neighboring minister to converse with him."

During his seven terms in Congress, his pulpit was filled by a long list of ministerial "supplies," and these letters, it seems to the reader, do not betray an overwhelming sense of responsibility for the church to which he was giving such extended absent treatment. A neighboring minister frankly recorded: "His absence from his people proved unfavorable to their religious prosperity." And John Randolph—one of the very few men of national prominence with whom he seems to have become acquainted—is said one time to have asked this pastor-congressman, "And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?"

In his day the journey from his home to Washington took six days of stage-coach travel. During most of these years spent in Washington, his oldest son managed the Coleraine farm, keeping the home fires burning and the table supplied. This was no slight task, for Congressman Taggart's first wife bore him fourteen children, and his second wife, whose acquaintance he had made in Washington, brought his patriarchal record up to seventeen.

Mr. Taggart was a man of very retentive memory. He used to boast that he knew the name of every one who had been a member of Congress during his fourteen years of service at Washington, and that he could give a description of each individual. He was con-

scientious in attending sessions of the House, but as a member of a hopeless minority he did not consider it worth while to take an active part in the debates, especially as he frankly recognized that the many attorneys in the House were better equipped for debate than was a man of his own calling. Apparently he was no "mixer." He cites many men's opinions, expressed in private conversation, but almost always it is apparent that he was a bystander, not a participant in the conversation. When not in attendance at sessions of the House, he spent most of his time alone in his chamber. It is said that he read the Bible through each winter that he spent in Washington. He longed for the society of his home friends, and repeatedly declared that he wrote so many and so long letters to please himself, and to avoid the ennui from which he would otherwise suffer.

The Rev. John Taylor, to whom all of these letters running through eleven years were addressed, was eight years Mr. Taggart's junior. Born in Westfield, Massachusetts, he was graduated from Yale College in 1787, and at the age of 25 was installed over the Congregational Church in Deerfield, Massachusetts. Not only were these two correspondents for many years pastors of churches in neighboring Franklin County towns, but they seem to have been closer drawn together by several months of itinerant missionary service in the Black River country of New York in 1802. They also sympathized with each other in the joys and sorrows incident to the headship of large families. Himself the fourteenth child of the Hon. Eldad Taylor, who was the fourteenth child of the Rev. Edward Taylor, this Deerfield pastor almost equalled Bro. Taylor's record, for he was the father of eleven children.

Two or three years after this correspondence starts, Mr. Taylor left his Deerfield pastorate because of ill health, and settled on a farm in Enfield, Connecticut, where he soon regained his strength. He was often

elected as the town's representative to the Connecticut legislature.

It is to be borne in mind, therefore, that all of these letters were written by one country parson to another country parson of practically the same point of view, a man keenly interested and actively participating in politics.

References in these letters show that Parson Taylor made repeated requests to Congressman Taggart to procure for him a copy of a certain patent. After repeated visits to the Patent Office he succeeded in securing for him the desired document, but discovered that there was a belief at the Patent Office that the patent in question had been obtained by fraud, and that there was a keen interest as to the name and address of the agent of the patentee who was evidently dickering with Parson Taylor for its sale or lease. The patent covered an invention in which Mr. Taylor would naturally be intensely interested, an improved process for "*rectifying spirits.*" Some months later, Mr. Taggart writes: "It is a long time since I have heard from you. I suppose you are closely occupied with your distillery." And within another year we find him writing, apparently in response to criticism from Parson Taylor: "When taxes are necessary for a legitimate object, I view domestic distilled spirits a fair subject of taxation to a certain extent." Despite his activities as a distiller, Mr. Taylor seems to have been a devoted preacher and pastor, and a public spirited and very serviceable citizen.

The eleven years covered by these letters were a gloomy period for Federalist representatives in Washington. Congressman Taggart's letters throughout show a vein of distrust and disgust for the leaders and the policies of the party in power. His first letter refers to the recently consummated Louisiana Purchase; troubled relations with England and France, and the embargo are the themes which he most frequently discusses; and the correspondence closes in 1814,

when the war with England was nearing an end, and the dissatisfaction of New England Federalists was finding a vent in the Hartford Convention.

In printing the following letters, punctuation has occasionally been inserted where necessary to the sense, evident slips in spelling have been corrected, and the paragraph structure has been improved. It has also been necessary to correct the chronological order of the letters, which in the original manuscript volume have been often erroneously bound. The only omissions in printing are in the case of irrelevant comment, pious reflections and redundancy of thought, all of which material is unnecessary for the student and only tends to make the letters prolix and monotonous. Such omissions are indicated by asterisks. The task of editing these letters and preparing them for press has been entrusted to Mrs. Mary Robinson Reynolds, assistant librarian of the Society.

WASHINGTON CITY, October 28, 1803.

REV'D SIR:

Business in the House of Representatives is attended so close that I can scarcely gain time to write to a friend, besides I have so many calls for correspondence that I find it difficult to answer them. I must refer you pretty much to the public papers for an account of the proceedings of Congress.

The treaty for the purchase and *capias* of Louisiana has received the constitutional sanction of the President, and the Senate and the House of Representatives have voted a concurrence by a very large majority. It underwent a large and animated debate from 11 to nearly 8 in the evening. The principal speakers in favour of, were Mr. John Randolph, Mr. Elliot, of Vermont, who spoke nearly two hours, Mr. Mitchell, New York, Mr. Nicholson, Maryland, and others more briefly. Mr. Purviance, from North Carolina, voted in favour of it, but his vote was I thought purchased dear. It was one of the severest philippics upon the present administration that were perhaps ever delivered in this House. I cannot recollect all the speeches against the motion; the principal were Mr.

Griswold, New York, Mr. Griswold, Connecticut, Mr. Goddard, Mr. Dana & Mr. Thatcher; Messrs. Griffin and Joseph Lewis Jr. from Virginia also spoke against it. The debates probably you will see soon. They have not as yet appeared in the papers printed in the city. I confess that by all the ingenuity displayed on the floor of the House, my objections against the treaty were not removed. I conceive it to be passing the bounds of the Constitution as a right to annex implies a right to dispose of territory, and as it was a transfer of the inhabitants to a foreign jurisdiction without their consent asked, or received. It is still a matter of uncertainty what is purchased, and supposing the whole territory of Louisiana to resemble the Garden of Eden its being annexed can be no advantage to the United States, but the fifteen millions of dollars is gone in quest of the twenty millions plundered from our merchants. Such is the present order of things.

Today, a resolution has passed the House so as in all future elections of President and Vice-President to designate the particular office for which the person is voted for, the resolution at large probably you will soon see in the public papers. This was introduced either the first, or second day of the session by Mr. Dawson, from Virginia. It was found to be very difficult to agree upon the subject as almost every one had an amendment of his own. While they were proposing, modifying and altering the several amendments the Federal members were silent. It was in some papers that thro a disagreement the motion would have been lost, but late last evening a resolution was agreed upon and was called up today. Mr. Unger, of South Carolina, Mr. Griswold, of New York, Mr. Hastings and Mr. Thatcher, of Massachusetts, and Messrs. Goddard and Smith, of Connecticut, spoke against it at considerable length, and its friends saw fit not to introduce one solitary argument in its favour, why when they had received orders from a superior to vote, but not to debate, is far from me to conjecture; at the call of the yeas and nays it passed by the constitutional majority 88 to 31. Nine Federal members were absent. Gen. Wadsworth, from Massachusetts, and Mr. Betton from New Hampshire were indisposed. Mr. Betton has been sick ever since his arrival; and seven viz., Mr. Bruce, of Massachusetts, Messrs. Talmage and Baldwin, of Connecticut, Messrs.

Van Rensselaer and Tibbitts, from New York, Mr. Dennis, from Maryland, and Mr. Loundes from South Carolina have not arrived. For myself I have been formerly rather in favour of designating and rather wondered why that provision was not inserted in the Constitution, but still thought it a matter of so small consequence that it was best not to risk an alteration of the original instrument, but when I came to hear the subject discussed I cannot but view that to be an important provision in the Constitution. The subject has been already agitated in the Senate whether it obtains the constitutional majority of two thirds there is not yet determined. I still indulge a hope that the prospect may be arrested.

I had thought of writing more at large on public affairs but on more mature consideration I believe it inexpedient; neither have I time as the business of Congress has this week in particular been hurried on with great rapidity. I have not as yet ventured on the floor. I believe men of my occupation are not so well calculated to make a figure as public speakers with experienced attorneys. We, however, have speakers of all descriptions, and wisdom and folly are I believe both tolerably well represented. The majority contains some pretty distinguished speakers. Mr. Nicholson, Maryland, Mr. Randolph, New York, and Mr. Rodney, of Delaware are some of the most distinguished. Mr. Elliott has made abundant attempts to distinguish himself. You will see something of his reception among spectators by the paper inclosed. Many of the new members have already seen fit to occupy the floor. Mr. Griffin, a new Federal member from Virginia, from one short attempt he made is I think something of an orator. In the majority Mr. Rodney, of Delaware offers fair to make the most distinguished figure; he appears to be a man of correct ideas and great candor, and I hope he and some others will exert their influence to check excesses which are otherwise to be feared. I have had one short interview with the President. He appears to be a gentleman of polite manners and had I been entirely free from prepossession I should have viewed him in a favourable point of light. * * *

With sentiments of esteem I am,

Your friend and brother,

SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, January 13, 1804.

MY DEAR SIR:

* * * I wish there was not too much reason for the gloominess of your picture of the present aspect of public affairs. I wish that I was able to remove the dark shades from the picture by stating truly that the present triumphant majority in Congress, tho differing from the Federalists in their attachments to men, and to some particular measures, were still invariably pursuing the public good, and the honour and independence of their country without any regard to party feelings and attachments. But from some recent events, I have a further confirmation that to crush the Federalists throughout the Union is with many the first and great object. Until a few days ago I had indulged a hope, that after the constitutional question had been carried by the triumphant majority, and the absurd resolution for altering, I will not call it amending the Constitution where by an important constitutional provision was sacrificed, merely as incense offered at the shrine of an idol, that there would have been little more to have called up the feelings of party during the remainder of the session. To cherish such an hope appearances were for some time favourable.

Sundry of our proceedings were carried on with harmony, or where there was debating it was amicable and without reference to the great political parties. Upon several questions of very considerable importance I was peculiarly gratified not barely by seeing the votes, but also by hearing a number who have been considered as leading characters in the majority, stepping forth and ably advocating national measures upon Federal ground, particularly in the resolution about abolishing the office of Commissioner of Loans and some resolutions about the fleet. In this number I am happy to number Dr. Eustis, Dr. S. Mitchel, Mr. Nicholson, and Mr. Joseph Clay. In questions wherein they took Federal ground it was difficult for John Randolph to carry a point and he sometimes got out-voted. But whether it was that John was apprehensive, his influence was on the decline, or that he proposed to himself to do a meritorious action by sacrificing a few Federalists, he upon the fifth instant brought forward a resolution to move

an enquiry into the official conduct of Judge Chase preparatory to an impeachment which after three days debate was past, 81 affirmative; negative 4; and a committee of 7 appointed to carry it into effect. I have already written several statements of this extraordinary affair to different persons, and I cannot now go over the ground again; besides I do not wish to revive the feelings I had during that three days discussion. I wrote as accurate a statement as I was capable to Dr. Lyman, and gave him liberty if he thought it worth while to publish it in the Northampton prints, and another to Major McGee.

You will probably, if not before this time, in one way or another soon become acquainted with particulars. I view this as a first step to prostrate the Supreme Court, or at least to displace the present Federal bench, and substitute Democrats in their place. Judge Chase is more obnoxious to the ruling party perhaps, than any of the other judges and therefore it is proposed to make a beginning with him. He was the presiding judge in all the tryals in the circuit court of the United States which grew out of the last Pennsylvania whiskey insurrection, particularly in the tryal of Fries for high treason, as also in several tryals under the sedition law, particularly in those of Cooper in Pennsylvania, and Callender for writing the prospect before us. His proceedings in these tryals were perhaps sufficiently severe, at least they will ever be viewed so among the abettors and favourers of the whiskey business, and those who were disposed to legalize slander and calumny. But the greatest crime of all of which Chase has been guilty, is that he is an able, bold and independent Federalist, and consequently must be pulled down, but for further particulars about this affair I must refer you to other sources.

With respect to the alteration in the Constitution, I still indulge a hope that it will not obtain a ratification by a constitutional number of States to make it a part of the Constitution. If five states should continue to oppose it, the resolution will be lost. Three of the New England states viz., New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut I think will undoubtedly reject it by a considerable majority. A majority of the Legislature of the State of Delaware, is decidedly Federal, and it is thought that the able opposition made by

the Senators of that state, particularly by Mr. White, in the Senate of the United States, will have some influence in the State Legislature, quite as much as those of the pliant Rodney who is said to be as good as two. The greatest danger I think arises by the states being taken by surprize and adopting before the debates are published and the subject fully considered. I believe that the Legislature of North Carolina ratified it the next day after they received it. The bill for that purpose was brought in and read twice the same evening. But I understand that the Legislature of South Carolina has adjourned, without day, not to meet again until after a new election without taking up the subject. The parties in that state have been very nearly balanced and the decided part which Mr. Butler, a leading Democrat in that state made to it in the Senate of the United States, precisely upon the same ground on which Federalists opposed it will have some effect, especially as by the adjournment of this Legislature they will have time to consider and will not be taken on surprize. Some hopes are also entertained that Vermont, tho one of the forwardest to urge the alteration, will finally not accede to it; their Federal members Messrs. Chamberlain, and Chittenden have, I believe, taken much pains in circulating Mr. Tracy's speech in that state. Mr. Elliott's opposition to it it is thought will have considerable influence. A leading Democratic member of the Vermont Legislature has also lately been in this city, and has gone home to meet the Legislature determined to do all he can against it, and if either Vermont, or South Carolina, or New York, of which some small hopes are entertained should oppose, the alteration cannot be carried. It is always best to hope as long as there is any ground for it, and in this hope I shall take leave of the subject by observing that the States of Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Maryland and Ohio have already ratified the proposed alteration.

I think that our northern papers as well as some in this vicinity are rather too severe upon our neighbor Elliott. It is true his first speech upon the Louisiana treaty was a piece of ridiculous bombast. If possible it was threefold more so than it appeared in the northern papers as I presume there never was half of it printed. It wanted of little of two hours long; with

many others I left my seat and did not hear half of it, and I expect he felt both mortified and disappointed by his own party, and speaking too often at other times has rather injured him. But still considering his advantages, he is undoubtedly a man of talents and considerable information, and he has one qualification for which many of our Democratic members are by no means distinguished, i. e. party, or no party he will act his own opinion. If he cannot be a Democratic leader he will not be governed by them. Even John Randolph can't govern him. He sometimes attacks John with a great degree of severity and considerable effect. He has several times voted with the Federalists, and upon the constitutional question, as well as upon the resolution for the committee of enquiry, or rather impeachment, he acted with a degree of independence which did him honour. I think he must be advanced from a serjeant to an ensign at least. Indeed, I could name I know not but half a dozen in Congress bearing the title of general who are not half equal to him.

Notwithstanding all his enthusiasm in favour of the Louisiana treaty, when the bill came from the Senate investing the President with absolute dictatorial power in that territory, or in plain words constituting Thomas Jefferson king of Louisiana, he with equal warmth opposed it. Altho I cannot myself but view the Louisiana treaty as in every way pernicious, and in a peculiar manner the bane of New England, yet it has among Federalists in this country some enthusiastic admirers. There is not perhaps a more stiff uncomplying Federalist either in Congress, or out than Gen. Dayton, one of the Senators of New Jersey, but I presume that this purchase has scarcely a more enthusiastic admirer in either House of Congress.

The affairs of Europe have a most solemn and threatening aspect. England at this time stands alone in fighting the battles of the civilized world, and the time probably is before this arrived when the die is cast. With anxiety I receive every paper which arrives and peruse them with eagerness, expecting the account of some grand event. If England should fall, I see nothing short of an almost miraculous interposition of Providence that can save the United States; and yet

so stupid are multitudes among us that they would rejoice in England's subjugation. Not more than two or three days ago I heard a member of Congress assert with as much confidence as if he was in the secret, that with the bulk of the British nation all the preparation to repel the French invasion was nothing but a farce. All Bonaparte's object was only to effect a revolution in the present system of representation, and set the Prince of Wales on the throne; and that Bonaparte and the Prince of Wales, as well as the principal part of the British nation, perfectly understood each other; that he had nothing to do but to land in Great Britain and more than two thirds of the British would flock to his standard; that the matter was well settled when Mr. Fox was in France last year. Methinks you will stare and after so much experience as the world has had of French fraternity, and liberty, will hardly believe we can have so great a fool in Congress; but the representation is literally true, and if Willis Alston was the only fool in Congress, our situation would be better than it is.

With respect to the religious and moral state of affairs in this city, I can only observe that if we were to judge solely by appearances on the Lord's day we would conclude that there was very little religion. Public worship, however, we have in various forms. We have preaching every Lord's day in the forenoon in Congress Hall; one of our chaplains is an Episcopalian, the other a Baptist, they preach by turns in the Hall; if there is no stranger, a clergyman occasionally present. We have a Roman Catholic priest, and a Scotch Presbyterian minister also in the city. I usually attend the Presbyterian meeting, partly because it is nigher to my lodgings, and partly because I am better suited with the religious instructions there than any other place. But all these societies appear to be small and I am apprehensive that a great part of the inhabitants attend no public worship whatsoever. And, indeed, I believe many members of Congress add nothing to the religious ornament of the city.

You ask me for a description of the personal appearance of several individuals, With respect to Monsieur Gallatin I cannot gratify you from personal knowledge. I have never seen him unless it was in a company wherein I had no oppor-

tunity to distinguish him. People who know him say his personal appearance is rather unfavourable. As for the President, he is a tall meagre figure above six feet high, I should think, one or two inches; extremely lean and slender, and is upon the whole far from handsome; his hair I suppose was originally sandy or what we usually call red, but age has whitened it. He affects great plainness in his dress and appearance; he keeps no carriage but when he goes abroad it is on horse back and commonly without any servant to attend him, which is more strange in this country than in New England, for here it is very rare for any man affecting the stile of a gentleman to ride out without a servant. It is whispered that the British Ambassador is not at all charmed with Democratic Majesty. It is said that when on a day and hour appointed, the Ambassador waited upon him for the purpose of presenting his credentials and being acknowledged in his official capacity, dressed in the robes of his office, our exalted chief magistrate received him in his gown and slippers; some add his night cap, but that is I suppose an hyperbole. I believe the Ambassador rather took it in dudgeon and thought he was ill treated.

As to Mr. John Randolph you can scarcely form an idea of a human figure whose appearance is more contemptible. He is rather taller than middle size, extremely slender, he never had a razor on his face and has no more appearance of beard than a boy of 10 years old, and his voice is the same. Tho between thirty and forty years of age at the distance of a few yards, he would not suppose him more than 13 when you are nigh him he appears older. By his appearance one would suppose him to be either by nature, or manual operation fixed for an Italian singer, indeed there are strong suspicions of a physical disability. He is extremely careless, and even slovenly in his dress; but he has a talent for ready speaking tho by no means what you would call a first rate orator, and his insolent haughty overbearing disposition knows no bounds. As it respects Mr. Breckenridge with his mental qualifications I am unacquainted, never happening to have heard him speak when occasionally in the Senate Chamber. His personal appearance is favourable. He is of good size, and well proportioned, and a

pleasant agreeable countenance and dresses very much in taste. His personal appearance is upon the whole quite respectable.

Since the passing of the resolution for the committee of enquiry in the case of Judge Chase, the business has been closely attended to and sessions lengthy, I know not of anything of that general importance as to merit a detail. Next week we have to go into the field of Georgia land speculation. Two petitions have been presented one from Virginia, and the other from a South Carolina company. A committee has reported upon these petitions against the prayer of the petitioners, and Monday next is appointed for their agents to be heard by counsel upon the floor of the House. I believe this to have been a very perplex and iniquitous business, but what Congress can do and what ought to be done I know not, unless it was to make the Legislature of Georgia and the Georgia speculator honest men; but this I believe surpasses even Jeffersonian omnipotence. * * *

Your friend, and brother,

SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, February 12, 1804.

DEAR SIR:

* * * My present hopes are founded upon some hopeful symptoms of a division in the present dominant party by what appears to me a growing disgust in many of them with their leaders, and from the respectable and even religious characters of numbers in private life. The latter class consists principally of respectable farmers, who without sufficient information and without extensive views of the principles of national policy have been duped with the flood of hollow professions, as well as malicious falsehoods which by means of hireling presses have overwhelmed our country almost like a deluge, have embarked with the present majority, I believe with the most honest intentions. It seems as if such men could not much longer be deceived. It is time as you say, should delusion still continue to prevail all the effect of this may be to destroy their popularity with their constituents, and at another election fill their places with more pliant tools of democracy who will go all

lengths in favour of disorganization. Still I cannot but hope that plain good sense may one time or another get the better of delusion. Here at present we must leave the scene, and add a word or two about recent proceedings in Congress.

The committee appointed to enquire into the official conduct of Judge Chase has as yet made no report. It is thought that no attempt to prosecute an impeachment will be made during the present session. It begins to be whispered, tho for the authenticity of the report I cannot vouch, that the Judge's enemies begin to be rather chop-fallen. Upon examination it is suggested that they can't find so much against the Judge as they expected, or intended. The Supreme Court of the United States is now in session. I perceive the Judge has not been frightened from his post by the clamour raised against him. He appears upon the bench with great dignity; the other Judges present are Marshall, Chief Justice, and Cushing and Washington. Judge Washington is a man of small stature, not larger than Major McGee. He has a pleasing countenance and a penetrating eye; but his deficiency in point of stature gives him but a faint resemblance to the dignified appearance of his late venerable uncle. When I compare the contemptible figure of John Randolph with the uncommonly large figure and dignified masculine appearance of Judge Chase rendered venerable by age, and a long uniform display of the most brilliant talents, and for ought I know, or have any reason to suspect, incorruptible integrity, it brings to my mind the figure of a little snarling snappish cur barking at a fleet and elegant horse, or to use the expression of the poet, of a dog baying at the moon. I know not however but in this instance the little cur will prevail.

The scheme for abolishing the office of Commissioner of Loans throughout the United States and transferring all the business relating to the funds to the treasury of the United States, that it may be solely under the direction of Monsieur Gallatin has I hope obtained its quietus for the remainder of the present session. A brief history of this business is as follows: early in the session Eppes, son-in-law to the President, introduced a resolution for that purpose which was committed to the committee of ways and means. This com-

mittee was divided in opinion, a majority however reported that it was inexpedient to abolish them for reasons assigned. Randolph the chairman of the committee was, however, opposed to the report. It was referred to a committee of the whole House and underwent an animated discussion. In committee it was agreed to by a majority of one or two. When the subject underwent a second discussion in the House and the question was put, agree or disagree to the report of the committee of the whole which was an agreement to the report of the committee of ways and means, the vote was a disagreement and an adherence to the original resolution. The majority was so small it was thought no motion would be made to bring in a bill. In this, however, we proved to be a mistaken. Eppes again moved for leave to bring in a bill to abolish them. This resolution was called up and discussed on Monday Jan. 30, and when the vote was taken leave was refused by a majority of six, fifty-two to fifty-eight. I thought then we should hear no more of it, but Mr. Jackson, Virginia, gave notice that he would call up a similar resolution in a different form on Thursday. This was done and the motion rejected by a much larger majority, many of its friends originally in favour of it, yet as it had been already fairly decided, refusing to call it up again and I understand that the original movers of the measure who are said to be no less personages than Thomas Jefferson and Albert Gallatin, have abandoned it.

For the principal part of last week the House have been clearly engaged in the business of the Georgia speculations, I take it you need not be informed that that large tract of country, consisting as it is said of from forty to fifty millions of acres lying between the state of Georgia and the river Mississippi has been on certain conditions ceded to the United States with the reservation of 5,000,000 acres for the purpose of satisfying claimants on the state of Georgia. Tho this would be far from realizing the extravagant calculations of the Georgia purchases, yet it is supposed that it would be abundantly sufficient to compensate them for any actual sacrifice of property which they may have made. The subjects of these numerous claimants which are distinguished into the 89 and 95 purchasers have been already before commissioners empowered

to examine them. The report of the commissioners is for substance that altho there may be want of strict legality in the claims, yet without pretending to decide positively upon their merits they recommend it to Congress as a point of policy to settle and extinguish them by an amicable compromise. Petitions for that purpose have been presented to Congress during the present session which were referred to a committee of which Mr. Nicholson was chairman. This committee reported a resolution to empower the commissioners to examine, adjust, and compromise the respective claims, provided that in doing this they did not exceed the 5,000,000 acres, or the net proceeds of it.

For myself I am decidedly hostile to the principle of land speculation generally. I view it as having done incalculable mischief to the United States, and operating as a peculiar hardship upon the poor but honest, and industrious settler. I had to my mind a striking view of this mischief during my journey into the state of New York. I view it as a good policy for the general government to lay their hands upon it, and by all just and equitable means to prevent it for the future, but not to do this by laws retrospective in their operation; and as I make no doubt but the views of the Georgia speculators were many of them, at least, as upright and honest as those of any men whatsoever who engage in any kind of speculation with a view to enhance their fortunes. I think it is a sufficient penalty for what was perhaps an imprudence to be disappointed of all their expected gain of speculation without being additionally stripped of all their property and reduced, as has been the case with many from affluence to beggary, merely by trusting to the puny faith of Georgia. This was the more the case as I conceive that the United States, in virtue of their possessing the 5,000,000 acres aforesaid vested in them for the express purpose of satisfying the respective claimants against the state of Georgia, and which in my opinion they have no right in either reason or equity to appropriate to any other purpose, have the means of compensating these claimants to the full extent of their actual losses, without costing them a single cent or rendering the public treasury one mill the poorer. It is my decided opinion it ought to be done.

I had arranged a few observations on the subject which I intended to have delivered on the floor, but by the arrangement of the principal Federalists it was concluded to take no part in the debate lest it should tend to consolidate the majority and hazard the loss of the question. An animated debate came on which occupied the attention of the House from Tuesday morning until Friday night. Mr. Randolph in two speeches of considerable length on different days worked himself up to a degree of enthusiasm little short of absolute lunacy, and indeed some insisted upon it that he must be under a degree of mental derangement. A bystander, a leading Democrat of Massachusetts was heard to use this expression d-m the Democrats, if this is democracy I have done with it. Another observed that if such positions as Randolph advanced were but to take effect, they would revolutionize the Kingdom of Heaven; and, Mr. Rodney, the great and mighty Rodney, who is as good as two, and in behalf of whose election the President of the United States thought it worth his while to interfere, was but little better. They had some supplementary aid from several of the *dis minorum gentium* of whom we have plenty. Mr. Nicholson took a firm stand upon the other side and delivered a solid luminous and well digested Federal speech of more than an hour in length. Mr. Elliott lent him assistance which was by no means contemptible as did Genls. Varnum, and Skinner, and Dr. Eustis. The only northern Federalist who said anything was Mr. Hastings who made a few very pertinent observations. There was no stenographer in the House, and I think it a happy circumstance for the honour of the United States that the debate probably never will be published. The vote carried for a reference to commissioners by a majority of 8.62 for, and 94 against. Randolph has not yet given up the point; late on Friday evening he introduced another resolution in somewhat of a different form calculated to defeat the purpose; whether he will succeed or not is yet to be determined, but I have not the least hesitation in believing that he would cheerfully sacrifice one half of the United States to get his will. By his unparralleld insolence however he is I think fast loosing ground with his own party, and happy will it be for the United States if it should be completely destroyed.

Thus much for proceedings of Congress at this time. A few other things of minor importance shall conclude. You ask a question about the President's attending public worship. He does occasionally, of six times which I have attended at Congress Hall he has been present four, and I have heard several times of his attending when I did not. I do not attend much at the Hall of Congress on the Sabbath. The Presbyterian meeting is nigher, and I am rather disgusted than otherwise with the Episcopal service. For these two Sabbaths we have had a new preacher at the Hall. Today I attended there, last Lord's day I did not. There are some things remarkable in his history which are worthy of a moment's notice. His name is Addison, He is a gentleman of a plentiful fortune who received a liberal education without either the need, or intention of going into any learned profession. Becoming seriously affected with the importance of religion, and an exemplary Christian in private life, he applied himself to the work of the ministry, and was introduced after the modes of the Church of England. He has no fixed pastoral charge but preaches occasionally to the poor whenever they wish to hear him without fee, or reward, and lives in the style of a gentleman upon his fortune; his rank in society gives him access to those who would be in a great measure unacceptable by an obscure clergyman, and it is said that he improves it for the suppression of vice, and immorality, and the promotion of religion. He has preached two excellently well adapted sermons in Congress, in which he has plainly, and faithfully, with that honest independence which a clergyman ought to feel, delineated the necessity of Christian principles, and the danger of infidelity and all principles tending thereto both in public and private life, particularly when they infect rulers, and the principles of Civil Government. The President has attended both days. I wish both he, and all of us may get good by his labours.

You make mention of Mr. Elliott. I cannot say but my opinion of him grows more and more favourable. That he wanted experience, and was insufferably vain I freely concede, but while his experience increases I conceive his vanity is checked. I believe him to be possessed of talents, honest, and

independence, and that time is fast correcting his vanity and enlarging his experience. My fears are that his independence and integrity will disgust his constituents and give Congress a member with less talents, and more suspicious integrity.

* * *

Your friend, and brother
SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, November 17, 1804.

DEAR SIR:

* * * The elections in Massachusetts excite considerable attention. I find I am disappointed in the electoral ticket. It is giving the Virginia party a partial triumph at least. We have had it reported that the Jefferson ticket has succeeded by a majority of five hundred; but the latest returns I have seen gives between two and three hundred of a majority in a return of upwards of thirty thousand votes on both sides. How it is on the whole you probably know by this time of the election of members. I think I have seen returns of eight, and of my own election such a portion is returned as probably puts it out of doubt. Tho I cannot but feel gratified with this new exhibition of the confidence of my fellow citizens, yet it is of small consequence and had another Federal candidate been brought forward I should have cheerfully withdrawn. I know not that I was ever in my constitution uncommonly prone to envy; but whatever might have been heretofore, I am persuaded that hereafter I shall envy no man of either the profit, or pleasure of a seat in Congress. It is peculiarly irksome at this time when the prospect of doing any service to our common country is so small. Indeed, I am sometimes almost disposed to think that it might be even better for New England if her Federal representation was all changed, that there might then be more prospect of a union among her representatives against the encroachments of Virginia than there is now.

I was satisfied last Congress and I am so now, that numbers of the northern Democratic representatives, both from Massachusetts and other places, felt the encroachments of Virginia, tho I do not find that they have been possessed of honesty, and independence enough to state the same to their constituents.

Mr. Elliott excepted, who has and still does act with a degree of honesty and independence which does him honour and does not spare to charge some others who expressed the same sentiments here which headed with their duplicity; but it is a time of revolutions, and such is the infatuation of a great body of the people of these United States that were a Democratic member of Congress upon the clearest evidence to state to his constituents the ground of his own political conduct, the consequence would be only to throw himself in the background. Some instances of this have happened already in Congress. Mr. Wm. Hoge of Pennsylvania, a man of considerable candor and moderation is dropped in the next Congress because he voted against the alteration of the Constitution. Mr. Mott, of New Jersey, one of the most upright candid men of the party, and incomparably the first character in the Jersey delegation, I find is dropped in the ticket proposed for the next Congress. Their election has not as yet taken place. Whether his omission is by voluntary resignation, or otherwise, I cannot tell.

While James Sloan who is emphatically the small end of small things is continued a man who has no one qualification that I know of to recommend him, party violence excepted. The same appears to be the case in our state governments, men whom the public never would have known had it not been for the spirit of party are introduced to public notice, and then are again forced to take the background to make way for others more violent. It is a vulgar proverb, that it is easy to raise the devil but difficult to bury him. This has been verified both by Gov. McKean of Pennsylvania and Gov. Clinton of New York. They see the consequences of that democracy by which they have been elevated but cannot curb it. I was in hopes that New England might stem the current, but I believe that sooner or later we must all go thro the Democratic mill. I had conversation with Mr. Van Rensselaer of New York a day or two ago. He informed me that in several counties in New York they had passed over almost every decent man among those called Republicans, and had brought forward a class that would make such an exhibition in their present Legislature as never was seen in New York.

Perhaps many more classes may be brought forward before we have closed our revolutionary cancer; but one thing we have for our comfort, the faster the pot boils the sooner it will throw off the scum, but a more rational consolation is that the Most High rules and will make "the wrath of man to praise him and the remainder of his wrath he will restrain."

I have made some enquiries relative to the state of the Federal int'rest in the southern states, particularly in Virginia; my information is that it rather increases than otherwise but it is completely paralyzed for election. They have set up no ticket and take no part in the election. I have been surprised at seeing the returns of several counties to find so small a number as 80 or a 100 votes to a county. These are I suppose Federal counties. Their election of members for the next Congress is not until April. * * *

With sentiments of esteem, I rest

Yours affectionately,

SAM'L TAGGART.

N. B. The Vice-President took his seat as President of the Senate the first day of the session and attends with them constantly. How this will be viewed by foreign nations I know not. He assumes but very little state. His appearance is different from last winter. He has no carriage. He has taken lodgings more than a mile from the Capitol, and usually walks to and from it on foot. I believe he is treated by all parties with a great deal of neglect

WASHINGTON, December 3, 1804.

DEAR SIR:

Your favour of the 23d ult. came to hand the 30th for which accept my acknowledgments. The issue of the Massachusetts election I had previously heard and in part witnessed the triumph which it occasioned. I shall not however finally give up Massachusetts as revolutionized until after our spring elections. I did not expect a change so sudden altho I had my fears that the general ticket would have an unfavourable operation. I have long been of opinion, at least I have had my fears that first or last, the steady habits of New England

would give way to the torrent. There has ever been this difference between federalism and democracy; that any thing which had the appearance of securing the former by policy, any thing which by the most remote construction could be represented as a deviation from the plainest and most artless integrity has constantly operated to its disadvantage. While democracy which has been founded in intrigue has been constantly promoted by manoeuvres, the most insidious general tickets where there was the most remote probability of ousting Federalists by the means have always succeeded. Witness Virginia, Pennsylvania and New Jersey; so has dividing and new modelling districts as well as the propagation a torrent of the most unblushing falsehoods. If a report is proved to be a falsehood a thousand times it makes no difference, it still has its effect.

I begin to think that too much calculation has been made upon the virtue, good sense and general illumination of the American people, and particularly of the people of New England without making sufficient allowance for their passions, their prejudices, and their vices, as well as for the innumerable arts which are practiced to deceive. I wish the latter may not prevail so as eventually to destroy every vestige of our free republican constitutions, and introduce a despotic government, thereby giving the world another melancholy proof of the position that in the present state of human nature a free government cannot be supported. I do not expect that our Democratic government will continue long in the state in which it is now. There is always a tendency in it to be making progress; the faster the pot boils the sooner the scum rises, so it is with the political pot, the faster it boils the nearer the scum gets to the top. I think it is likely our present Democratic leaders will not long keep their ground. The revolutionary wheel will quickly throw them, at least those of them that are the most enlightened, and men of the best character and principles into the background, and bring up another set and so on. Appearances of this have already taken place in some places some of which I know not, but I hinted in my last and more might easily be produced if room could be had in a letter. It is an easy matter to raise a Democratic phrenzy

so as to make almost every man imagine himself to be a sovereign, but difficult to direct the storm and say hitherto shalt thou go and no farther. An instance in point we have in Gov. McKean of Pennsylvania. He had a powerful influence in democratizing Pennsylvania. Now the tide is turning against himself and he is upheld in office by the Federalists, those very Federalists whom he took so much pains to throw in the background.

When I was on my journey to this place I travelled in the stage with a Federal gentleman, a citizen of Philadelphia, from that place to Baltimore. He informed me that he believed the Federalists would almost universally support Gov. McKean because, altho they did not perfectly accord with him in politics, yet he was in the main a very good Governor and in the present state of things beyond all calculation the best they could obtain. And he believed that the moderate Democrats, in connection with the Federalists, would be able to support him against any opposition which Duane and his tools could bring against him, and that this was the only means to save Pennsylvania from ruin. Gov. Clinton is said to be in pretty much the same predicament in New York. He cannot restrain that spirit which he has been so active in raising. But amidst the threatening symptoms of revolution succeeding revolution, I think I still see some ground of encouragement from present appearances; and as you are sufficiently prone to despond I shall crave your patience while I mention a few things. I believe there are a considerable number of members in the national Legislature who bear the name of Republicans, who are Federalists in almost any thing else but the name, and disposed to administer the government substantially at least upon Federal principles; that a union may be insensibly formed between these and Federalists so as to stem the torrent is a subject both of hope and fear; hope that it may succeed and fear that all the best men among the Democrats, all who have any view of correct principles of government, will be successively thrown in the background.

But I think I can discover some thing of a greater degree of independence among some of our members in a disposition to speak and act their own sentiments independent of the tram-

mels of party than there was last year. We have had some changes in our members since the last session, two deceased, two resigned, and one transferred to the Senate who have successors in the House; two more have been lately transferred to the Senate, who have no successors in the House as yet. In place of the two members deceased viz., Hon. Daniel Heister, of Maryland, and John Trigg, of Virginia, we have Roger Nelson in place of the former and Christopher Clark in place of the latter. By this change considerable has been gained in point of talents. They are both professional men and eminent in their professions. Mr. Nelson has made rather the most display of his talents. In voice he is a stentor; he is a man of sense, and a competency of modest assurance. He appears to stand in no awe of John Randolph, and rather to delight in thwarting him altho how he will act in important national questions is as yet uncertain.

But further I find that federalism in the south, tho paralyzed, is by no means extinguished. There has been a little attempt to revive it in Pennsylvania. A Mr. Kelly, a Federalist, has been elected for the next Congress in the counties of York and Adams, in place of Mr. Stewart, the present member an ignorant violent drunken Democrat. In the county of Washington, Pennsylvania the Democrats became disgusted with their present member Mr. Hoge, a man of candor and moderation, principally because he voted against the alteration of the Constitution, and for the next Congress chose another man, a Mr. Hamilton in his place. Mr. Hoge finding that he had in some measure lost the confidence of his constituents resigned his seat in the present Congress rather in disgust. The Federalists made some exertions on the occasion, and replaced him with one of their own number, tho his election is contested, yet it shows the growing of the party in that county in making an attempt which one or two years ago would not have been made.

The smallness of the vote given for the electoral ticket in the states to the south is a matter of considerable speculation. In Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, it was unusually small. In a number of counties in Virginia the votes were only from eighty to a hundred votes;

in a county in New Jersey mention is made of one town containing upwards of one hundred voters which gave in but three votes for either electors or representatives for Congress. The whole vote in the large state of Pennsylvania was not, I believe, more than twice as large as that of the county of Hampshire only, if my recollection is correct, not more than nine or ten thousand.

I heard, or rather overheard, some of our Republicans discoursing on that subject a few days ago, and observing that it was a fortunate circumstance that the Federalists set up no counter ticket, nor made any opposition, for if they had been at their posts they might easily in many places have carried their point, and that public opinion is undoubtedly vibrating. I state these things merely as I have heard them and leave you to draw your own inferences; probably I am rather predisposed to draw favourable ones.

I must not close without giving you a little sketch of the present state of business in Congress. A bill is depending before the House for the purpose of restraining the trade to the black empire of Hayti, which is nearly as explicit on the subject as the President's speech; and is as much as to say we hate to starve the black dogs, but our dear cousin Bonaparte who has in his great humility, I am informed, condescended to write a letter to our beloved President with his own hand, is too powerful to be affronted, therefore something must be done which in case of extremities may serve as a come off, as it is of the utmost importance to maintain peace with all the world.

Another bill is depending calculated to have reference to outrages from foreign vessels similar to those committed by the Cambrian and Leander, British frigates in the harbour of New York. This bill is a curiosity in legislation, and as it invests our President with completely despotic powers, & may perhaps be fitly christened, an act to restrain and limit executive patronage and influence. It appears to be predicated upon the supposition that a presidential word in connection with the irresistible roar of cannon from gun boats No. 1 or 2 is sufficient to blow a British frigate to atoms, and effectually to overawe them so as to deter from all outrages in future.

The articles of impeachment against Judge Chase are now coming under consideration. They are the order of the day, for this day the question of postponing them until Thursday and afterwards until Wednesday next was negatived by a majority of 68 to 40. Probably this may be somewhat of a criterion to estimate the strength of parties on that subject.

The business of the Georgia lands will I expect be on the carpet soon, tho as yet there is no day assigned. Several petitions in behalf of the claimants have been lately thrown in, at the head of one of them is the Hon. James Sullivan Esq., the intended Governor of Massachusetts. How far the late unwearied endeavours to revolutionize Massachusetts, which have been crowned with such signal success, will aid in softening the hearts of opponents so as to effect a disposition to indemnify the claimants, I know not.

I believe Randolph remains inexorable and is mustering all his forces to prepare for war. I believe, however, some calculations are made upon the exertions in this good work meriting their reward, and I think it probable that some of those who were so active in making those exertions were looking to the influence it might have in favour of the Georgia claimants. So fully persuaded of this are some of the Federalists here, that I have understood some have manifested an inclination to shift sides, & vote against the same. I hope, however, this will not be the case. Whatever others may do I believe I shall not shift my ground on this subject for two reasons. Because I wish Federalism always to keep the straight path of moral and political integrity. This I think is on the side of the claimants. Because even supposing it right to give a vote upon probable calculation of its political consequences, the calculation in this case would be a bad one for federalism in Massachusetts. It is true I know not, but the final negative of the claimants would have a good political effect in Massachusetts. But should Federalists have any hand in effecting that negative, the effect would be bad. Upon the whole I believe that the *via trita* is *via tuta*. The plain beaten path of moral and political integrity is the road for Federalists, and the less they have to do with remote

calculations of the probable political effects of doubtful measures the better.

You ask for information about our chaplain Bentley. You have doubtless before this time heard that he does not accept of his appointment, in this he has probably done wisely. On the 27th ult. we were called to ballot again for a chaplain. There were a number of scattering votes, but the principal were for Mr. Lawrie, a worthy Presbyterian clergyman in the city, and Mr. Parkinson our former chaplain. First ballot no choice, on the second Mr. Parkinson was chosen by a considerable majority, tho it was known to many that his previous engagements were such that he could not accept the appointment. He accordingly the next day signified by letter his non acceptance. On the thirtieth we came to another tryal. Mr. Chambers, a gentlemen who perhaps a 10th of the the members did not know there was such a man in existence, was nominated, and at the close of the ballot the votes as nearly as I can recollect stood as follows: for Mr. Lawrie 57, Mr. Chambers 44, and four or five scattering votes of which one was for Thomas Paine. Mr. Lawrie was accordingly chosen, and we expected he would have officiated in the Capitol last Lord's day, but he was prevented by an afflictive stroke of Providence, the funeral of his only child. Besides his being a man of worth and an honest Calvinist, the objection against Mr. Lawrie is that he is supposed to be a Federalist, altho he has never declared his attachment to any party and has declared to me and others his intention not to. Since the election I have obtained the following authentic information concerning the said Mr. Chambers, that he is a distinguished ropemaker in the city, who has a very lucrative employment by furnishing cordages for the navy, and is an occasional Methodist preacher.

On Saturday last I had the honour of dining, in company with about a dozen other members of Congress, at the President's table and among a variety of other good things partook of some very good wine, and a portion of the mammoth cheer which was wretched enough. The President was very sociable and for once was dressed like a gentleman. Among other curiosities he favoured us with the sight of some Louisiana salt, but I find the salt mountain is got to be a plain, and instead of

being on the Missouri it is situated on the Arkansas river several hundred miles farther south. He informed us that he has this information from the Osage Indians, that the salt rose to the surface of the earth on an extensive plain to the depth of from one to two inches, where no trouble was necessary to collect it than to rake it into heaps and remove it; that in the short space of 24 hours it would collect in nearly as large quantities as before it was gathered; that this plain was called by the Indians the Holy ground; that did not so many hostile tribes collect here for the purpose of procuring salt, they would be here all at peace, and also would not molest each other upon their return. If all this is half true it is pretty well for an Indian story. Some of the company felt rather disposed to ask a number of tough questions with which His Excellency seem'd to be rather pushed, and frankly confessed his ignorance of the particulars. * * *

I rest Yours affectionately,

SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, December 25, 1804.

DEAR SIR:

* * * Today being Christmas the House did not sit and we were entertained in the Capitol by a preacher of a singular art, a divine of what is called the New Jerusalem Church, a follower of the famous Baron Swedenborg. He also preached on the Capitol on the Lord's day, but I attended the communion in the Presbyterian Church and so did not hear him. His discourse today was a curiosity, there were so many things in it which I intended to remember that one thrust out another and I can recollect but little. Before he began his sermon he repeated what he called the creed of the New Church. In this there were several singularities, but the prominent were the following: He believed the scriptures to have a three fold sense, natural, spiritual, and celestial; the spiritual sense was that in which they were revealed to the New Church principally thro the ministry of the great Emanuel Swedenborg, who was sent of God to announce the spiritual or second coming of Christ whom he declared to be now come in this New Church, and that now was the day of judgement. That death was only

the continuation of life, that when the soul left the body, it immediately assumed a spiritual body in which it would live forever; and that our present bodies never would be raised. That there was one eternal God, that in this one God there is a trinity not of persons, but of properties, which if I recollect right, he explained to be wisdom, love and the proceeding property of power, which in his sermon he illustrated by the trinity in the human soul of understanding, will, and affection which proceed from the other two. * * * The preacher's name was Hargrove. He resides in, and ministers to a small society in the City of Baltimore. By what information I could obtain about him he was formerly a Methodist preacher of considerable eminence. He was not a man of much education in early life, but has been a very close student. His discourse appeared to be the point of close study, his language was correct, and his manner of delivery solemn and pathetic. He had none of the babbling of a Methodist, nor any disagreeable whining tone. But as an orator he, I think, ranks considerably above mediocrity. His spiritual meaning of the scriptures serves him at every turn, it is ready to prove every thing he wishes, and evade every objection which can be brought against his system. Mr. Hillhouse observed that he and his Bible, pretty much as Democrats did the Constitution, made it mean anything he wished. Of what reveries is not the human mind capable when unguided by a "thus saith the Lord."

I intend not to trouble you with politics this time only briefly state one or two things which may perhaps give some information. Our last business was to pass a bill to regulate the clearance of armed merchant vessels. The bill is a non-descript; I sent a printed copy of it to Dr. Lyman. I voted against it, but I feel no very great opposition, because tho ridiculous it is pretty harmless especially when compared with some provisions which some of our wiseacres attempt to introduce into it. But they would not carry even among the Democrats, altho some of them no doubt originated from the fountain head. Had all the contemplated provisions been introduced they would have gone far to have destroyed our commerce, and robbed the treasury of several millions yearly.

Judge Chase's tryal is assigned for the 2d of January. I hear today he is very sick. Perhaps Providence is about to snatch him out of the hand of his persecutors. Considering that he is a man of plethoric habit troubled with the gravel, and sundry other complaints, and at the advanced age of 64 such an event would not be surprising.

The Georgia business is not yet come up before Congress. The agents of the Company, Mr. Granger P. M. G. and Perez Morton of Massachusetts have laid a lengthy and luminous printed elucidation and vindication of their claim on the table of every member of Congress, which I think establishes it both in law and equity beyond all contradiction. Both the agents are good Democrats. What effects their arguments will have upon their Democratic friends in Congress remains yet to be tried. * * *

Yours affectionately,
SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, January 4, 1805.

MY DEAR SIR:

* * * On Wednesday the second instant the Senate at 12 o'clock resolved itself into a court of impeachment and Judge Chase appeared and addressed the court, the purport of which was to ask a postponement of the tryal until next session of Congress, as on account of the nature and multiplicity of the charges; the distance from which evidence must be procured; and the nature of the defence which he must make, which he considered due to his own character and to that of his family, due to the United States and to the world, connected with his own present ill state of health rendered it impracticable to proceed on the tryal at present. He did not enter particularly into the consideration of any of the charges, but spoke a few words generally; that the greatest part of the facts upon which they were supposed to be grounded were wholly unfounded, as he trusted he could make appear in the course of the tryal, and others, tho he admitted the facts as true, yet that he had neither been guilty of a crime nor misdemeanour, but had acted in a manner strictly conformable to justice, to his sacred oath to the law of nations, and the existing laws, and Constitu-

tion of the United States. I can truly say it excited in me feelings which I cannot very well express. To see a man venerable by age, grown gray in the service of his country, in some of the most important offices which he had discharged with ability, fidelity and honour. One of the band of patriots of '76, whose signature I believe stands to our Declaration of Independence, and one of the framers of our excellent federal Constitution, a man whom nature never formed to take a very subordinate part of anything, arraigned in this manner merely to gratify a little party rage. Connected with this to see a man presiding in the trial, with hands reeking with some of the best blood in the nation was a sight truly humiliating so that I could scarcely forbear exclaiming, alas! my country.

After the Judge had closed his address the Senate adjourned to a private apartment and notified Mr. Chase that next day at twelve o'clock they would be ready to give him an answer. He did not appear in the Senate room until after one. I understand that considerable debate ensued on the settlement of preliminary questions. They were all then sworn, the President first by the Secretary, and afterwards the members by the President. A resolution was introduced with the day blank for proceeding on the trial. It was moved by Mr. Bradley and amended, or altered and new modified by Giles. A motion was made by Mr. Tracy to fill the blank with the first Monday in December next. This was negatived 18 against 12. There were only 8 Federal Senators present. More of the other description who voted in favour of that day were, if I remember right, Bradley and Smith of Vermont, Smith of Maryland, and Smith of Ohio. It was then moved and carried to fill the blank with the 4th of February next. Then the court adjourned. I could wish the Judge's address might be reported in the papers and I think probable it will.

The last business in Congress which is worth detailing in a letter was a bill for altering the charter of Alexandria, and this is important only on account of the principles involved in the discussion. The most important alteration was an extension of the right of suffrage for mayor, and common council to all free white males who had resided in the city for the space of one year previous to said election, and had in that time been

charged with a tax, no mention made of payment, nor any mention of the amount whether a cent, or a dollar. The bill finally passed our House, tho rather heavily 54, 52 against the wishes and remonstrances of as many as two thirds of the citizens who possessed nine tenths of the property. Its fate in the Senate is unknown, it is thought it will be lost. In the discussion we had so many elucidations of personal rights, natural, inalienable rights, social rights, &c., which left all involved in the darkness whether man had any rights at all.

A resolution was introduced near the close of the last session for receding the territory of Columbia, all excepting the city, to the states of Virginia and Maryland. It was not then definitively acted upon. Monday next is assigned for the hearing and discussion of it. How it will be decided I know not. It is to me evidently a plan for the aggrandizement of Virginia. Randolph observed in a speech some time ago that so long as he was a member of that House he would resist every measure calculated to promote the growth and importance of the city. It is thought that the intention of Virginia besides regaining an important commercial town, and adding a fraction to their representation is to grant such privileges to Alexandria as may effectually check the growth of Washington. I had some discourse a day or two ago with Mr. Conrad of Pennsylvania upon the subject. He thinks it will not carry. He informed me that he told Randolph it was nothing but a plaguey Virginian plan. Mr. Conrad is a considerably candid, sensible man, and perhaps as little trammelled by party as any of the majority. I think it will be a preparatory step towards the removal of the government, and that should it prevail would be the prelude of its dissolution. However inimical to the Union, and desirous of a division of the states, I may be represented by the Democrats of the county of Hampshire, because I have freely expressed my mind that some particular measures of the ruling party were paving the way for that event, yet should it take place, which I sincerely hope may be prevented, I had much rather it should take place while the present party are in power, and be brought about by them. Our Attorney General Mr. Lincoln has resigned his office it is said rather chagrined. Who will be his successor is undeter-

mined. A Mr. Mason, a distinguished attorney in the vicinity, brother I believe to the late Stevens Thomson Mason of the Senate, and a Mr. Pinkney a very distinguished law character who has lately returned from Europe, and who has heretofore been considered as a Federalist, are talked of. John Randolph has it is said in equal or greater chagrin, resigned his office of ruling the majority in Congress, for this substantial reason that he finds they will no longer be ruled by him. The candidates aiming at the honour of succeeding him are John W. Eppes, Joseph N. Nicholson, Roger Nelson, and perhaps others, none of which I think possess Randolph's abilities.

One thing is certain the party at present seem broken and divided, and do not act with their usual concert. The more moderate are begining strongly to preach up moderation in the disputes between Democrats & Federalists, and I believe if the truth was known, begin to look up to them for assistance to counteract the dreaded violent measures of their own party. In Pennsylvania and Maryland their Democratic legislatures are carrying on with a high hand, and the minority by that means rapidly increasing. In the latter they are attempting to assume church, college and corporation funds into their own hands, and to new model not only the courts, but the Constitution of the state. In the former, the impeachment of their judges for imprisoning a worthless fellow for contempt of court occasions prodigious agitation. Some of their members of Congress go so far as to say they are going to ruin, that three other such judges could not be found in the state while others, as Leib and Smilie, are ready to go all lengths in justifying violent measures. It is thought to be greatly to the honour of the bar in Pennsylvania that not a lawyer in the state Federal or Democratic could be found who would lend his assistance in carrying on the impeachment. They had therefore to apply to our great Mr. Rodney and take him away from Congress for that purpose. You have heard of Rodney as good as two. He has lately given us a sample of it. He left Congress without leave in order to attend that business for which he was undoubtedly well rewarded, but tarried here invisibly nearly a fortnight,

legislating at six dollars a day; but on Monday last, all his energies being probably wanted to carry on the impeachment, a friend asked leave of absence for him for two weeks from that day. This leave I conclude was asked for the invisible Mr. Rodney all that was visible of him having gone nearly two weeks before. By this manœuvre he probably draws about 80 dollars out of the treasury of the United States, and is at the same time under pay from the legislature of Pennsylvania, but Mr. Rodney is a friend of the people.

I see Mr. Denio has published a very flattering statement of the receipts compared with the expenditures of the treasury for the last year in his Gazette of Decemb 24. The misfortune is that it is not true. Mr. Gallatin's statement was made in a manner rather calculated to catch gulls by adding the balance in the treasury at the commencement of the year to the receipts in one gross sum which to a superficial observer would all appear to belong to the receipts of the year. Mr. Denio, it is probable, received his information from some printer who was taken in in that way, or from some one who for party purposes, was disposed to palm a designed misrepresentation on the public. I have written to Mr. Denio an explanation, desiring him to correct the statement and have authorized him to make use of my name in the correction if he thinks proper. * * * [This letter is unfinished in the original manuscript.]

WASHINGTON, January 20, 1805.

DEAR SIR:

* * * You will doubtless have heard before this reaches you of the lengthy discussion we have had upon the subject of receding the territory of Columbia to the states of Virginia and Maryland. The debates at large, at least as large as they will be published, I am forwarding them to Denio as fast as published. I shall try to procure some extra papers and send you some of the speeches. Among them you will find one of your humble servant, which tho far from the best, you will perhaps be fond to read. It is not come in course to be printed yet, as they are published in the order they were delivered.

I viewed the scheme of a recession as an opening wedge to pave the way in the first place for the removal of the government, and in the second for the dissolution of the union. Whether Washington is the best place which could have been pitched upon for the permanent seat of government is now out of the question. It is constitutionally the seat and cannot be changed, nor this territory receded, without either an alteration or violation of the Constitution. The great argument for the recession was the trouble and expense of legislating for them, and to set them free from their degraded situation as they do not vote for a representative in Congress. It was really amusing to hear some of our warm wise men of Gotham drawing frightful pictures of their slavery, and the importance of setting them free by transferring them like cattle, or like vassals, attached to the soul of a new master contrary to their wishes, and against their warmest remonstrances. But liberty as well as monarchy has its tyrannical friend, and between uncontrolled democracy and uncontrolled despotism in any other shape, there is but a very narrow dividing line. As for a division of the Union I hope it will never be done by Federal hands. If it must be done let Democrats do it. The decision was not such as its advocates expected.

The political views of Virginia are not treated in Congress with all that delicacy and indiscriminate praise of our Massachusetts Democrats. The ancient dominion was attacked pretty severely in the course of the debate, and was not even spared by some of her own members. Lucas, a Frenchman, a member from Pennsylvania, who speaks such broken English you can scarcely understand half of what he says, made a speech on the occasion which will I believe read very well. Among other things he observed that if the state of Virginia was disposed to prosecute the business of making people free, they had better begin at home, they would there have business enough; that for his part that altho he liked his situation as a citizen of Pennsylvania rather better than he would one in the District of Columbia, yet were he there he thought he would make a very poor exchange in point of freedom to be thrown into Virginia.

Jackson, a Virginia Democrat, made such a statement of the manifest inequality, and partiality of the present system of Virginia representation, as were it to appear in a Federal paper in Massachusetts would be branded as a Federal lie. Maj. Lewis, another Virginian, a Federalist, however, was so severe upon the politics of his own state that I told him afterwards, that were I to publish anything in my district so severe upon Virginia as his speech, I would be branded by every Democrat in it with a design to dissolve the Union. But, altho it was a Virginia plan, yet in the end a majority of the representatives of the state voted against it, and altho evidently calculated to dissolve the Union, the poor Federalists who are now so desirous of breaking the Union, all excepting one voted against the measure, while our exclusive supporters of the Union from Massachusetts voted four in favor and three against the recession. Varnum, Larned, Seaver and Bishop in favour, and Eustis, Cutts and Crowning-shield against it. Bishop, however, I think probably has nearly closed his Congressional career. He had appeared thro the session to be broken as to health and to be very stupid and inattentive to business altho he was in the House yesterday, but I hear he was last night attacked by a paralytic stroke from which it is thought he will never recover.

Since the discussion of this question a large sum 130,000 dollars has been appropriated for the completing the public building, and the prospect of this city continuing to be the permanent seat of Government, and the city growing to be respectable is greater than I have before seen it. Indeed our appropriations this year have been pretty liberal. Yesterday we passed the bill for the support of Government for 1805. I cannot recollect the amount but shall endeavour to ascertain the items before my return but I believe it is larger than any passed heretofore for that object.

Much has been said about the superior economy of the present administration. There is not so much money expended upon great national objects as was under the Federal administration still upon other objects, I believe there is much more profusion. I will instance only in the contingent expense of the House of Representatives. Under the former adminis-

tration that expense I believe, I intend to investigate the fact but at present I can only say I believe, it used to be from 10 to 12 thousand dollars, in the long session of 1798 it amounted to something more. I believe about 14 or 15 thousand. The first session under Jefferson's administration it amounted to 17 thousand. Last session 20,000 were appropriated and fell short, this session 2,500 more have been appropriated to make up the deficiency. Many similar instances of economy could be pointed out. Still it has gotten the name of an economical administration, and you know when a man gets the name of rising early he may lie in bed until noon.

I still cannot but think in general, that the complexion of the House this winter is more favourable than last. Party spirit, at least the virulence of it, does not run so high; and there is more freedom of social intercourse. The unanimity of the majority is broken. They do not act with their former unanimity. Their leaders have lost their overbearing influence. The Samson Randolph is shorn of his locks, and as to any overbearing influence in the House is become weak as another man. Indeed, I believe for him to be very zealous in support of a question, would be a very ready way to loose it if the decision was confined exclusively to the Democratic party. Such is the derangement of the party that I believe no man in it could introduce a subject into the House and make any certain calculations of carrying it merely as a party question. And I think I see a very considerable number of the majority very hopeful symptoms of political convalescence. For a considerable space of time past, I believe for six or seven weeks, the Federalists have been in the majority on more questions than in the minority. I cordially believe that were the same body of men now in Congress to continue for another year, a fair majority of them would adopt and pursue substantially the Federal system; and was even the affair of the impeachment of Judge Chase to begin now it is questionable whether it would be voted. But serious apprehensions are I think to be entertained from the zeal and inexperience of the great number of new members who will compose the next Congress, and who will probably all, or nearly all, join the most violent party. This I apprehend from the

zeal and activity of democracy in the extreme parts of the Union, for I verily believe it to be much more virulent in New England than it is in these parts, either in or out of Congress, and the most violent Democrat from Virginia has been heard to observe lately that the Federal int'rest was rapidly reviving in that state, and that he expected nearly half of their representation in the next Congress would be Federal.

* * * For particular reasons I have to several of my correspondents expressed a wish that no extracts from my letters might appear in the prints at present. I have no objection to their being communicated in any other way to any friend you may think proper. * * *

I rest yours, &c,
SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, February 3, 1805.

DEAR SIR:

* * * I had anticipated from appearances that we were likely to have a calm session until the close of it, but the past week we have had a subject up which has notwithstanding the coldness of the weather raised a fever heat. I mean the subject of compensating the purchases of Georgia lands. This subject was debated for five days. Randolph came forward on this subject clad in robes of vengeance and made two harangues, one on Tuesday and another on Friday last which exceeded for virulence anything I ever heard uttered, and abused not only those concerned in the speculation but every man who would do anything to compensating as acting from corrupt motives, sacrificing the funds of the nation upon swindlers, and every other epithet that the billingsgate stile, of which he is a perfect master, could furnish. I was astonished for my part, and I believe almost every one else that he was permitted to proceed, but the speaker is much a friend to the party and is I believe considerably led by Randolph, or rather fears him. His virulence drew forth some sharp and spirited reply. Elliott, Dawson and Jackson retorted his severity in terms of considerable asperity, as did Root of New York. No Federalist entered into the debate but Dana, who being chairman of the committee

reporting a resolution for compromise had to speak on it of course. Randolph in the course of his rant abused that committee in a manner perfectly indecent. Dana replied with that delicate severity of sarcastic irony of which he is a master. Randolph pretended to be offended and it was thought meditated a quarrel, but I hope it will subside.

In the course of the discussion he reflected in terms of great severity on the character of the Postmaster General. He felt himself injured, as well he might, and addressed a letter to the speaker the next morning complaining of the treatment and requesting an investigation into his conduct. This set the House into a flame, so that for a time I thought the House bore more resemblance to a French revolutionary convention than the legislature of a free, enlightened, and independent nation, until the business was postponed until tomorrow. The resolution was carried against Randolph by a small majority, but it is thought that by throwing in embarrassments and delays he will probably yet defeat the bill.

For myself I shall keep to what I view a correct course, but I have found many subjects occupy the attention of Congress upon the fate of which I felt a much greater anxiety than about the Georgia speculation. I view it reasonable and equitable that they should be compensated especially as the United States have the means of doing it without any expense to the public purse, but if they finally fail of a reimbursement I hope it will be thro the means of a Democratic Congress. I could have wished that our Democrats of Massachusetts, who are so obsequious to a Virginia faction, had but heard in what estimation they are held by their leaders. I believe if there is any one being in nature whom Randolph, and those who support him, hate more than another it is a New England Democrat. Their object is to keep New England divided, and in that way paralyze the northern influence in the Union, but if they must be united it would please them as well to have them Federalists as Democrats. But, hopefully, the unanimity of the party is broken, and they can scarce assure themselves of a majority on any question, and I think the outrages of last week must have a tendency to sink

Randolph in the view of every person of common sense and common honesty.

The tryal of Chase's impeachment is by assignment to commence tomorrow. Some of our impeaching gentlemen are a little chop fallen by the acquittal of the judges in Pennsylvania. Their condemnation was looked upon certain, and had it succeeded I am informed it was the determination of Duane's party to have gone on and impeached the Governor, but now they conclude to wait patiently till his time is out, and endeavour to run him down at the next election. Dallas, the noted attorney, has I think done himself honour by his conduct in the case of the judges. He is a very popular attorney and a leading Democrat; he was applied to by the House of Representatives to assist them in conducting the impeachment. He refused and afterwards volunteered in defence of the judges so that the honour of assisting in the prosecution devolved on our great Rodney as no attorney in Pennsylvania, Federal or Democratic would undertake it. Some indulge a hope that the acquittal of these judges is a favourable omen towards the acquittal of Judge Chase, and I have heard some one in particular of our Democratic members express it as his opinion that he would not be condemned, but I know not the foundation of it. I make no doubt his removal is a presidential measure, and that some good friend, some say Nicholson, is destined to fill his place; but whether a majority of two thirds of the Senate which is required for his condemnation are disposed to go all lengths the event must determine. Rodney is talked of as the successor of Lincoln as Attorney General; and the Postmaster General I expect will soon have a successor, as honest Gideon, as a reward for his faithful service, in the cause of democracy has every indignity heaped upon him calculated to make his situation uncomfortable. * * *

Your friend, and brother,
SAMUEL TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, February 6, 1805.

DEAR SIR:

Altho I have written very lately, yet as the impeachment of Judge Chase is a matter of great moment I conclude it will

at least be a small gratification to have the earliest information on that subject. What I write now must be done in great haste as the mail of this evening will soon close, and I do not wish to delay the sending of it until tomorrow evening. Monday the 20th was the day assigned for Judge Chase's appearance. A numerous concourse of spectators assembled, considerable pains has been taken as well as expense incurred to accommodate spectators on this occasion by preparing seats on the floor for the House of Representatives and a second gallery for spectators, so that two galleries and the lobby are appropriated to the use of spectators. The court was formed and the Judge appeared about one o'clock in company with R. G. Harper, Luther Martin and Hopkinson Esq^r who appeared as his counsel. The Judge's countenance is one of those which is naturally calculated to command respect. It is rendered venerable by age, and was peculiarly interesting on account of his situation on this occasion. It was placid and serene without any marks either of trepidation or of contempt. It was such as one would naturally suppose a *mens conscia recti* could alone inspire. He filed what was called his answer; the reading was begun by himself and prosecuted by Mr. Harper who was occasionally relieved by Mr. Hopkinson until it came to the concluding part contained in the paper herewith transmitted which was read by the Judge himself. Mr. Harper who read the principal part is an almost inimitable reader and thereby did great justice to the composition. The reading consumed upwards of three hours during the whole time the utmost silence and attention prevailed.

Whatever difference of opinion there might be in relation to the guilt or innocence of the Judge there could be but one opinion about the merit of his answer. I could wish it were published throughout every corner of the United States. It goes I think to a complete vindication of the Judge's conduct and is a complete answer to every thing like the shadow of a charge in the articles, and whatever may be the fate of the impeachment his defence will live and do honour to his memory when his enemies are forgotten. As soon as I can possibly procure a copy I shall send one on to Mr. Butler.

I think it might be well worth his while to reprint it immediately. After the reading was closed the managers requested time to consult about a replication to the Judge's answer. Today, they presented the replication, so called, to the House and the House voted it as a reply. I shall make no observation whatsoever upon it as it will soon be published, only this that in no instance since I had a seat in Congress did the House appear to me in such an unfavourable point of light as when they voted that replication. It was a mere ebullition of intemperance and passion; upon this they will join issue I suppose; an early day will be assigned by the Senate to hear the examination of the witnesses for and against the impeachment, together with the pleadings of the council. I shall forward what occurs from time to time.

The Georgia business which was up last week has raised a great degree of heat and intemperance in the House which was before very calm. Democracy is verging towards a crisis. Randolph has undoubtedly lost many of his friends, but whether he is yet strong enough to carry his measures remains to be tried. Since he last appeared to take an active part in the House his violence and insolence know no bounds.

There is not a doubt but other important attacks are meditated upon the Constitution. The object of a Junto which affects to direct all public measures undoubtedly is to concentrate all the powers of Government into a single assembly to break down the Senate and prostrate the judiciary and have a manageable executive. How would our Constitution loving Democrats of Massachusetts, who are even ready to die with love to it and with fear least the Federalists should destroy it and dissolve the Union, introduce a monarchy or some other dreadful thing, relish such sentiments as these? "The Constitution is a damn'd thing, one half of the framers of it were fools, and the half of the other half scoundrels. I will pay that respect to it which my oath demands of me and no more. I hope a committee will be chosen in the recess of Congress to revive it. The Senate must be broken down," &c, &c. I have not heard the name of the worthy mentioned who uttered these sentiments, but in general that he was one of the Junto who affects to rule.

Randolph excepted, are practising attorneys and the Judge has four eminent attorneys as his council: Luther Martin, Esq., Attorney General of Maryland, a man who for extensive law knowledge is surpassed by few; Philip B. Key Esq., one of the sixteen arraigned Judges, a man who ranks high in his profession, a most accomplished orator and said to be a very amiable man, a man whom his warmest opponents accuse of no crime only that of being a Federalist; Robert G. Harper, Esq., whose character is well known, and Joseph Hopkinson, Esq., a young gentleman of respectability son of the late Francis Hopkinson of Philadelphia. The Judge appears in much better health than at his first appearance Jan. 2d, and if a judgement may be formed from the serenity of his countenance, easy and composed in mind than some of his prosecutors. * * *

At present adieu,
SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, February 18, 1805.

DEAR SIR:

I do not sit down really to write a letter but merely to scrawl a few lines in haste to accompany the paper herewith enclosed which contains Randolph's first speech upon the Georgia claims as a sample of the candour of the debates on that subject. If I can do it conveniently I will send you one or two more as soon as published.

The tryal of Judge Chase progresses. I have attended it principally, tho not constantly, as I found an unremitting attention to be painful for eight days. The examination of witnesses is not yet closed. It is expected to finish tomorrow unless a number summoned by the House of Representatives, and which have not as yet come on, should make their appearance. The venerable Judge intends, if he falls, to die in the last ditch. I believe his defence has already abashed his enemies, and some of them I think secretly wish they had never commenced the prosecution. The slender support given to the articles by testimony, and the weight of evidence from some of the best characters in the United States, must I think carry conviction to every mind not completely calloused o'er

with prejudice, that the charges are groundless if not malicious.

The tryal has thus far been managed with dignity and apparent partiality. I could almost forgive Burr for any less crime than the blood of Hamilton for the decision, dignity, firmness and impartiality with which he presides in this tryal. He is undoubtedly one of the best presiding officers I ever witnessed. The fate of the tryal if decided this session will soon be known. It is, I believe, the general opinion here that the Judge must be acquitted; but how far party spirit will operate it is impossible to foresee, & I shall be in the County of Hampshire I hope about the middle of next month, probably either the 14th or the 18th. Till then I must bid you farewell. I rest,

Yours, &c.

SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, February 23, 1805.

DEAR SIR:

* * * As the tryal of Judge Chase is the only business of importance now going on at Washington, so I can at present think of no more entertaining subject for a letter than to offer a remark or two upon its progress. It is not yet closed and I presume will not be before about the middle of next week. I have attended it the principal part of the time closely for thirteen days, first to hear his answer and then after an interval of a few days the tryal which commenced Saturday the 9th; every day since that time, Lord's Day excepted, the tryal has proceeded and I have attended. In the progress of the tryal I have been agreeably disappointed. Altho I never expected that anything like criminality or corruption could be attached to the Judge, yet I did expect that from the natural warmth of his temper during the struggle of political parties he might have been betrayed into several acts of indiscretion which might give somewhat of a colouring to the proceedings against him, but the investigation has made him appear to be the honest, able, upright and independent Judge; his superior talents are acknowledged by all and his prosecutors have used every art to turn this against him as an argument of corruption.

The United States particularly the movers of this prosecution are contrary to their intention raising to Judge Chase a monument *ore perennius* and raising it at considerable expense too, for this prosecution will cost the United States forty thousand dollars at least, probably more; but should it prove the grave, or at least the incurable consumption of Democratic violence and folly of which there is some hopes, it will be money well laid out. The general opinion now is that he will be acquitted. Even Duane has I understand offered to bet the odds of five thousand dollars to five that he will be acquitted. If this violent demagogue and natural enemy of judges, and justice is of that opinion, I think it must be decisive; but whatever may be the fate of the prosecution he will undoubtedly be acquitted in the view of the world and of posterity. By reason of the clamours which have gone out against him, his character laboured in the view of the public, but every day's investigation has tended to operate a change in the public mind.

The whole of the mighty affair at Philadelphia when stript of all its colouring amounts to no more than this; that Mr. Lewis one of the council for John Fries, tho a respectable and worthy yet a hasty and passionate man, mistook the intention of the Judge in handing a written opinion upon a point of law to the council on the first day of the tryal, and by his own mistake was thrown into a passion, which mistake he communicated to Mr. Dallas the other council, and they withdrew from the defence of the prisoner, intending according to their own statement that by Fries being tried without council, a greater colouring might be given for application for pardon of the executive, and considering any thing they could urge as desperate and what could be of no use to the prisoner. Indeed, I could not but consider it as remarkable that after so great a lapse of time the Judge could be able to procure such express testimony in his behalf. In some cases it required a very considerable stretch of charity to believe there was not something nearly approaching to intentional false swearing.

A certain Mr. John Heath deposed that while the court at which Callender was tried, he waited on the Judge at his lodgings upon business. The marshal came to the Judge and

shewed him the panel of the jury, and the Judge enquired of him whether he had any of those creatures called Democrats on it, and if he had he must strike them off. Mr. David Mead Randolph, the marshal, who is acknowledged by his political opponents as well as friends to be a man of unquestionable integrity, and to have been as marshal an able, attentive officer, deposed and swore that no such conversation ever did take place, and that he never did while marshal upon any occasion exhibit the panel of a jury to any judge; because according to the laws of Virginia the panel of a jury is the exclusive business of the marshal with which the judge has no concern and that on Callender's tryal the panel of the jury was not completed until the morning when they proceeded to the tryal, and that was done in open court where it was impossible any such conversation should take place. Mr. William Marshal, a lawyer of eminence, a brother to Chief Justice Marshal who was clerk of the court at that time deposed to a variety of circumstances which rendered it almost impossible that any such conversation should take place. A certain Mr. Montgomery, who supposed himself implicated by some remarks in the judge's charge to the jury at Baltimore in the year 1803, was peculiarly nettled on the occasion, and published in a Baltimore paper a statement of it several weeks afterwards, which was considered as a false one at the time; this after a lapse of almost two years he swore to ten or twelve other witnesses that were sworn who recollected no such remarks in the charge altho they paid particular attention to it, among which there were the judge who sat with him on the bench and almost all the principal attornies at the bar with several of the jury men to whom the charge was given. The charge itself was also produced.

But I am tiring your patience. Judge Chase is a man perhaps of the first or one of the first legal talents in America. His constitutional temper is warm, joined with a quickness of perception almost without an equal, by which he is accustomed to decide at once without attending to all the tedious form of patient investigation; but as appeared from testimony when by this quickness he was hurried into a mistake, no man could retract it with more readiness or greater candor. For

many years before he had a seat on the Federal bench of the United States, he directed the judicial proceedings in the state of Maryland almost with a nod, and as it is said had it in his power to controul legislative proceedings at pleasure, an influence which there is no evidence that he ever abused.

Altho not the Chief Justice of the United States, yet perhaps no judge has ever had so great influence on that bench. It is not to be wondered that a man of such a temper, who had been so long listened to and consulted as an oracle, should feel a consciousness of his superior talents. A change of the political complexion of our country has exposed him to a flood of obloquy and reproach. The issue of this tryal as it respects the short remains of the life of a poor, gouty old man who must have done with this world may be but of small consequence. As his continuance in office can add nothing to his honour, and as, I believe, he has a competency independent of the emoluments of office, but as it respects the judiciary of our country, it is all important.

But, altho I am already trespassing on your patience I must give you a little account of the present stage of the tryal. On Tuesday the 19th, the examination of witnesses was closed about one o'clock, when the court adjourned until Wednesday. On Wednesday morning the pleadings on behalf of the House of Representatives was opened by Mr. Early, of Georgia. He acquitted himself very handsomely in a speech of about an hour and three quarters. Considering the untenable ground he had to go upon he, however, said a number of severe things which might have with as great propriety been omitted. He was followed by Mr. G. W. Campbell of Tennessee. I heard his speech but in part. It was as usual for him a very dull one, and I believe more so because I conjecture he was conscious there was no foundation for his argument. After proceeding about an hour and a quarter, he professed himself too much indisposed to proceed, and the court adjourned until Thursday morning. As I had some business at Georgetown in the morning it was late before I arrived at the Capitol, so that I heard no more only about quarter of an hour at the close.

He was followed by Mr. Clark of Virginia in a short speech

of about twenty minutes, which I did not hear, when the managers stated that they had nothing farther to say until after counsel has been heard on behalf of the respondent. Mr. Chase's counsel have distributed the several articles. Mr. Hopkinson, of Philadelphia, son of the late Francis Hopkinson, Esq. the first District Judge of Pennsylvania under the present Government. He spoke to the first article relating to the tryal of John Fries. Mr. Hopkinson appears to be a young man, his appearance is not the most promising. His voice is not the best and perhaps he would not pass for a finished orator, but his speech, which was about three hours and a half long, astonished every hearer for luminous illustration and closeness of reasoning and propriety of expression. I must confess that to me it was rather novel to hear a man speak for three hours and a half without uttering one incorrect ungrammatical expression which I observed, or a single sentence which was not strictly applicable to his subject. He did great honour both to himself and his client.

After he sat down it was proposed to adjourn for half an hour, when Mr. Key arose and professed to be unable to proceed on his part of the defence on account of indisposition, when the court adjourned until Friday, when Mr. Key proceeded to argue on the 2d, 3d and 4th articles of impeachment with equal perspicuity with the discussion of the day before, and in a speech of nearly the same length. I sat pretty nigh him and observed every word. Mr. Key is a man of dignified personal appearance and a pleasing countenance. He is somewhat advanced in years, perhaps between 50 and 55 years of age. He has been long considered as one of the first law characters and most accomplished orators of the age in this part of the country, as well as a man of a very respectable and amiable character.

There are two defects in him in the view of some people; the one tho he has been long a citizen of the United States, yet he was born an Englishman and did not leave his country under the imputation of any crime; the other is that in this country he has the misfortune to be a Federalist. I had heard him speak at the bar last winter. He equalled but did not surpass my expectations so much as Mr. Hopkinson.

He will pass for a finished orator, but by reason of indisposition being affected with a severe cold and pains in his breast, he was under some disadvantage before he closed, he appeared to be much exhausted. After an adjournment of half an hour, Mr. Lee, the former Attorney General of the United States, spoke to the 5th and 6th articles in a close, nervous, correct, and argumentative speech of nearly two hours long. He, tho a man of acknowledged distinguished legal talents, but has not all the captivating powers of eloquence to charm an audience, which Mr. Key possesses. Today Mr. Luther Martin will speak to the two last articles after which it is expected Mr. Harper will close with a general defence upon the whole charge. Nicholson, Rodney and perhaps Boyle will then reply on behalf of the managers. It is expected the tryal will be closed about Wednesday or Thursday next week.

Thus far I proceeded in my letter in the morning before going to the House. Ten minutes before eleven this day Mr. Luther Martin arose and continued on his feet, excepting an adjournment of half an hour, until five o'clock and did not close. He is to be heard again on Monday. He took a general sweep over the whole affair and closed today with the 4th article. His speech so far as I heard it, for I did not hear the whole, was a mixture of extensive legal knowledge, close and conclusive argument and genuine strokes of humour, with some pretty severe satire delivered in a manner properly his own, i. e. extremely eccentric and without regard to grammatical correctness. As a speaker he is displeasing and many of his words inarticulate. They appeared more so after listening to the correct language, finely turned periods, and oratorical delivery of Messes. Key and Hopkinson. Towards the close he put the court, audience and managers all in exceeding good humour by some strokes of wit, and immediately asked an adjournment, professing himself unable to proceed, which was readily granted.

I think now the pleadings on the part of the Judge will hardly be closed on Monday. The two last articles will be reserved for Harper. Judge Chase is himself so much indisposed with the gout that he has not been in court since

either Monday or Tuesday I am uncertain which. This tryal will make a large volume and will I think be an interesting publication. I can give you no farther information at present. It is now so near the close of the session that I probably shall not write again. At present I rest

Your friend, &c.

SAM'L TAGGART.

Mr. Tracy is very sick should he be unable to be present at the decision it will be one vote lost to the Judge.

WASHINGTON, December 2, 1805.

DEAR SIR:

* * * Today 108 members from different quarters convened; a quorum also of the Senate assembled; Mr. Macon has been again chosen speaker at the third tryal by 58 votes. The President has been notified that the two Houses were organized, and has sent word that he will send a communication by way of message tomorrow, 12 o'clock, which I shall send on as soon as possible. What will be the complexion of the present Congress I cannot conjecture. I see a large number of strange faces. Whether they are likewise or more wise than those they have succeeded I cannot tell, but they are members of Congress; also I understand a sad disaster has befallen one newly elected member, Duncan McFarlan, of North Carolina, famous heretofore for hog, and cow stealing. Even the laws of the mild Republican State of North Carolina are so tyrannical as to hinder in a measure from managing his own affairs in his own way. When the poor man ought to be here acting for the good of the nation, mere physical force keeps him away from his duty without his consent. He is now immured within the walls of a prison upon a recent action of hog stealing.

You will note that it is the custom in North Carolina as well as other southern states for the large landholders to mark and turn out to the woods very large droves of hogs, and to collect them in at the latter part of the season. Mr. McFarlan has been in the habit of relieving the proper owner from the trouble of collecting in his own hogs, but he is for the present frustrated in some of his benevolent intentions.

Another incident worthy of notice, I have been credibly informed of; it is said Mr. Thomas Paine has lately had a paralytic stroke, and on the awful view of eternity, he is praying earnestly for mercy and regretting in the sincerest terms that he ever did or said anything against the Christian religion. If this is true, it is one among many testimonies of the kind to the truth and excellency of the Christian religion from the mouths of its most inveterate enemies. No instance can be given of any man who repented at a dying hour that he had been a Christian, but many thousands have repented their opposition to it. * * *

Yours, &c. &c.

SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, December 24, 1805.

DEAR SIR:

* * * The proceedings of Congress as yet have not been of that public national importance as to afford any great scope for epistolary correspondence, excepting yesterday when the House was occupied with debate upon a contested election from the State of Georgia which is not yet closed. Nothing has taken place meriting the name of a discussion. A general view of our foreign relations is contained in the President's message. So far as they relate to Spain, documents have been communicated in detail partly with closed doors, so far as they are communicated to the public in print. If I can procure a copy from the printers I shall send it for your perusal and that of your neighbors. Perhaps you may not otherwise light on them so much at large.

Two things I think appear plain upon the face of the whole business: 1st, that France is at the bottom of the whole business; altho she has sold us Louisiana at a very dear rate she is disposed that we shall reap as little advantage from the purchase as possible; and 2d, another thing apparent is that all our troubles with Spain are but the natural fruits of that ill judged purchase, and are a begun verification of the predictions of Federals, but where the matter will end is probably known only to him who holds the balances of nations, and

makes "the wrath of men to praise him, while the remainder of his wrath he will restrain."

With respect to the President's message I am happy to find that anything will arouse a feeble popularity courting administration out of that state of apathy in which they have heretofore been involved. It will thus be fortunate for our country. But supposing it should now be found necessary to prosecute vigorous measures for defence, at how much greater expense must it be accomplished than if the plan, wisely begun by the former administration, had been uniformly prosecuted. I have ever viewed the so much boasted economy of the present administration *magna companionere parvis* to be like stopping windows with hats and blankets to save the expense of a few lights of glass. * * * Tuesday the 24, was spent upon the contested election. The debate had no reference to the dispute between Federalists and Democrats. Both the sitting member, Cowles Mead and the claimant Thomas Spalding were Demos. It was decided finally by a small majority in favor of the claimant, and against the sitting member. I thought the decision an incorrect one on principle, altho I felt no particular interest in it.

This discussion brought forward several new speakers, particularly Mr. Bidwell and Mr. Quincy, of Mass., Mr. Broom the new member from Delaware, and Mr. Williams, of New York. Mr. Bidwell is as smooth as the ocean unruffled by the slightest breeze, and Mr. Broom, I think, offers fair to be no unworthy successor to Bayard. He is a young man, said to be hardly thirty, altho from his appearance I should suppose him thirty five. He has the advantage of prepossessing exterior. I think he offers fair to prove one of the first orators I have heard in the House of Representatives. He is said to be a very powerful pleader at the bar, and I had this character of him from a clergyman of Pennsylvania, that in addition to his being a man of distinguished talents both as a lawyer and an orator, he is a man of unblemished morals, and strictly a religious character. This is more than can be said of Bayard.

With respect to the complexion of the House generally, altho the number of nominal Federalists has decreased, yet

I am apt to think so far as I have had opportunity to observe the complexion, that there is not a loss of talents nor an increase of party violence. I think should Randolph, and Nicholson be determined to push violent measures, tho as yet they have been very quiet, they will find a pretty strong phalanx against them, whether so strong as to amount to a majority or not, must be determined by the tryal. Excepting two or three butterflies which will always hover around the candle, New York representation will be firm.

On the 24th we had the report of a committee upon that part of the President's speech, relating to defensive measures necessary to be adopted in the present juncture. The committee reported a sum, the amount of which I do not recollect, for increasing the number of gunboats; 150,000 dollars for fortifying ports and harbours, and 600,000 dollars for buildings 74^e. The committee upon the increase of our land forces and new modelling the militia has not yet reported; what reception the report of this committee will find in the House I know not.

What effect the recent events in Europe will have upon our foreign relations I know not. Should France continue to push their conquests in Germany and at length dictate the terms of peace at pleasure, then farewell the Paradise of Louisiana. But the defeat and destruction of the combined fleet must operate as a serious check. But probably before this can reach you you will have obtained more information on this subject from public channels of information than I can give.

With respect to the fullness of the Treasury it is certain that the revenue grows more and more productive upon the plan of finance laid by Hamilton. And I lately had a conversation with a gentleman who has sustained an important office in the Treasury Department ever since the commencement of the present Government, in which he observed that the affairs of the Treasury are unquestionably well conducted; and altho he has not been with Mr. Gallatin in politics, he gave it as his opinion that a better man could not be found to be at the head of that department; that during four years about 18 millions of the public debt have been paid; but added

that if that sum had been expended upon the national defence and the gradual augmentation of our fleet, he thought that our situation as a nation would at present have been preferable to what it is. * * * Excepting Mr. Bidwell none of our new Massachusetts Democrats have taken any active part. I think there will be some rivalry between Messrs. Randolph, Nicholson & him about taking the lead. But he must either fall in the rear or be whipt out of the course.

Mr. Bidwell has made an attempt at popularity by introducing a resolution in to the House directing the President to bestow a golden medal with appropriate devices upon Mr. Eaton, as a testimony of the approbation of his conduct in contributing to the peace with Tripoli. The resolution has not yet been discussed, I think it will pass by a majority. I find there will be some growling against it. Mr. Eaton, by the way, has ever been a Federalist, but I find it is not quite so heinous to speak with approbation of Federalists as it has been heretofore.

Now Mr. Griswold is out of the House he receives many high encomiums from his political opponents; as one of the ablest members that has ever been in it. * * *

Yours affectionately,
SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, January 12, 1806.

DEAR SIR:

* * * With respect to the state of politics in the southern and middle states we have but one solitary Federalist to the south of the Potomac. With respect to democracy, from the best accounts I can learn it is assuming rather a milder form, and those called constitutional Republicans or *fortium quido*, as some called them, are growing the more popular party. They in principle and practice I believe make a considerable advance towards federalism. This party triumphs in Pennsylvania. In Virginia of late at the choice of a Governor, and of a Judge of their Supreme Court, the same party have lately triumphed.

With respect to the state of parties in Congress, I observe a great want of unanimity and concert; more of a disposition

among men than formerly, to vote independently, each one for himself. I hope this may prove a prelude for voting right. With respect to the temper of the House respecting the subject of defence, I cannot give you the information I could wish, because all discussions upon that subject which have hitherto taken place, and which have grown out of a private confidential message accompanying the documents I sent you, have been with closed doors. Our doors were closed on Friday the 3d instant and during the whole of the past week, and our sessions were very long each day the doors have been shut. This, however, can excite no jealousy among the great mass of our citizens, as it is all effected under the auspices of the exclusive friends of the people.

Enough appears, however, from public documents, as well as intelligence circulated in every part of the Union, to impress it upon the minds of our citizens at large that our country is in a very critical situation. When a ship becomes leaky and unmanageable and is sailing in a heavy gale among rocks, shoals, and quicksands, with a pilot feeble, timid, and unskilful the crew are in the utmost danger. I do not say this is the precise situation of the United States but I have my fears. What between France and Spain squeezing our territories on the one hand, and Great Britain squeezing our commerce on the other, connected with a want of firmness and energy in the administration of our government, I have my fears that we are in a fair way to receive a fraternal hug.

With respect to our disputes with Spain, however indefensible may be the conduct of the dons, yet various circumstances have led to that crisis besides those mentioned in your letter which I shall not repeat. The United States set up extravagant claims as to boundaries extending from Louisiana to the Rio Bravo on the west, which would I understand take in the capital and all the principal settlements of New Mexico, and extending them on the east to the river Perdido, including a principal part of West Florida. It now appears that however fair the claim might be grounded on the treaty of St. Ildefonso, to the territory eastward of the Ibberville, France by a secret treaty of which the United States knew nothing at the time, had relinquished any claim eastward of the Island of

Orleans; accordingly, the French Commissary Laussat had orders not to take possession of that territory.

But the greatest source of all is French intrigue. Formerly when a place of deposit was refused at New Orleans, France found it extremely convenient to pocket fifteen millions from the United States for settling the controversy by transferring an undefined territory to the westward of Mississippi which, exclusive of the Island of Orleans and the free navigation of the Mississippi, is millions worse than nothing to the United States. If now, which I presume is her wish, she can by fomenting disturbances on our frontier, be called in as an umpire, and upon the reception of a few million more, settle the difficulty and perhaps induce Spain to part with East and West Florida, it will be very convenient to her. And supposing that in any future time Talleyrand should want money to support his mistresses, or Bonaparte to make princes of a few more of his needy relations, if they can by fomenting new disturbances on our frontier, dip their hands into the American pocket and pull out l'argent it must be allowed to be a very convenient place of deposit. Perhaps all this may prove more than conjecture.

Our disputes with Great Britain are also of a serious nature. I believe she has no particular enmity against the United States, yet she steadily pursues that pole star which guides every nation, i. e. her own interest. Our neutral commerce is of immense value to her enemies. Of this advantage she wishes to deprive them, and the sinking of our national character to such a low ebb in Europe encourages her encroachments. What alteration will result in our neutral situation from the rapid succession of events, the almost unparalleled success of the British by sea, amounting nearly to an annihilation of the marine of the combined powers, and the rapid progress of Bonaparte by land in Germany we cannot foresee.

I think, however, these events ought to have no other effect upon our counsels unless it was to redouble our exertions in assuming a firm, and decided attitude. But are we likely to assume that attitude? Ay, ther's the rub. Peace with all nations, economy, and the rapid extinguishment of the public

debt, constitute the hobby horse of the present administration. To this ostensible object every other in the view of many must be sacrificed. National honour and dignity, and even national safety are as nothing compared to it. Should we go on to build seventy forts, or fortify ports and harbours, or raise a few additional troops to defend our frontiers, it will encroach upon that system of economy which is so beneficial to our country merely! No, but from which we derive all our popularity, and enjoy the sweets of office for us and our friends.

Some of us have seats in Congress at six dollars a day, with the pleasure of seeing the word honourable attached to our names, which otherwise would be simple John, James, Joseph, &c. Thus many of us are committed to that, from many understanding little more about national policy than the seats they sit on; many being or feeling themselves committed by former practices, and some—but I must stop my pen, but should there be even something still more rotten in Denmark our vigorous defensive measures are in a hazardous predicament, altho I still have hopes.

From the charge of timid temporizing measures, I must exempt John Randolph. He has on the present occasion assumed a firm, bold and decided tone which would do honour to any legislature, and made a display of talents on the spur of the occasion which during a former acquaintance of two years I never thought he possessed. This late conduct I think sufficient to make atonement for a multitude of past political transgressions. But altho he could easily lead a mulish crowd down hill, yet *Facilis descensus avari sed revocari gradum hic labor hoc opus.*

I know not but I have already written more than prudence would dictate, yet writing in confidence that no undue use will be made of it, I feel an almost irresistible inclination to add a few words more. I know not whether it was from you, or from some other clergyman in the vicinity, I heard a story of I think it was Parson Stiles' father to the late President Stiles sermon on the different kinds of devils. Whether we have got a skunk devil here or not, I believe, a smooth, sly cunning underhanded hypocritical devil is not wanting, and a very

busy devil he is. We have had a public Presidential message, somewhat in the blustering vapouring stile; we have had a private confidential message communicated to the House by the President's secretary, all this is well enough.

But in addition to these we have, I believe, certain supra-confidential messages which give springs to the proceedings of the House, at least, of many in it which are communicated only to a chosen few. I judge from this that I find several things proposed and urged upon the House as agreeable to the messages of the President, of which there is no hint either in the public or confidential messages. Our friend, B—l, who now affects to be a leader and a great man, has a singular talent at interpretations of that kind. He has already had a name given him on the floor of the House, which if it gets abroad in the world, he will not easily shake off, i. e. sworn interpreter of executive messages. Randolph and he are quite at points and he does not spare lashing him. Should we have a monarchy and J—n on the throne, B—l would be admirably qualified to be prime minister to such a monarch; his talents are considerable and in smoothness and hypocrisy he is not lacking. * * *

Your friend, and brother,

SAM'L TAGGART.

N. B. Today we had a female preacher in the Capitol by the name of Deborah Ripley, a European I believe by birth, but who has crossed and recrossed the Atlantic several times. As I did feel disposed to gratify a minority at such a great expense of propriety I did not attend as was the case with several members of Congress, so I can give you no account of her performance. * * *

S. T.

WASHINGTON, February 2, 1806.

DEAR SIR:

* * * You observe that my last letter was gloomy. I know not very well how I can make this less so. Our closed doors business lasted about a fortnight. The issue has been little to the satisfaction of the minority. Altho I may not tell you I suppose what we have done yet it is no breach of confi-

dence to inform you what we have not done. I will only however sum it up in this single proposition. We have not in my judgement, I mean during our closed door session, done one single thing which the exigencies of our country required, or its honour and independence demanded. But as I am under no conscientious tie to secrecy, and as I am restrained from publishing the whole not by a sense of any duty I owe to my country, I will state a fact or two.

It is no secret now, that during closed door sessions three years ago, two million of dollars were appropriated for secret services under the direction of the President, which was a prelude to the purchase of Louisiana. I heard a conversation out of doors before our closed door session commenced, that there was no need of any warlike preparations in order to settle our difficulties with Spain, nothing more was necessary than to make an appropriation and take proper steps thro the agency of France to purchase the Floridas. Perhaps you may have sufficient sagacity to draw an inference so as to guess at least part of our business. This is I believe the first time I have sincerely regretted Randolph's defeat. I believe neighbor Bidwell is now J'sns right hand man. Randolph does not spare to lash him, but whatever corporeal sensibility he may have, he seems pretty destitute of mental.

I see here what I never expected to see, i. e. a degree of a national spirit and attention to a national character, rising in Virginia, while Mass'tts seems doomed to drink the very dregs of democracy. Randolph's exertions during our secret sittings were great, and he discovered talents which I never supposed him to possess. I must quote you one expression he used after he had met with a defeat in all his measures. "After our doors are opened, you will bring forward some paltry expedient or another, to blindfold the nation, and keep up a show of preparing for a defence. But gentlemen, you may propose what you please, I will scout it from one end of the continent to the other for you are doing nothing, and will do nothing but bubble the nation. Yes, I say you are bubbling the nation."

I cannot picture to [you] the indignation stampd on his countenance when he uttered these words, and as you have never seen him you cannot form an idea of it. The words,

however, soon appeared to me to be prophetic; for soon after a bubble was brought forward under the form of a bill authorizing the President to call out 100,000 militia upon emergency, a power that he has had by a standing law for several years. Some severe remarks were made upon the bill but none more severe than by a Democrat who voted in favour of it. His speech was so curious that I shall set it down as nearly verbatim as I can. The idea, I believe, without either adding or diminishing one, I cannot vouch for every particular expression.

Mr. Speaker, I was in hopes this bill would have passed without opposition especially as it appears to be the only effective measure likely to be adopted. I want to be able to tell my constituents we have done something, should they ask me. Have you obtained from Spain a ratification of the treaty and pay for her spoliations of our commerce? No, we have authorized the President to call out the militia. Have you raised any troops to protect our frontiers and repel Spanish aggression? No, we have empowered the President to call out the militia. Have you done anything to fortify our ports, and harbours? No, we have authorized the President to call out 100,000 militia. Have you done anything to obtain indemnification for British spoliations on our commerce and to put a stop to depredations in future? No, but we have directed the President to call out the militia, if necessary. Have you done anything toward building 74^s or otherwise increasing our navy? No, we have given the President directions to call out the militia. Have you done anything to rescue seamen who are impressed on board British ships and to stop impressments in future? No, but we have empowered the President to call out the militia for these reasons and because this is likely to be the only effective measure, I hope we will be unanimous in favour of this bill.

From what I can discover of the hidden spring which moves the political machine, I believe neighbor J-n is practicing some of the arts of an able politician. He published a blustering vapouring message at the commencement of the session, in order to meet the spirit of the nation which appeared to be roused. I believe he is secretly counteracting the effects of

his message. When a timid temporizing pacific system answers the purpose, he can rejoice with the nation in the success of it. But should it fail, of success and our country in the end be compelled to the adoption of vigorous measures, he can throw the responsibility on Congress and shelter his own popularity under his high sounding message.

Similar calculations may also probably be made in relation to our difficulties with Britain. However unjustifiable the conduct of the latter, I believe that of the United States has been little less so, and whatever difficulties do exist, I believe might have long since been done away by proper diplomatic arrangements. But after affairs had got pretty well embroiled, principally by a backwardness on the part of the United States, to renew the stipulations of the British treaty, Mr. Monroe was sent to negotiate, than whom probably a more improper character could not have been selected, whose diplomatic talents had been invariably tested by a want of success, and whose partiality to France and hostility to Britain was notorious all over Europe.

I think there is still some probability that difficulties may be settled upon some terms; perhaps, I say perhaps, for undoubtedly as strange things have happened after our affairs are embroiled in every possible way short of actual war, and after the sacrifice of some 20, 30 or more millions of the property of our merchants, a treaty may be patched up, substantially the same with the former British treaty, tho probably on terms less advantageous; and our administration reap thereby another harvest of popularity for saving us from the horrors of war with which we were threatened; altho all this might have been done with greater facility two or three years sooner, without any sacrifice either of property or national character.

Mr. Gregg's resolutions which you will doubtless see before this can reach you, looks a little squally with regard to Britain. The subject of a non-intercourse has been labouring in embryo a good while. I expect it will be under discussion this week. I have serious doubts about the expediency of the measure. It will meet with opposition, but I suspect that in some form perhaps by setting it on a distant day so as to give

time for a negotiation, it will pass the House. I expect Randolph will oppose it. I heard one of the Virginia members say a day or two ago, that he hoped no Virginian would vote for it. I fear it will be like cutting off our own right hand to break a finger of Britain. Something will depend upon the state of Europe unless Britain is peculiarly pinched from that quarter. I believe the United States will be most injured. I expect it will meet with powerful opposition. Perhaps it may do its service, it may be a means of causing the scum to settle to the bottom.

Randolph I think appears to be considerably altered I think in his system. In company with a number of other members I had a few words conversation with him the day before yesterday. The conversation turned about our Turkish Ambassador and his suite. He observed he thought it was very wrong to bring them to this country; he wished they were out of it, or were sent off, I believe was his expression. Some person observed that they calculated to proceed to the north as far as Boston, and that it might do good by shewing them the strength of our country. "Shew them the nakedness of our country," he replied, "just such a country as they want to prey upon, an immense commerce and no navy to protect it."

You will probably have seen before this the Spanish Ambassador's, the little Marquis's, commentary upon our President's message, that part of it which relates to Spain. He trumps up pretty high in order it was thought to brave the President. He repaired to the city from Philadelphia just about the time his communication was made public where I had not seen him for near two years, and to let everybody know he was here he appeared last Lord's Day at church a place where I had never seen him before. What countenance he receives from Mr. Jefferson I do not know. I believe he is received very coldly.

Give my compliments to Major Hoyt and tell him I should be obliged to him to send on his communication with regard to the militia. Varnum's report against a classification has not been acted upon, and it will meet much opposition. Now anything I have seen with regard to the militia I have hitherto been pretty much disposed to vote against every thing brought

up. We boast much of the militia as the strength of the country. That they are the natural strength is true, but every way I have seen for the application of that strength heretofore appears to me expensive, partial, oppressive and inefficient. I am no military man myself, but I shall be glad to communicate anything which may be forwarded to those who are, and should rejoice in anything calculated to render the militia an efficient force, and throw the burthen more equally upon the community. * * *

I rest,

Your friend, & brother

SAM'L TAGGART.

N. B. The fatigue Randolph underwent in speaking sometimes from two to three hours in a day, during the closed door sessions together with the extreme agitation of his mind have made him sick. He has been very little in the House since. Randolph with all his defects as a politician has some good qualities, he scorns meanness and hypocrisy. He has no view of stabbing in the dark, he is either a warm friend or an open adversary. His independent spirit scorns to stoop to an agency in measures now carrying on for these B-Is to the man, and has probably supplanted him in the good graces of the President.

An examination of the British doctrine upon neutral commerce of 204 pages has been laid on our table, the author's name not mentioned but said to be Mr. Madison. I have not read it all but it looks very well on paper. Mr. Madison is a powerfull writer but such discussions want a little of the *ultima ratio regum* to enforce them.

S. T.

WASHINGTON, February 10, 1806.

DEAR SIR:

* * * On Thursday last we had another secret session, the occasion of it was some post dispatches arrived from Mr. Monroe at London. There was nothing in them that I could see that required much secrecy any farther than the impropriety generally, which is attached to a publication of the correspondence of foreign ministers. The contents in general

were a little more favourable than the last. The important discussions relating to the state of the union have not as yet taken place. The information called for by Randolph, previous to the discussion of Mr. Gregg's resolutions, we have not yet obtained. In the meantime another set of resolutions somewhat similar to Gregg's have been introduced into the Senate by Gen. Smith, Maryland, and another set of resolutions tending somewhat to the establishing a navigation act have been introduced by Joseph Clay. * * * Congress has been passing a number of bills of minor importance; that which has consumed the most time I believe five days have been already spent has been a proposition for imposing a tax of ten dollars on negroes imported into the United States. Progress was made so far as to have a bill engrossed for a third reading, when on motion it was recommitted to a select committee as the bill was after all found to be defective. Altho no man, I believe, has a greater aversion to slavery and the slave trade than myself, yet I felt it to be my duty to oppose this business in every stage of it. As it was a delicate subject for member from a state where slavery does not exist I found it necessary to discuss the subject on the floor of the House. I was advised when I first manifested an opposition to withdraw it and vote for the measure on account of the extreme unpopularity of slavery in the northern states. To this I could not accede, and altho there was at first but a small minority against the resolution, yet the subject grows less popular. The bill may pass our House, altho somewhat heavily, and probably will be lost in the Senate.

I see more and more evidence daily of a change in Randolph's conduct and sentiments. I do not vouch for the truth of this, and I do not fully credit it, but I have heard it reported in the city that he should have said in private conversation, that the Democrats ought to go to Braintree and ask pardon of John Adams for abusing him and opposing him in the only practicable mode in which our nation[s] independence can be maintained. One thing is certain, he has evidenced much more hostility to France than Britain. Spain he says no longer exists as an independent nation. It is idle to talk of a dispute with Spain. In France our national character is also annihi-

lated. And Talleyrand has got the United States down among his list of contributors to the glory of the great nation along with Spain, Holland, Genoa, &c. He held no such language two years ago. I believe however it is no less true than melancholy. I know not, however, but he is now about to give us an interlude. He has revived his proposition of last session relating to an alteration of the tenure on which the judges hold their offices, and has given notice that he will call up the subject on Thursday next. I rest

Your friend and brother,

SAM'L TAGGART.

* * * *N. B.* I have only farther to add that this day the celebrated Duncan MacFarlan of hog stealing memory, alias the friend of the swinest multitude appeared, took the necessary oath and took his seat in Congress in order to add his useful labours to the exertions of his co-patriots in Congress, and to add one more name to the list of honourables of which our honourable body is composed. You may publish this note as far as it relates to him if you please.

WASHINGTON, February 24, 1806.

DEAR SIR:

* * * The Senate on Thursday last passed the bill which has been before them almost ever since the commencement of the session for prohibiting the trade with the Island of St. Domingo. It is made the order of the day for this day in the House of Representatives. It passed by the Senate by a large majority. Gen. Smith & Dr. Mitchell who signalized themselves considerably against it at length voted for it. It is limited in its duration for one year and its operation may be suspended sooner at the pleasure of the President. The day the bill passed, I heard Mr. White of Delaware make a very able speech against it. I don't know as I am fully possessed of the subject, altho I viewed Mr. White's arguments unanswerable, but I did not hear much said on the other side. But whatever may be the policy of the bill, so far as the moving spring of some of our legislators is discoverable by actions, it would appear as if in legislating on our foreign

relations, their fears and their resentments moved them more than any other motives. The insulting menace of a brute of a fellow, miscalled a French Ambassador, back'd with the threat of Talleyrand to the same purpose, has blackened the blacks of St. Domingo blacker than nature made them, and convinced many of independent legislators that the trade is wrong.

A gentle threat that if war was to take place between the United States and Spain, the French would unquestionably join Spain, joined with warm professions of friendship and a wish to mediate between the powers with an innuendo that money would effect a settlement, and put us in possession of the Floridas, I believe has had some influence in preventing certain measures and in promoting others which were agitated with closed doors. The avowed object of some was to settle with Spain at present on any terms so as to bring our whole force of gunboats, I suppose with our 100,000 militia, to bear upon Great Britain, probably aided with the whole pose of our resolutions for non-intercourse. Bonaparte's rapid successes in Germany were going to put Great Britain completely in our power, and if she was not going to be finally conquered by France, she was going to be so intimidated that for fear of a rupture with the United States or for fear of losing our custom now when she was just about to be shut out from all market on the continent, she would immediately accede to all our demands. But now that there is a prospect of the tables turning, and Bonaparte is found to be not quite invincible but has felt very serious impressions from the Russian armies, I am apt to think fear is beginning to get the better of resentment, and I expect soon to hear that Britain has not been so much to blame as I thought her. Indeed, I believe never was a legislature more completely confounded or reduced to such a dilemma that they know not what to do. There is something said about adjournment for 60 days to wait the moving of the waters in Europe. Whether this or what will take place I know not.

A bill has passed the Senate for the payment of all the witnesses summoned in the trial of Judge Chase. It is the order of the day for this day. It was partially discussed in committee of the whole on Friday. Early and Jackson

spoke in favour of passing the bill as did Alston. Macon, Speaker, & Nicholson spoke against it. Something will depend upon the new members perhaps, as they had not their feelings excited and their honour pledged by appearing in the prosecution, they may turn the scale in favour of passing the bill. Randolph was not in the House, he has not been in [since] about the 4th, or 5th instant; he is very much indisposed.

The negro bill has not yet passed. I believe it is to be read a third time today. I believe a majority of the House is heartily sick of it and wish it never had been introduced; probably, however, they have gone so far there will finally be a vote to pass it in our House. I know not of any thing farther worth mentioning.

With regard to our secret proceedings reserve in speaking of them is pretty much worn away. It is pretty well understood that among other things, or indeed the only thing that was decided, was to pass a bill appropriating 2 millions of dollars for the extraordinary expenses of foreign intercourse, being generally understood as a first installment for the purchase of the Floridas from Spain, or rather her guardian France who will probably take care to pocket the money and save Spain the trouble. This will probably be another 15 million business and in some two or three years the settlement of a western boundary between Louisiana & New Mexico so as to extend a little farther beyond the morass some 10 or 15 millions more. These are the glorious times of economy. Wild land enough. Our money is not squandered on ships fortifications, armies, &c. This bill has passed the Senate and received the signature of the President. If a copy of it could be obtained I believe it will not be long before it should find its way into the public papers. The majority I think in favour of the passage of the bill was either 16 or 18, 54 or 56 to 72. In the majority were all the Demos. of Mass'tts. Mr. B—l had the honour of introducing the subject into the House. In the minority were the major part of the Virginia delegation. But a more particular history of this business another time.

I prepared a speech on the occasion with thoughts of delivering at the passage of the bill, but on account of the fatigue it would occasion, and fearing that the Federalists were

determined pretty much to be silent, I did not deliver it which I have rather regretted, because had it been delivered it might have some time been published for the entertainment of my friends. If it is not too heavy to send by mail I dont know but I shall send it for your amusement, and you may keep the manuscript till I return should I send it, when you consider the arrangement as the work of a single evening you will excuse inaccuracies.

The Senate have voted to send an envoy to Britain, who will be the man is not known for certainty in public. Aaron Burr is talked of. He is now in Washington. He was here in the month of December and has made a rapid tour to South Carolina and is returned. A coalition is said to be formed between his party and the Clintonians in the State of New York, and it is suggested that he begin again to squint towards the Presidential chair at the next election. Burr's talents none can dispute, but to see such a man exalted to the highest honours his country can bestow we may justly exclaim, *O tempora, O mores*. I feel a little delicacy about communicating all the information contained in this letter to the public direct yet as it is here talked of publicly out of doors, I could wish, if as much talked of with you, I want to know whether the good people of Massachusetts want any more waste land.

I rest yours, &c., &c.

S. TAGGART.

February 24, [1806.]

The bill for paying the witnesses as well as the St. Domingo bill have been brought up today but are postponed, the latter will I expect be taken up tomorrow. I believe it will pass altho there are objections to some of the details.

I have tried the package mentioned in my letter and find it is not over weight. Perhaps I shall send it so that it may arrive at Deerfield by the next mail. I know not but I have gone too far in my communications in my letter. I wish the facts to be publicly known, but I do not wish to take upon myself the responsibility of publishing, altho here they are just as well known out of doors as they are in; and I have heard today that the Spanish Ambassador [has] had the whole

information from a member of Congress. No one can guess who. Supposing such an intimation as this should be published without throwing the responsibility on me or on yourself, or on any particular person, I should have no objection; a little caution is perhaps as yet necessary. A communication of this sort, viz., it is now generally understood at Washington out of doors and is not contradicted, that the only measure carried into effect during the secret session of Congress was an appropriation of two millions of dollars to enable the President to enter into a negotiation to purchase the Floridas of Spain. A bill for this purpose was then passed which has since passed the Senate and received the President's signature. This is a sum to be paid in hand as a first installment in the purchase.

I submit this to your discretion whether it can in any way be made public without incurring a needless reproach.

N. B. It will not do to publish it in Greenfield & * * *
[This letter is not signed in the original manuscript.]

WASHINGTON, February 26, 1806.

DEAR SIR:

Nothing farther is done as yet about the payment of the witnesses in the trial of Judge Chase. The two days of this week have been principally taken up with the passage of the bill restricting the trade to St. Domingo. It passed by a large majority, all the Republicans but four voting in favour of it. These were Verplanck, New York, Crowninshield, Mass'tts, MacCreery, Maryland, Elliott, Vermont. The bill is limited to one year, and the President is empowered to suspend the operation of it at any time. Attempts were made to take off the limitation, and to extend it to three instead of one year, and to increase the penalty by burthening the whole commerce of the United States with the obligation to give bonds with sureties not to go to St. Domingo, but neither attempt succeeded. The provisions were in general considered as sufficiently severe and many I believe swallowed the bill rather hardly. I can view the measure merely as a peace offering to France in submission to her imperious mandates. I make no doubt it will be nearly equally gratifying to Great Britain as it will enable her to monopolize the trade of St. Domingo.

But I fear it will be attended with serious consequences to the United States. There cannot I think remain a doubt on the first knowledge of this law, the blacks will seize and confiscate all the American property in the Island, and it is well if they stop here from the ferocious character of the banditti. It could not be thought strange were they to massacre every American they may get in their power. Should they be driven by desperation to seek subsistence on the ocean it will bring an Algiers into our bosom and by multiplying piracies may go far towards delaying our West India commerce. One thing which rendered the southern states so much against this commerce was the peculiar aversion they have to considering any people with a black skin as free and independent, thinking it will have in time a bad effect on their own blacks. Here I think they are mistaken in their policy. Should these barbarians be driven to the ocean they will I think be much more dangerous to the southern blacks and have much greater opportunities to communicate their principles to them and excite insurrections among them than by feeding them at home and letting them raise coffee and other articles for the consumption of the United States. * * *

Yours,

S. TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, March 3d, 1806.

DEAR SIR:

* * * I remember in the summer of the year 1790 I went a journey to Saratoga Springs, Congress then sat in the City of New York. I saw in my journey a New York paper which had in it rather a burlesque on their proceedings. They were represented as a famous literary society collected in that city from all parts of the continent for the purpose of preparing and publishing certain literary works which were to astonish and enlighten the world. The first in the catalogue was a treatise on trifling in folio, showing the method of trifling away four hours in the day to the greatest advantage; the second was the art of milking a ram and several others whose titles I have forgot.

I have several times thought that the proceedings of this

winter might give occasion for a new edition of the treatise on trifling with large additions and improvements, a large appendix at least if not one entire new volume. I cannot say we have trifled away the past week and have done nothing. We have passed one important bill which has since received the President's signature, viz., for interdicting trade with the Island of St. Domingo. And we have a second time proceeded so far upon a bill for imposing the ten dollar tax upon negroes imported into South Carolina as to have it a second time engrossed for a third reading; and instead of passing it, it is again recommitted to a committee of seven, to new-model it and try to bring in something that will go down. The friends of the bill find the difficulties I suggested to be very serious ones; they cannot as yet frame a bill on the subject which they will agree to pass.

On Friday last the subject of fortifying ports and harbours was brought up and underwent considerable discussion but no vote was taken on it. I thought there was rather the appearance of a majority in favour of the measure.

We have not begun upon our difficulties with Great Britain, the document from the treasury has not been yet communicated to us, it will appear in a day or two. This is a document which I wish to possess but I don't want it with a view to be informed how I shall vote on our non-intercourse resolution. I suppose them to be both impracticable and impolitic.

There is much speculation here about the secret expedition out at New York under Gen. Miranda; and you will find by the papers that an attempt is making in certain queries addressed to Mr. Madison to implicate the Government. These are supposed to come from the pen of Marquis Yrujo. Whether there are any grounds for the insinuations I know not. Certain it is Miranda was here, and I think it probable waited both on the President & Mr. Madison. I hope for no improper end. But that a man who could write Mazzei letters, and hire Calender to defame the former administration, a man who, when Secretary of State, could hold a language official and a language confidential, to the minister of certain powers; and could send public messages and confidential messages, and

messages super-confidential, clashing with both the others, might in connection with his ministers pursue a crooked policy in their conduct with foreign nations which has contributed in some measure to our embarrassments, is not impossible. Charity hopeth all things; pretty certain it is that if the Spanish Marquis's conduct has been extraordinary, the treatment he has received has been a little so. Should the court of Spain vindicate the cause of their Ambassador it may take—dollars for a peace offering without purchasing Florida. Whisper says dispatches of rather an unpleasant nature have been lately received from Spain, but as we have no account of any arrival I rather seem the reception of any kind. With respect to our proceedings in relation to British aggressions, it is my opinion that dispatches from Europe would give us more light than documents from the treasury. Should the combined forces of Russia and Austria be finally successful, and Bonaparte be driven out of Germany our proceedings will be very moderate and pacific; but should he be finally victorious, and be able to dictate a peace on the continent and Great Britain again have to contend a lane with his gigantic power, we will no doubt rise in our demands. I judge the sentiments of many by the expressions of one. I heard one member say a few days ago that he hoped Bonaparte would keep his ground until we settled our difficulties with Britain, and then he did not care how soon he got a thrashing. Lest you should think the manuscript I spoke of sending the beginning of last week should have miscarried I must say that I have not yet sent it. To send or not to send that is the question which I have not yet determined.

Yours, &c.

S. TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, March 7, 1806.

DEAR SIR:

If you call this a letter I promise you it will be a short one. A law has passed the House so far as to be engrossed for a third reading to compensate all the witnesses in the tryal of Judge Chase; the bill first passed the Senate. It was moved in the House to amend the bill by inserting a clause to limit the

compensation to the witnesses summoned in behalf of the government and carried in committee of the whole when the House was thin, and by several members the nature of the amendment was not attended to. When the proceedings of the committee of the whole were acted on in the House, members were more generally in their seats, and the question was taken by yeas and nays to disagree to the modification of the committee of the whole, and restore the bill to the form in which it came from the Senate and carried by, I believe, a majority of 5, 54, 59, or 56, 59 I am uncertain which. The bill is to be read a third time today.

The bill for a partial non-importation from Great Britain still hangs in the Senate. This committee have struck out a number of articles on the list in the bill which passed the House of Representatives which was predicated exactly on Nicholson's resolution. But no decision has yet been on the bill.

Saturday, the day was a considerable part of it spent upon a motion of Randolph's for printing the secret message of the President with the journal already published. The scene would have been laughable had it not been that the dignity of the nation was evidently committed by the confusion of their representatives. Randolph gave notice that he was about to introduce something in relation to the secret journal the day before, and the galleries were full after a scene of confusion, which tho it excited laughter at the time was a subject of serious reflection. The House adjourned in confusion without doing anything. Randolph gave pretty fully expression of the measures of the Government, and repeated his denunciation of the Secretary of State made before in secret conclave. I suppose the subject will be again reassumed today. Nothing can exceed the consternation occasioned to some by the publication of the secret journal, Famine, War, Pestilence, Earthquakes, &c. are evils of minor importance compared with the hazard of their dear popularity. To defeat any farther publication the confusion was rais'd on Saturday. * * *

I rest, Yours,

S. TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, March 12, 1806.

DEAR SIR:

* * * Seven days have now been spent in discussing Gregg's resolution without coming to any decision. The names of the speakers on former days you will find in the papers. To-day Jackson occupied about an hour before he closed his observations begun yesterday. He was followed by Mr. Rhea of Tennessee, who in a speech of about half an hour grumbled out something in such a low voice and inarticulate manner that but few heard it. Then followed a number of explanations from former speakers who said they had been either misunderstood or misrepresented. When Mr. Early moved for the committee to rise in order to their being discharged from any farther consideration of the resolution, this motion was negatived by a majority of four or five, when Crowninshield favoured us with a second speech in favour. No question has been taken, and I expect that tomorrow morning the motion will be to postpone any farther consideration of that resolution for the present in order to take up another. Many voted against the committee's rising who are against the resolution, but wished for a final disposition of it expecting it would not carry. It seems to be the general impression that that resolution will be negatived.

Whether anything will be adopted as a substitute is uncertain. Our wise men are pretty much in the situation of the man who proposed circumcising his females. Something must be done, they don't very well know what, but it is above all things necessary to vent our indignation against Britain in some way or another. No Federalist has spoken on the subject. -It seems to be their determination to let the majority manage all these affairs in their own way, without doing anything farther than give a simple vote. I am not perfectly satisfied that this is the correct course, and had made arrangements to have spoken, but I yielded to what appeared to be the general opinion. I shall not now speak upon it in committee of the whole. Should it pass in committee and the report be brought before the House, I shall think it my duty to oppose it.

I don't hardly know which I am most opposed to the resolution itself, or the arguments by which it is opposed.

More another time.

Yours,

S. TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, March 13, 1806.

DEAR SIR:

* * * Today Gregg's resolution was dismissed for the present without any question being taken on it. His friends I believe found they could not carry it, therefore they were willing thus quietly to let it go to sleep. It is now liable, it is true, to be called up at any time. But I believe the bauling won't be disturb[ed]. It was today moved to postpone the subject generally, as we might soon be expected to receive important news from Europe which might materially affect the course of our deliberations; but the motion was lost by a small majority. I expect we will go into the consideration of Nicholson's tomorrow. Nicholson himself was in favour of the postponement.

Some precious confessions are leaking out. Randolph made another speech of considerable length today. He had on former occasions thrown out several hints that we had no cabinet, or that we had only an invisible irresponsible cabinet, a set of political undershapers or of invisible go-betweens between the Executive and the Representatives of the nation. Today he has come out in full. On the following occasion, on the 17th of January near the close of our secret session, and after all the main questions had been decided. Important despatches from Europe were communicated by the House, both relating to our difficulties with Spain and England closely connected with the subject of our deliberation, which had they been communicated sooner would probably have naturally altered the course of the discussions and the state of the vote. These despatches he informed us were in Washington before the 20th of December, as he knew from this circumstance that he received letters from Mr. Monroe at London by the same arrival of the same date with the despatches, and that on the 16th of January one of the heads of

department who ought to be consulted on all important affairs of the nation, knew not that any such despatches were in existence. He added that among several other expressions which I partly do not recollect and I did not have time to write, that an Executive who does not place confidence in the Representatives of the nation cannot or need not (I don't know precisely which is the expression he used) expect that the nation would long place confidence in him. As I wish to put this into the Post Office this evening I have time for no more.

From your friend,

S. TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, March 17, 1806.

DEAR SIR:

* * * I cannot now give you much more intelligence about Congress proceedings. On Saturday the House did not sit. On the 14th, Friday, Mr. Nicholson's resolution was called up. Mr. Mumford of New York spoke in favour of it, or rather in favour of Gregg's resolution. He made an apology when he began for his being a merchant and unacquainted with public speaking. He communicated considerable mercantile information and gave an affecting history of the interruptions and vexations of our commerce. Mr. Chandler, Dist. Maine also talked a while half an hour or more. I did not hear him.

Randolph replied not quite with his usual violence; he observed in general that gentlemen could all point out the disease, but he wanted to hear the remedy pointed out. No man had offered a single reason to prove the present measure to be the proper one. He did not, however, forget to compliment the gentlemen on their parliamentary economy in delivering speeches on one resolution which were composed for another. I have heard it said that when the President heard of Randolph's attack upon him on the floor of the House, he was so affected that he shed tears, and said the newspaper scurrility he did not regard, but such an attack was more than he very well knew how to bear. A gentleman connected with the war office with whom I had some conversation on the subject, observed that he should have thought of that when he

countenanced much more severe as well as unfounded attacks, upon better men at a time when he could with the greatest care have repelled them. * * *

The game is already begun for a next President. Jefferson is out of the question. If they would suffer themselves to speak out I believe his popularity is rapidly declining among his friends. I think I can see the appearances of old age advancing. It is natural for expectants to court the rising sun. Randolph observed the other day that when he arrived at the seat of Government, at the commencement of the session such was the critical situation of our foreign relation that he expected every gentleman's eye to be directed across the Atlantic to England, France and Spain, when behold almost every eye was directed to the house half way between the Capitol and Georgetown. Who shall be its future occupant? Who shall be our next President? was the question. Federalists out of the question. No less than three Democratic candidates are named. Burr, Madison and Monroe, and no doubt everything that intrigue can effect will be done for all the three. The intent of the coalition between the Burrrites and Clintonians, in New York, is supposed to be first to bring Burr forward in opposition to Lewis as a candidate for Governor, and if that succeeds to make it the stepping stone towards the presidency. It is thought the Virginia int'rest will be thrown in the scale in favour of Monroe in opposition to Madison. Should he succeed in effecting a favourable adjustment of our difficulties with the Court of Great Britain, it will be improved by his partizans a stepping stone to elevate him to the presidency. It is suggested that Madison is jealous of Monroe, and wishes to send an Envoy Extraordinary to the Court of St. James to eclipse him if possible. Perhaps if they overturn overturn overturn he whose right it is may—

You have doubtless, as well as myself, read with surprise and astonishment the late accounts from Europe. If they are correct, of which there is too much reason to believe, altho I find them still scrupled, Bonaparte's success on the continent is

complete. England probably will again have to contend alone against a power become more gigantic by success.

I think it is peculiarly unfortunate that there are so many points of collision between us and Great Britain at present. The British fleet, should the late intelligence be correct, is the only barrier in the way of our being swallowed up in our turn by the tremendous vortex which threatens to devour everything. Indeed, after some of our late proceedings, particularly the passage of the St. Domingo bill, and the secret bill for repurchasing West Florida, we can hardly be called independent. Now some of our Republicans begin to feel it. Mr. Clark of Virginia observed to me the morning after the late intelligence was received, that if Bonaparte succeeded in humbling England, it would not be long before he would dictate to us what we should print in our papers, and what we should say or rather what we should not say on the floor of Congress.

However serious our complaints are against Britain, I believe her conduct has not been altogether without cause on our part. The policy of Great Britain in all her wars with France has been to distress her on the ocean. In this she has, in general in former wars, succeeded so effectually as to drive her from that element altogether. Her being cut off from her foreign and her colonial commerce has usually disturbed her so in her finances as to compel her to put an end to the wars. Since the United States have risen as an important neutral power, particularly in a commercial point of view, France and Spain by opening their ports to a neutral commerce in time of war which are shut in time of peace, are enabled to carry on a commerce with their colonies and with the East Indies, and the British are cut off from the privilege of annoying them in one of their most vulnerable places. It is contended that the business of clearing and reshipping the same goods is only an evasion of established rules, and the necessity of the case urges them at present to a rigorous enforcement in order to prevent a trade so important to their enemies. The dispute between the two powers is long and intricate, and int'rest operates powerfully on both sides. On the one side a gainful commerce, which is believed to be fair is interrupted, and on the other assistance is in this direct way rendered to the

enemies of Britain in a way which enables them to protract the war. * * *

Your friend & brother,

SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, March 24, 1806.

DEAR SIR:

* * * I send you in four packages an account of Jefferson's hobby, more Louisiana. To me it is neither very instructive nor entertaining. But when the subject was brought up it was so pleasing that a vote was obtained to print so many that I have six for my share. I don't know what to do with them and know not very well how to carry them on my return. I thought I would break some of them to pieces and dispense them among my friends by mail. You are welcome to this *Qua re*.

How do you like Randolph's speech? He is proceeding as he has begun. On Friday during a closed door session he made a pointed attack upon Mr. Madison for concealing important despatches in order to aid the scheme of propitiating France with money to effect a settlement with Spain, and I expect he will repeat it with open doors. This week is the discussion of a bill founded on Nicholson's resolution. Randolph is an excellent fellow to pull down, altho I have no great opinion of his talents for building up. In the present instance I believe he has pretty good ground to stand on. He is tearing off marks with a pretty rude hand it is true, but I believe they must come. I believe if the truth was known the administration are trembling for their very existence. Several members have declared openly, some of them rather with sentiments of indignation, that had not these despatches been concealed and they obliged to legislate in the dark, their votes would have been different from what they were, Nicholson, Clay, of Penn., Masters, Rea.

On Friday last we had a closed door session of about 2¹/₂ hours. The intention of it was to take off the injunction of secrecy from our late proceedings. No direct vote was taken on the question. By a majority of 10 a vote was obtained to postpone a final vote on the subject until Monday night. Besides the

appropriation business which is pretty generally known, several other things are nigger mugged in secret, which if they were fairly before the public, would I believe give a very different direction to the public mind from what it has now, and cover some particular characters with—something else than honour.

For two days last week the House did no business on account of the death of Gen. Jackson. It has always been the custom to adjourn when a death is announced. This was done on Wednesday and on Thursday his funeral was attended. The Gen. was 49 years of age; his complaint was a dropsy. His constitution was worn out with agitation, fatigue and intemperance. . . * * *

Your friend, &c.

S. TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, March 31st, 1806.

DEAR SIR:

* * * The bill for a partial non-importation has been passed since I wrote last; it is to take place Nov. 15th. The passage of it was rather the point of compromise obtained by dint of concurring than any real union of sentiment. Many of those who voted for it would be glad it would not pass the Senate, and many voted on the presumption that it never would be carried into effect. It was passed ostensibly, however, by a large majority. It has not yet passed the Senate that I know of. Randolph did not go largely into its merits on its passage. He contented himself with a few sarcastic observations on the strength and national dignity of the measure. He said that after all the flourishing of gentlemen about taking high ground and strong measures and asserting our dignity we were presented with a mere milk and water thing, a dish of chicken broth and water gruel, a bill which none of its supporters possessed of common sense, suppose can ever be carried into effect and that its title ought to be an act giving additional encouragement to custom house perjury than anything else. I shall forbear giving my sentiments on it until I see you.

A bill making the appearance of making some compensation

to Georgia claimants passed the Senate, but has been rejected by the House of Representatives so that business has been laid asleep for the present session.

I may perhaps have occasion to make an apology for the levity of the following narrative. It, I acknowledge, partakes considerably of the ludicrous. On the evening of the 26th, I believe, some mischievous demon whether it was old Satan himself or some friend of an inferior grade is not stated, attempted *Vi & Armis* to carry off James Sloan. The particulars of this most wonderful affair, so far as they have come to my knowledge are as follows: Mr. Sloan on that evening went to a neighbouring house to pay an evening visit to his friend Samuel Maclay one of the Senators of Pennsylvania. During the time when they were engaged in familiar friendly chat a knock was heard at the door. Mr. Maclay says, "Come in." The noise still continued in the passage but no person entered. Sloan thinking the stranger could not open the door, and thinking Maclay to be rather tardy or impolite, arose and opened the door, when *mirabile dictu* instead of a friendly neighbour *monstrum norrendum informe ingens* a spectre of a most hideous and terrific form exceeding in horror all the drawings of Bunyan's devils stood in the passage; but upon the door opening march'd in, seized Sloan by the hand and attempted to take him off. But the latter being reluctant to go just then and the demon not being remarkably violent, he let go his prey and sat down quietly for a few minutes and then withdrew without saying a word.

Sloan says the fiend appeared to be about the size of friend Sly. You will conclude that he was no chicken and as Sloan is very small he would not have served him for more than a mouthful. So far the business is farcical enough. On the next evening something more serious happened. Some real fiend or fiends entered the chambers of several members of Congress while they slept and plundered them of their watches, pocket books and cloathing to a large amount. Willis Altson told me he estimated his loss at 300 dollars. It included an excellent repeating gold watch valued at 160 dollars. The pocket books, after rifling them of their contents which were valuable and scattering such papers as were of no

use to the pilferer, were left near the homes where they were taken. Mr. Shuneman of New York was more fortunate than some others. He lost his watch which he says was of small value, his pocket book was taken containing 140 dollars in bills, but fortunately a bill of 100 dollars was rolled up in a small bit of a newspaper so that it was not suspected to be of any value. This he found near his pocket book, probably the whole amount plundered amounted to 6 or 700 dollars. No account of the thief or thieves as yet; they must have been well acquainted with the houses when they perpetrated the villiany. Sloan's demon is blamed, but he is probably innocent but if guilty I presume he esteemed the articles purloined of more value than the little withered carcass of James Sloan.

* * *

Your friend,

SAMUEL TAGGART.

N. B. It was observed that when the fiend like apparation attempted to seize Sloan, Mr. Maclay did not appear to be at all surprized, but whether this arose from his nerves being of a firmer tone than Sloan's, or from some knowledge of a plot is not stated. It seems that whether a real fiend or one composed of flesh and blood, he knew his man.

WASHINGTON, April 2d, 1806.

DEAR SIR:

* * * A few days ago it was in contemplation to adjourn on the 14th of April. * * * That prospect is now over, and a close of the session at present appears like a tantalus cup or a jack a lantern which constantly recedes as you approach it. On the 21st ult. Mr. David R. Williams, a member from South Carolina, caused the galleries to be cleared, and introduced a resolution to take off the injunction of secrecy from our closed door proceedings in January last. A lengthy debate ensued in which Randolph threw out some very severe things against Madison in which I believe, I partly stated in a former letter. A motion was then made to postpone a farther consideration of the subject until Monday the 31 which was carried so that no vote was then taken on the main question. On Monday a motion to

clear the galleries was made by Dr. Leib and the subject again taken up, when after a session of more than six hours in which Randolph spoke more than three, and after every expedient to evade the question which ingenuity could devise has been tryed, it was finally carryed to take off the injunction by a small majority of, I believe, four or five, so that we may now blab as much as we please.

To you however I have nothing to tell in addition to what you know already, unless it was perhaps to give a little sketch of Monday's debate, but to do justice to it neither the short limits of a letter nor my imperfect recollection will allow. Randolph's invective knew no bounds; he spar'd none who came in his way. It would have been an amusing sight to a Federalist from Massachusetts, and not an unedifying one to a Democrat to take a peep into the House of Representatives and contemplate the phiz of Varnum, Bidwell and others while writhing under the lash. What made the biting sarcasm of which he is the most perfect master of any man I ever knew, to be the most severely felt was that they contained wholesome and important, tho unpleasant and unpalatable truths. It is notorious that the present administration obtained their situation by base and dishonourable means. It is painful, no doubt, to have the mask torn off, and Randolph is doing it with no very gentle hand.

I will give you one or two sentences verbatim which I took down at the time for a taste: "I have no hesitation in saying that the principal part of the mischiefs which this nation has experienced for the last two years, have proceeded from the King's Closet, and the keeper of that closet," meaning the President, and the Secretary of State, "I consider the matter as fairly at issue, whether this nation is to be governed by a secret Machiavelian invisible, irresponsible cabinet, or by the principles of the Constitution. I am prepared to abide that issue." He said that however the administration might succeed in hoodwinking the nation for a time it was a state of things which could not last, and he was let too far into their secrets for them to hoodwink him.

He repeated and amplified his charges against Madison on a former day. He charged the administration with ne-

gotiating loans unauthorized by law, and applying to the committee of ways and means for an appropriation to cover them, but that that committee was so mulish as to hang back, and that notes, for the payment of which the faith of government has been illegally pledged, were now running out at the bank. He stated that an attempt has been made to draw the two millions out of the treasury in order to commence a negotiation for the purchase of the Floridas before any appropriation had been made by law for that purpose. Eppes, the President's son in law then rose and observed that he had heard such a report himself out of doors, and that he did not scruple his colleague had heard and believed it; but that he had information from the highest authority, he did not hesitate to say from the President himself, that the report was wholly without foundation. Randolph, after some pretty severe retorts on the impropriety of introducing the President's name in debate, observed that let the statement of his colleague be derived from what quarter it would, it was incorrect as he was able to substantiate it. This was a civil way of giving a great man the lie direct; and indeed, the enquiry itself was pretty much like a husband whose wife was accused of unfaithfulness to his bed, enquiring at her to know the truth.

His severe retorts upon individuals I have no room to notice. I cannot, however, pass over one upon Smilie. Smilie construed some things he had said as a reflection upon his country, and answered it by a long encomium upon Ireland and the great men it had produced. Randolph replied that he meant no reflection upon any man's country, for altho Ireland might have produced rather more than its quota of blackguards, the many distinguished eminent men it had produced were a fair balance. That a gentleman and a man of honour was the same in every country, and that the honour of real Irish gentlemen was proverbial. That it was no disgrace for any man to be a native of that country, but as to the converse of that proposition, or whether a man may not be a disgrace to the country, he said nothing.

But glancing at the administration was not confined entirely to Randolph. The concealing the despatches

important to our deliberations for so long a time as four weeks when so necessary to the discussions on which we were engaged, has excited Randolph's indignation, and filled many others with disgust. J. Clay observed that by concealing important information the people were kept ignorant of facts they ought to know and that if fair, impartial information, the feelings of the public mind would be very different from what they were at present. The public ought to know that while our Ambassador at London had been treated with the politeness due to a gentleman at least France had prohibited Spain from treating with us, and imperiously threatened us with war if we persisted in our claims upon Spain, and that the latter has refused to treat with our envoys and almost kicked them out of doors. The nation ought to know why we were disposed to act as the bullies of Great Britain and the cullies of France, that for his part he was ashamed of the vote he had given in secret conclave, that he wished to meet the public and vindicate himself in the best manner he could.

Nicholson observed that the argument for still keeping on the injunction of secrecy, i. e., lest a publication should tend to defeat the object in view had no weight with him, he was free to declare that if he had not been compelled to legislate in the dark of the contents of the despatches which had been kept back, he pretended not to say from what motive had been communicated to him before he was called to give his vote, it would have been different from what it was, and that he hoped in God the negotiations would be defeated. This declaration, however, was on the 21st of March, on the 31st Nicholson was not present. Numbers among whom Masters, Clay, Nicholson, Elliott & Bedinger have declared that had they known the contents of the despatches their conduct would have been different.

Thus far for I wrote in the morning before I went to the House, had I then known that the whole of our secret journal with the report of the secret committee would have been published in the paper herewith transmitted, perhaps some of the preceding observations might have been spared, but as it is I shall still send them. As a result of the whole I shall make an observation or two. I am far from viewing

Randolph as a correct politician or from approving his present line of conduct in the gross. His impetuosity of temper is constantly hurrying him into imprudence, sometimes of the grossest kind as well as sometimes the most unmerited scurrility towards his opponents. Some instances of that have occurred so gross as to be pass'd all endurance. I have no high estimation of his talents for building up a system, but for pulling down probably none can exceed him, and certainly he never made such a display of talents during the time I have been acquainted with him, as during the present session. Respecting commerce and commercial pursuits, he has all the prejudices of a Virginian, and evidently does not understand the subject.

Some time ago I had some discourse with Mr. Clark, one of the most sensible and candid Virginians, on the subject of commerce and the prejudices of Virginia planters against merchants. He introduced the subject himself by observing that there was a great difference between our merchants in the north and those of the south; that our merchants were principally native citizens whose int'rest, habits, and feelings were identified with those of the great mass of the people. This was not the case with theirs, they were almost all foreigners who had no common int'rest with the body of the people, that their most wealthy merchants rarely owned a real estate worth 2000 dollars; that their sole object was to make their fortunes many of them cared little by what means, and when their fortunes were made it was usual for them to return to Europe carrying their fortunes with them; this he said was one principal ground of the Virginia prejudice against merchants. Indeed, I could not but view a predilection for the game of commerce as materially influencing the decisions of this House. [this letter is unfinished in the original manuscript, and is followed by an advertisement of Patrick T. M'Dermot].

Here you have the advertisement itself.

Advertisement.

The subscriber continues to write or to assist in composing circular letters for those gentlemen in Congress who have not had the same advantages of a literary education, or who may

be less acquainted with the real state of the Union than himself (at his old place of abode). His price is ten dollars for composing an entire letter of one sheet, or in proportion for any short or long letter on any subject.

PATRICK T. M'DERMOT.

April 5, 1806.

N. B. He trusts the success which those gentlemen who have before employed him have met with by being reelected to Congress is alone a sufficient recommendation for future patronage.

P. T. M'DR.

WASHINGTON, April 20, 1806.

DEAR SIR:

* * * Towards the close of the session yesterday the Senate was employed upon the nomination of an Envoy Extraordinary to the Court of London, and I suppose confirmed the nomination of this, however I am not certain. Our House adjourned at a late hour about 5 o'clock, and left the Senate in session. The person nominated for that mission is Mr. William Pinkney of Maryland a gentleman of distinguished talents and very respectable character, who has resided several years in London in the character of an agent in behalf of the State of Maryland. He has always been considered as a Federalist. During the warmest bickerings of party in the middle states he was abroad from his native country. Since his return which was in the summer or autumn of 1804, he has not entered deeply into the distinction of party, but gentlemen who are intimate with him say that his Federal principles are unchanged. It is thought by many to be as judicious an appointment as could have been made, and must pass for an offset against Armstrong's appointment to Spain.

I find our advocates for the Florida purchase are beginning to have long faces about the business. What secret intelligence they received I don't know, but they begin to express some at least, one on the floor of the House and others more privately, that there is little prospect of its succeeding. Whether it is the battle of Austerlitz which they expect will cause the dons and their friend Bonaparte to rise in their

demands, or whether it is something else which they expect will hinder I know not.

On the 17 instant we had in the city a sample of that increasing Gothic barbarity which is the disgrace of our country, I mean a duel between a Dr. Smith and a Dr. Archer, the one of the army and the other of the navy, in which the latter was shot thro the body. He was first reported to be dead but he was alive yesterday morning, but no hopes of his recovery. The particulars so far as I have heard them were these. At a ball which was at a Col. Wharton's the commanding officer of the marines, Lieut. Wormley, I know not whether of the navy or the marines, asked Miss Danielson, Mrs. Eaton's daughter who is in the city with Gen. Eaton, to dance. She excused herself saying she had danced considerable and was tired, and declined. Wormley took it as an affront, and threw out some ungenerous expressions upon the young lady. Eaton was not present. Dr. Smith told Wormley that it was ungenerous and ungentlemanly to make such an attack upon the young lady when she had nobody to protect her, and said he would inform Gen. Eaton which he accordingly did. This brought on something like a fracas between Eaton and Wormley which was stopped by the officers present interposing. Wormley then went to make an attack upon Dr. Smith for informing Eaton. He proved to be unequal to the task, and Smith whipped him severely. Afterwards he sent a challenge to Dr. Smith by the hand of Dr. Archer. Smith in answer observed that Wormley was no gentleman, and that he conceived himself under no obligation to meet such scoundrel and poltroon. Archer rather resented the treatment of his friend. Smith told him if he felt himself obligated to espouse Wormley's cause as he considered him a gentleman he would meet him. He accepted the invitation, they met and Archer fell. It may be truly said of him should it cost him his life, as is probable, that he died as a fool dieth. For even according to the laws of honour, cruel absurd and wicked as they are, he was under no obligation to engage in a quarrel in which he had no concern.

Your friend, &c.

S. TAGGART.

N. B. Don't you think I may begin to look up? I understand I had one vote in the town of Shelburne for Governor. Five years ago last November I had a few votes in Shelburne for member of Congress, at a time when I had no more thought of an election to a seat there than I have now of obtaining the Governor's chair. I told James Sloan yesterday that I expected to be Governor of Massachusetts when he was Vice-President this in *teneatu*—

WASHINGTON, January 19, 1807.

DEAR SIR:

* * * Besides a number of small bills which it is needless to particularize during the course of the past week, the following of more importance have passed the House of Representatives, tho as yet they have not passed the other branch, viz., an act to punish certain crimes against the United States. This bill when it was first reported contained some extraordinary provisions, viz., one to punish a man by obliging him to find security for his good behaviour, or in default of finding such security, to imprison him because there was ground to suspect he might commit a crime hereafter. This section was struck out of the bill. As a substitute Bidwell proposed another section of the following import, that if a person should be laid under bonds to be of good behaviour, should go out of the United States and under a foreign jurisdiction commit another offence, that his recognizance should be forfeited. A small majority I think four adopted this section in committee of the whole, but when it came to be reconsidered in the House it was attackd so severely in front and rear, that not more than nine or ten rose in favour of Bidwell's hopeful offspring; and indeed supposing a man who was laid under bonds should be guilty of a capital crime in a foreign country, and be punished accordingly should by the same act forfeit a recognizance given in the United States, it would be literally being hang'd and paying forty shillings. Bidwell, by the bye, appears to be getting quite down.

Another bill pass'd is to empower the President to accept the services of 30,000 volunteers if he needs them and can get them. One of these acts is designed I suppose to catch Col.

Burr, and the other to hang him or do something more grievous; and I think he almost ought to be hanged for frightening our administration so horribly. What other crimes and misdemeanors he has been guilty of I know not, nor shall I blot my paper with reports about.

Those rumours which you have such an abundance in the public prints are many of them so vague so improbable so quixotical and so contradictory that I must leave their developement to the great discoverer, time, and I presume you are tir'd of hearing or reading them. With many of our wise men, however, as it is said to be a plan in hostility to the Spaniards as well as for the dismemberment of the Union, it must be a plan concerted with the British. France and Spain you know have always been so friendly to the United States, and Bonaparte in particular is such a firm friend to all Republicks, that it would be little less than high treason to suspect him of any views hostile to the peace, happiness and prosperity of the United States. It is true to some faithless folks there are a great many circumstances to stagger this belief; of these the Spanish conspiracy in Kentucky as long ago as the year 1793 to dismember the Union is some one of the least prominent; and on Friday last Joseph Clay had the audacity to state on the floor of the House to the following effect: if Burr's conspiracy is a British plan and hostile to the Spaniards as well as the United States, why has not the Spanish Ambassador complained of it as a breach of neutrality and called upon the Government to suppress it. But not a word of complaint from either France or Spain while on the contrary, it is well known that during the last winter Yrujo & Burr were night after night closeted together; still it must be a British plan.

Two other bills were passed this week, one repealing the duty upon salt and continuing the 2 & $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent for another year. This bill it is thought so far as relates to the repeal will be lost in the Senate. I always thought the tax on salt rather an injudicious one, and if any part of the revenue could be spar'd that was as proper as any to begin the reduction. But altho I voted for the bill which seemed to be a measure recommended by the executive, yet for myself I rather doubt

the policy of making any reduction of the revenue in the present state of our country. Could we be assured of the continuance of tranquility, of which there is at present but very little prospect, unless new arrangements are made about purchasing territory, the revenues of the country are adequate to meet all existing objects of expenditure independent of the aids derived from the salt tax, or the 2 & $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

Another bill of some importance is entitled, an act for the redemption of the whole of the public debt. Altho there is little relationship between the bill and the title, I think it to be of some importance as it goes to simplify the business of the public debt by reducing all the different species of debt into one uniform 6 per cent stock, of which certificates are to be issued to creditors subscribing to this new modification in sums not exceeding 10,000 dollars; and instead of the present gradual abolition of the principal by sinking 2 per cent annually, an entire certificate is to be paid at once, and the whole surplus revenue to be annually appropriated to such payments; and preference to be given to particular certificates by the priority of application by the holder, with the exception of the certificates of the 3 per cent stock which are not to be paid until after the payment of all the other species of stock. I gave my consent to this act because it in the first place rendered every species of the public debt redeemable, which at present is not the case with the 3 per cents, and because I believe it will expedite the payment of the public debt by relieving the administration from the embarrassment of not knowing what to do with the surplus revenue after meeting present arrangement; and because it is much more eligible for a public creditor to receive his principal perhaps at a time somewhat remote in a gross sum of 10,000 dollars to admitting government owes him so much, than to have his principal gradually annihilated by a sinking of 2 per cent annually, and because it goes to simplify the system of the public debt.

I intended when I began to have closed before this time. One or two miscellaneous matters I must still mention, first of John Randolph. His conduct during the principal part

of the session has been almost as mysterious as Coll. Burr's. He has been very still, said little on any subject, and when he spoke it was always in a manner so mild and conciliating that the general opinion was that he was paddling back into the bosom of his party; and that the administration had made him overtures with which he had been closed. On Friday last, however, he took off the mask and took a firm stand on the ground he had occupied last winter. The subject was a resolution to call upon the President for all the information in his possession, excepting such as the public welfare might require to be kept secret relating to plots and conspiracies within the United States, either against the peace and happiness of the United States, or of nations with which the United States are in amity. It occasioned much writhing and twisting and the trite argument of its expressing a want of confidence in the President was presented in almost every point of view; but John carried his point by a large majority. After this important information comes we shall know all about Coll. Burr.

Another anecdote. The famous John Wood, a character well known in New York as the author of an infamous book, which he called a "History of the Administration of John Adams," which thro Burr's means was suppressed, has for the past season been engaged in Kentucky in the publication of a paper called the "Western World," set up for the express purpose of writing down Burr, is now in this city for setting up a paper for the purpose of writing him up again. I understand he some time ago very politely called upon the President to show him his prospectus and solicit his subscription; with what success I did not hear. Wood is a Scotchman who came over to this country with Callender. He is a man of undoubted talents as a writer but an unprincipled wretch who has ever had them in market for the service of the highest bidder. * * *

I subscribe, yours affectionately,

SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, February 8th, 1807.

DEAR SIR:

* * * The most important business which has occupied the attention of Congress during the past week has been the adoption of some system of defence. This occupied the House for two days, and was then postponed until the present week. A resolution past the House in committee of the whole some time ago for granting 250,000 dollars for building fifty additional gunboats. *N. B.* When these already begun are completed their number will be 69. The President wanted 60 in addition. Altho it would puzzle a philosopher to tell what they were for, unless there was some evidence that they either had, or were like to do some good; until that is determined 69 may suffice for an experiment

While such a liberal grant was made for gunboats, 20,000 dollars was all that could be obtained for fortification of ports. Of 150,000 dollars however appropriated last year, 100,000 dollars are yet unexpended, but when the subject was taken up in the House it was proposed to take 100,000 dollars from the gunboats and place on the side of fortification. It soon appeared the gunboat philosophy was losing ground, the number was docked down to thirty, and lest a vote for that number should be negatived, a postponement was called for and at length obtained, and in the meantime information was called for from the President which will probably be communicated tomorrow. It rather appears as if we were like to have a new denomination of parties in Congress, viz., gunboat, and anti-gunboatmen. During the course of the debate Elliott, who by the way is this session a full blooded Federalist, observed that the language of the United States used formerly was now reversed. Some years ago it was millions for defence and not a cent for tribute, now it was millions for tribute and not a cent, O, I mistake 20,000 dollars for defence.

In the course of the debate we were represented to be in a state of profound peace, and under no apprehensions of a rupture with any nation. France is friendly, no reason at all to apprehend any intention whatsoever in either France or Spain to injure us. But as to the real state of our foreign relations this is all involved in mystery. No facts are in the

possession of government to warrant the report sometime since circulated in our papers, that our negotiations with Great Britain were broken off; by the last despatches everything was proceeding amicably. As a comment I find the British are taking our vessels and carrying them in to Halifax and condemning them in courts of admiralty. With respect to our disputes with Spain, I believe no progress whatsoever has been made or is making in negotiation. If Bonaparte returns triumphantly to Paris with all Europe at his feet, our affairs with Spain will probably be settled precisely in the way he chooses to dictate.

As a little comment on what we have to expect a certain M. Beaumarchais, who was an agent through whom various supplies for the United States was furnished by France during the revolutionary war, brought in an account which was considered enormous. So far as the account was supposed to be just it was settled. At the last session of Congress the heirs of M. Beaumarchais exhibited this account to Congress. Congress referred it to the treasury department, and upon a report that a small balance appeared to be due, provision was made for its discharge. Two or three days ago, the account was again presented to the President by General Turreau, accompanied by a demand from the French government stating that the account had been examined and found to be just. The President laid it before Congress and I suppose it must be paid. I believe it amounts to near half a million of dollars.

A word about our present prospect of peace or war. My opinion is that for some time to come we will continue to enjoy, as it respects foreign nations, what may be called peace. Peace or war are in our cabinets matters of calculation. Besides the calculations which are made on the probable issue of the unprofitable contest of trying who can do the other the most harm. As economy is the life and soul of the present system, there is also a calculation of the expense in dollars and cents, supposing a war to continue 4 or 5 years and the annual average expense to be from 15 to 20 millions. Private losses by destruction of property, a sum nearly equal, loss of popularity, and probable loss of office—millions more.

On the other hand, the probable annual amount of a tribute necessary to maintain peace, may not be more than 5 millions annually. National honour and real independence lost may stand at 00,000,000—00 dollars, cents; security from future insult and aggression ditto. Thus you see the balance is clearly in favour of peace. This is my calculation, if you do not approve of it you may mend it. However, possibly we are not yet so far sunk but that a thrashing from some foreign power may yet bring us to our senses; and upon the whole, low as our national character is sunk, I cannot but indulge the hope that something of a national spirit begins to revive. The state of York is evidently gaining both in her state government and on the floor of Congress. Massachusetts' delegation, I think, I mean the Democratic delegation with one or two exceptions, is close to the rag end of democracy. Cook is an exception, except the name and a nominal attachment to T. J., is little distinguishable from Federalists. Massachusetts' legislature has not joined the multitude in beseeching Mr. Jefferson to prevail upon himself to be willing to be elected for four years more; but I find democracy goes on hopefully in the legislature. It may work itself out the sooner. I wonder by what clause either in our state constitutions, or the Constitution of the United States, state legislatures are vested with the power of, in this way, attempting to controul the election of President? But probably nothing will tend to bring down a system faster than such rotten props to bolster up declining popularity. I wish, however, that in the end our independence and our free Republican constitutions may not go overboard in the wreck. Like a story I have heard somewhere of a physician and his patient, when the former was asked whether the man's fever was gone off, answered, "Yes, but the man is gone along with it."

A word or two about Aaron Burr and I shall give you no more trouble at present. The day before yesterday, we had an account in the papers that he was at Natchez, about 300 miles on this side New Orleans, by the course of the river, with a force of 2,000 of an advance guard under Gen. Adair, late a Senator of the United States from Kentucky, and that Burr was following with 6,000 more. Yesterday by the

removal of 2 cyphers, it was reduced to 200 under Adair, and 600 under Burr. This probably exceeds the truth by two thirds. Indeed, I believe it would be at present difficult to prove that Burr has done any illegal act whatsoever. There has been a great alarm, but I don't know but now as many people are alarmed at the illegal arbitrary proceedings of Wilkinson, as at any supposed dangerous consequences of Burr's projects. That Burr had something criminal in view appears from Satan's deposition and I believe there is little doubt but he also tampered with Commodore Truxton. But the amount of all his proceedings on the Ohio so far as they are in evidence is little, or nothing. But that men should in defiance of the civil authority be arrested by a military officer and sent away 12 or 15 hundred miles without cause shewn, is an alarming procedure in a free country. Bollmann & Swartwout are still in prison. I understand that a new attempt is about being made to bring them before the court by a habeas corpus. Mr. Alexander has been brought before a single magistrate and discharged, the attorney general saying he had no evidence against him. Mr. Alexander is a young lawyer of great eminence formerly a pupil of General Hamilton's. It is said that all that Wilkinson has against him was his appearing as counsel in favour of Bollmann & Swartwout. I know not where all this will end. I think it probable that it will subside for the present but it will without doubt tend to sow the seeds of a separation between the eastern and western section of the Union. It may be suspended for a time but sooner or later it must take place. * * *

Affectionately yours,

SAM'L TAGGART.

Monday afternoon

Mr. Alexander, mentioned above, dined at my lodgings. I believe he is treated with great attention by gentlemen of the bar who are now collected from various parts, for the purpose of attending the Supreme Court now sitting. A habeas corpus has this day been applied for in behalf of Swartwout & Bollmann; the decision of the court is postponed until tomorrow.

WASHINGTON, February 18, 1807.

DEAR SIR:

I did not intend to have troubled you any more during this session, but the humour of scribbling operates so powerfully that I shall once more forward a few lines. For two days, the House of Representatives have been engaged in very lengthy debates of making legislative provision for the better securing the right to the writ of habeas corpus. At present, tho there are laws in the individual states securing that right, there is none under the United States, only the constitutional provision. In this debate there has been the most strenuous endeavours to rally old party distinctions that I have witnessed during the present session, and a mighty consternation prevails in the House for fear something may be done which may operate against General Wilkinson or hurt the feelings of the President.

The resolution for the making of such provision was introduced by Mr. Broom of Delaware. Randolph appears in support of it, and has treated General Wilkinson's character with very little ceremony, and has been by no means sparing in lashing his party for making it a party question. In the course of debate Elliott observed that he was at all times ready to step forth as the champion of the Constitution and liberties of the people and if it, viz., the Constitution sunk he would sink with it. G. W. Campbell observed sometime afterwards with rather a sneering allusion to Elliott's observation, that he did not pretend to stand forth as the champion of the Constitution and the liberties of the people. Randolph replied in his peculiar stile and said, "The gentleman does not pretend to stand forth as the champion of the Constitution and the liberties of the people, I am glad of it, for God help the Constitution, and God help the liberties of the people if their defence depends upon such champions." The question is not yet decided. I expect the debate will be taken up tomorrow, perhaps I may be able to state it before the mail closes.

If you do not hear it before this reaches you, I can communicate the important information that Aaron Burr with his small party did, on the 15ult., surrender to the civil authority on a written capitulation; the terms I cannot state, but the

fact does not admit of a doubt, and notwithstanding all the reports which have been circulated in relation to his armaments he had not anything with him amounting to even the shadow of a military expedition. He pleads innocence and says his persecution arises from a plan of Wilkinson and the Spanish Ambassador to ruin him and that he is able to produce the most conclusive testimony of Wilkinson. Public opinion is said to be in the western country to be very rapidly turning in his favor and against Wilkinson.

The letter published some time ago purporting to be written in cypher by Burr to Wilkinson, he proclaims to be a forgery which he supposes done by Yrujo. Wilkinson has made several other arrests among others General Adair, late a Senator from Kentucky. It was given out by Wilkinson that Adair was coming with an advance party of 2000 men. He appear'd at New Orleans with no other retinue than a single servant. The General immediately ordered the drums to beat and the military to be paraded, and threw the whole city into an uproar and ordered a Coll. with a party of 100 men to arrest him. He has also ordered one of the judges of the territory of Orleans to be arrested and all civil authority is there for the present at an end, and the utmost confusion prevails. What will be the issue of this confusion I know not. Mr. Marshall from Kentucky, a lawyer of respectibility and in Federal times a Senator from Kentucky, observed in my hearing this evening that he had not a doubt but Wilkinson was now and had been for many years, in the pay of Spain; and as he has been a much more active and influential partizan so he had a larger pension than Judge Sebastian.

Three days have been spent in the Supreme Court hearing counsel on the point whether Bollmann and Swartwout are to be admitted to bail. The court have not as yet decided.

Yours affectionately,

S. TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, February 21, 1807.

DEAR SIR:

* * * The public attention seems now to be somewhat turned from Coll. Burr, and directed to the extraordinary

conduct of General Wilkinson. The Supreme Court has this morning discharged Messrs. Bollmann and Swartwout from imprisonment without bail. General Adair and Peter V. Ogden were brought before Judge Nicholson, late a member of Congress and promptly discharged. General Adair whose integrity has never been called in question, has written a lengthy and affecting letter to the Kentucky representation upon the conduct of General Wilkinson. I have not seen the letter but I have heard somewhat of a summary of its contents from a gentleman who perused it. He states that he has had no connection either with Coll. Burr, or with his infamous co-intriguer Wilkinson; that he received a letter from General Wilkinson dated near the Sabina, sometime in the month of September, I do not recollect dates, urging him in the most earnest and affectionate manner to engage in a military expedition against the Spaniards, and stated the facility of overrunning Mexico; that 5000 light troops would be an armament sufficient for the purpose; and added, "Dear Adair, you are the only military character in whom I can place confidence." This letter he says he has now in his bureau at Frankfort in Kentucky.

To this letter he wrote in reply that he was now too far advanced in life to engage in a military expedition which required all the vigour and activity of youth; that his domestic connections were so dear to him that he must refrain from military enterprises unless his country was invaded; that whatever might be his private opinion relating to the propriety of an expedition against the Spaniards, he had no knowledge that such an expedition was authorized by the Government of the United States; and that he had too great a regard for the constituted authorities of his country to engage in any military expedition not authorized by law; that without any reference to Coll. Burr or his enterprise, he went to New Orleans on business purely of his own private concern, to dispose of a quantity of whiskey he had on hand and reclaim a debt of 1500 dollars which was his due; that his retinue consisted of one single servant and three horses; that in this way he proceeded to New Orleans, went to a public house and bespoke a lodging and was just seated at the table at dinner when a

captain at the head of 100 men entered the house and arrested him by order of General Wilkinson; that he was hurried on board a boat and refused communication with any one, or the use of pen, ink, or paper and not so much as permitted to take his cloaths with him; that he was hurried from boat to boat until he was at length put on board of a schooner and sent by a military guard to Baltimore; that after being on board ten days he was by the politeness of a gentleman passenger accommodated with pen, ink and paper by which he was enabled to write that letter, and that he was now at Baltimore almost destitute of comfortable cloathing; that as soon as he could accommodate himself a suit of cloaths he would proceed to the seat of Government, and concludes by observing that he has riskd his life, and fought, and bled in the cause of his country, and now calls upon that country to protect him against a military tyrant.

This letter has had a great impression on many to whom it has been communicated. For myself I believe that had it been Wilkinson's design to alienate the western country, pave the way for a separation, and make Burr popular he could not have hit upon a more effectual method than that which he has pursued. The innocence of Burr, who previously possessed great personal popularity in the western country will be blended with the innocence of those whom he has treated so injuriously, and I think it probable the principal himself will be set at liberty, and whatever may have been the object of the conspiracy it will be strengthened by those extraordinary means which have been used with so much apparent zeal to support it. Another singularity, two of the officers who were sent on guard to the prisoners, sent on to the seat of Government, have been arrested on a charge of mutiny by orders secretly sent on by Wilkinson in the same ship on which the prisoners were brought on.

I rest Yours affectionately,
SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, November 17, 1807.

MY DEAR SIR:

* * * Since I wrote last I have been able to form something more of an idea of the present Congress compared with the

last. I think it appears to be the opinion of every one, that so far as it respects Congressional eloquence we have gained a considerable accession. Whether it has gained equally in sound political principles remains yet to be tested. The state of Kentucky in particular has gained more than 100 per cent from having a very weak representation. I think it offers fair now for having one of the ablest on the floor of Congress. Mr. Rowan in particular appears to possess more talents and information than the whole of their former delegation. Other states have gain'd something, but perhaps no other in proportion and I think a very valuable acquisition is made in Mr. Key of Maryland, who is I think unquestionably the first orator I ever heard in either House, far before Bayard himself. Attempts are, however, making to vacate his seat on the plea that he is not, in the sense of the Constitution, a citizen of Maryland as his more usual residence had been for several years in the District of Columbia. This is the ostensible reason why a number of Democratic electors in his district have petitioned against him. The real objection, however, I presume to be that he is guilty of the crime of Federalism, and was once a British officer. These things taken in connection with his high standing and imposing talents is I believe a reason with many for wishing to get rid of him.

With respect to the prospect of peace or war the prospect to me looks sufficiently gloomy. I believe neither our warlike President, nor any of his pages had any real notions of war; they thought that the terror of their non-importation laws, taken in connection with the many enemies Britain had in Europe, and the President's skill in negotiating Britain, would easily be compelled to accede to any terms they were disposed to dictate. You have, no doubt, heard the news of the probable failure of our negotiations with Britain. No official account has been received by our Government, and I understand the President professes to give no credit to the intelligence. When this news arrived it made abundance of twisting and writhing. Among our exclusive friends of the people some were for immediate war; Bradley appeared to be one of the warmest warriors. Great Britain he said was on the point of destruction and it was the policy of the United

States to come in for a share of the spoil, or be in at the death, as the huntsmen say. I told him that even the jackass could give the dying lion a kick. A large number, however, did not seem quite so warlike, they seemed rather chop-fallen. War was an event they did not expect and were by no means prepared to meet. I hope the news may not prove true but I have my fears that it is true, at least, in part.

War among European nations seems to be a mere matter of calculation of profit and loss. The question is not whether there is just cause, but what is it probable I shall gain or lose. This has long been the policy of Bona—and something like it appears in the conduct of Great Britain towards Denmark. Estimating war on this principle I am apt to think that in the present juncture Great Britain may safely calculate on more gain than loss in a war with the United States, i. e., she would suffer less from our open hostilities, with all our means to annoy her, than she would be acceding to our demands concerning the carrying trade, and a relinquishment of the right of search. She is now or probably will soon be at war with almost the whole of Europe, and the addition of the United States to the number of her enemies would make but little difference. We on the other hand have everything to loose and nothing to gain by war. But the destruction of our commerce and the consequent beggary and ruin of thousands is not the greatest evil. An entangling French alliance is infinitely worse than all the calamities of war. This will be the grave of our independence.

When I take a view of the prospect before us I tremble for my country; and when we reflect on the numerous provocations we have given, from time to time, to a haughty high spirited nation we cannot suppose her very averse to war; and when we reflect upon our almost unparalleled prosperity for the last 20 years and the ungrateful returns we have made it is no ways strange should we meet with a reverse. But the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, and controuls men and devils. His counsel will stand, and he will do all his pleasure.

Our clerk blunders on but I think he improves, and our little shoemaker who we have got for a chaplain is a prodigy considering his education and advantages. He is every way

so far superior to our chaplain of last year that I feel perfectly reconciled. His command of lan.[guage] and the systematic accuracy of the two discourses I have heard him deliver far surpassed my expectations. * * *

Yours affectionately,

SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, December 7, 1807.

MY DEAR SIR:

* * * You will recollect that had we not been called together by proclamation, today would have been the first day of the session. It is a very natural enquiry for the sov'reign people our masters, of whom you are one, what has Congress been doing during the six weeks extra session?

* * * Exclusive of some local legislative business, of some importance I believe, during the six weeks extra session Congress, as it respects the embarrassed situation of our national affairs, has done as much ill as good. In general we have been legislating in the dark. No information from Europe until very lately, lengthy confidential despatches have been read this day. Some of the outlines have found their way into the public papers particularly about closing the negotiations in Europe, and that it is to be recommenced here by a special minister. Details I am not at liberty to publish or communicate. Probably had not Congress assembled before this day the business of the nation might have been in a state of great forwardness by Saturday night as it will be.

Still your question will recur, what have you been doing? To this important enquiry I shall now attempt to give an answer. Some have been making war speeches; some have been grinning and growling, and barking at Great Britain; some have been proposing expeditions to take Canada, and have found out that it can be taken in a trice; some are for driving the British out of our waters by force; some say we are now actually at war, and ask the question, if not at war ever since the attack on the Chesapeake, what state are we in? Others say we are not at war. I rather incline to coincide in opinion with the latter for this plain reason, that when we are at war with Great Britain I believe we will know it; there

will not be one dissenting voice on the subject. Some are for this mode of reprisals, some for that, and some for the other thing, some are for a total non-intercourse, some for an embargo, &c, &c; and Johnny Randolph proposed a descent on Jamaica, in case of a war, in our gunboats I suppose; but it is to be observed that John is decidedly hostile to a fleet, *ergo*, I know not that he means that we should cross in a balloon. And honest Matthew Lyon proposed sequestration of all British property. Much more has been done than project.

The Senate has brought forth a bill containing a litter of 188 gunboats, of which a single British frigate would disperse and devour a score with greater facility than a hawk would scatter so many chickens. The Senate has also brought forth another very warlike bill to empower the President to drive interdicted vessels out of our waters by force, and to make use of our sea and land forces for that purpose, i. e., our land militia and sea militia. I have not read the bill and so cannot be particular in describing its provisions. These bills want the sanction of our House to give them currency. Whether they will pass in their present shape, or be licked into some other form is uncertain

Our House has as yet brought forth nothing. There is some advancement in pregnancy in a bill for fortifying ports and harbours, and building gunboats; but the latter I hope in all conscience the Senate's bill will supersede. There is a conception of some additional frigates, but whether it will come to the birth, or only prove an abortion is yet uncertain. A scheme is likewise in embryo for arming the whole militia of the United States, and provide a formidable train of moveable field artillery. The first of these measures will meet with formidable opposition, and I am thoughtful the bill will not pass; it has been opposed on various grounds; that it is needless to attempt arming the whole militia at this time at the public expense, because no prospect that they will be wanted, and that it is sufficient for the public to arm such detachments as may be called into actual service; that it is impracticable, both on account of the difficulty of providing a sufficiency of arms, and the expense without encroaching on funds wanted for

other more necessary uses; that it is unequal that several states have made great exertions in arming the militia and are pretty generally armed, and that it is unreasonable that those states where the people have armed themselves at a great expense, should be obliged to be at the expense of contributing to arm such as have been negligent; that the arms of the citizens ought to be their own and not belong to the Government; that altho it would be well for Government to do something to encourage the enlargement of the manufactory of arms so as to assist the people to obtain them at a reasonable lay out; that the arms of the militia ought to be private and not public property; and that the operation of such a plan goes directly to disarm the nation and throw the arms into the hands of Government, and may in time enable an ambitious executive to sport with the liberties of the people. Of those who opposed the measure I was one. Some voted for it because the soul of it was supposed to be popular. I believe a bill to that purpose will never pass.

But I have scrawled on so rapidly that I had almost forgot that I was writing a letter. I believe it is time to stop. One thing farther I will inform you of, which may be depended upon, I have heard it from a source which may be depended upon different from the public papers, i. e., a partial revolution lately happend in North Carolina. The Governor of that state is chosen annually by the Legislature. He may be elected three years successively and for the next three years he is ineligible. Five years ago, at the expiration of three years which their Federal Governor Williams had served, they chose a Mr. Turner a Democrat, and Federal men and Federal measures were completely put down throughout the state. Mr. Turner is now a Senator in Congress. At the end of three years for which he was eligible, a Mr. Alexander, a member of the first Congress which I attended and a member elect for the next, was chosen Governor, he has served two years and was eligible for a third. But the present Legislature now in session have superseded him and chosen their old Federal Governor Williams. They have also chosen a Federal Speaker of the House of Representatives, a Federal clerk, and a Federal Attorney General. The Democratic members

from that state which consist of their whole delagation, with the exception of only one, are pretty much chop-fallen on the occasion. * * * I have the pleasure of subscribing affectionately

Yours, &c,

SAM'L TAGGART.

WASHINGTON, December 20, 1807.

MY DEAR SIR:

* * * The most prominent measure which has been brought nearly to a conclusion is the bill for suspending the operation of the non-importation act, which has after a variety of modifications passed both Houses, and wants only the President's signature which it will doubtless obtain. This act goes to suspend the operation of the law absolutely unto the first day of July next, and further to empower the President, if the situation of the country shall in his judgement require it, to extend the suspension to the 31st of December 1807. The ostensible reason given for this suspension is the more friendly disposition manifested by the Government of Great Britain, altho if there is any evidence of this friendly disposition more than was apparent when the act was passed, it is locked entirely in the heart of the executive. No official information has been communicated to the Legislature. Not only is this returning friendly disposition harped upon, but also is attributed to the tenor effected in the British cabinet by the magical influence of our wonderfully efficient law. But how that, which is calculated only to irritate and provoke, and which has done no real harm to any single mortal excepting the embarassment it has occasioned to our merchants and the confusion and uncertainty it has introduced into their transactions, our sapient wiseacres perhaps can determine to the entire satisfaction of their constituents. Should the truth be permitted to come fully before the public, I doubt not that it would be found that the existence of this absurd and impolitic law has been, and still continues to be, the principal obstacle in the way of amicable negotiations.

Some faint motions are making to do something for our security by making some more effectual preparations for

defence; but from the present disposition of the House I think there is little prospect that anything effectual will be done. In the view of a great many, probably of a majority of the House, our situation is so highly prosperous that we have no grounds to fear. Bonaparte is our good friend and ally, and even were he disposed to be hostile, we are so powerful by sea and land I suppose that it is not in his power to do us any material injury. I wish the adage may not prove true with respect to us *Quem deus perdat prius demeritat*.

But such a total apathy and insensibility to the perils of our situation appear to me but an unhappy prelude to serious calamities. Our situation appears to me nearly to resemble that of the nations of Europe previous to their being swallowed up in the vortex of Gallic despotism. Never was there a greater scope for the exercise and final success of the Gallic maxim, divide and conquer, than what is afforded by the present complexion of the United States. A flourish about the fullness of the treasury and a surplus revenue for the purpose of internal improvements, such as canals and turn-pike roads, and the propriety of even altering the Constitution to pave the way for appropriations of that nature at a time when every cent of the public money that can be spared is most imperiously demanded for the public service, is well calculated to increase the fatal security.

What will be the issue of the present war in Europe we cannot yet tell with certainty. You have doubtless heard of the late disasters of the Prussian arms. If England should finally fall in the struggle, in which there is again a prospect of her standing single and alone, there cannot I think be a reasonable doubt but the United States will be immediately drawn into the tremendous vortex. But in the midst of the wreck of empires and the crush of nations, we may still take comfort that the Most High rules, and He will eventually say to the proud usurper, Thus far shalt thou go and no farther.

I shall here use the freedom which perhaps may be deemed imprudent, to mention an incident which perhaps you will not hear of any other way, and which I have no wish to publish, especially in the public prints, which tho I esteem it a forgery and in that respect unworthy of regard, yet suggests some

things probable at least. But to the narrative. On Tuesday evening a letter with the Philadelphia postmark addressed to Congress arrived by mail, and was by the doorkeeper delivered to the Speaker next morning. It proved to be anonymous, and as such the House concluded to take no notice of it and would neither hear it read nor take any order about it. Curiosity, however, was on tiptoe and every one was desirous of being informed of its contents. I had the opportunity to hear the principal part of it read. It was lengthy, consisting of two sheets of paper. The writer professed to be a foreigner but imperfectly acquainted with our language; that sentiments of friendship alone induced him to make the communication, which as he did it at the risk of his life he was obliged for that reason to conceal his name. He mentioned that he had travelled over a great part of the United States in company with some French spies who were sent out by Bonaparte in every direction to spy out the nakedness of the country; that he had entered into their views, and had obtained their confidence, and that as soon as peace could be made with Great Britain, it was determined in the cabinet of St. Cloud to effect the conquest of this country; that in order to obtain a pretence for an immediate declaration of war it was determined to excite the Spaniards to some trifling acts of hostility which might provoke reprisals. For this reason he urged the necessity of an immediate vigorous preparation for war and that delay would be ruin. He then made some proposals relating to the organization of an army, and recommended improving the assistance of foreign officers, and pointed particularly to General

[this letter is unfinished in the original manuscript]

WASHINGTON, December 22, 1807.

DEAR FRIEND;

* * * Last night precisely at eleven o'clock we closed a session which had been held for three days in secret. Should I say that the die is cast, that my country is no longer independent; we have been legislating under an imperial decree of the Emperor of France and sanctioning a plan matured in Paris it would be saying no more than I fear will be realized.

Speculating men may reason on the impropriety of measures, but the great mass of mankind are governed by their feelings, and as long as their immediate int'rest is untouched, they concern themselves but little about the operations of Government about public men and public measures. But the measure sanctioned last night is one of that kind which will make men feel, and will bring on a total stagnation of business. Suffice it to say, Congress has laid an embargo, unlimited as to duration on all ships and vessels of the United States clear'd, or not cleared; foreign vessels have liberty to depart, either in ballast, or with such goods, wares and merchandise as they may happen to have on board when notified of this act. The manner in which this act will be ostensibly held up to the view of the nation will be that it is a measure which will operate impartially, and which will tend to coerce Great Britain and France to recede from their present mode of warfare, and respect the rights of neutrals. France rigidly enforces her decree of blockades. Great Britain is about issuing a countervailing decree, but no authentic evidence as yet that she has issued such a decree.

But for myself this is a mode of warfare I don't like. A man humps upon my toe and hurts a corn; to be revenged I knock my own brains out, our boasted revenue destroyed at one blow; the produce of the farmer and planter rotting on his hand, public and private credit ruined, people out of employ; our seamen either turned out to starve, or driven to seek their bread in foreign countries; failures and bankruptcies without number will be some of the evils attending the measure. But what is worst of all, altho it is ostensibly impartial as to the powers of Europe in the course of the discussion, the cat has been let out of the bag. It is designed to operate against England only, and there is to be an understanding between the French Government and the Government of the United States, at least that is the impression. It is said and believed that our Minister has been insulted at Paris, that Bonaparte has declared to him that he will have no neutral, and that the only price of avoiding a war with France is to shut our ports against England, or in other words provoke England to hostility against us, and then the door

will be opened for an alliance offensive and defensive with France. These are the impressions. This is the fact, that invariably before this when communications have been made by the Executive relating to foreign relations, the communications of our Minister to the Executive have been communicated with the despatches. But at this time it has been sufficient to send us a short note from Mr. Armstrong to the imperial Attorney General of the Council of Prizes, and the answer of the latter in the name of the Emperor. I believe many who voted for the measure, thinking it only to be a necessary precautionary measure to save our own property, they have no views of its bearings. Had we been permitted to view the whole ground, I believe the vote would have been different. Altho the vote could not be altered, yet they were obliged to hear and hear some unpleasant truths uttered, with boldness and independence.

John Randolph closed the debate with a very impressive speech, delivered not in that passionate manner in which he oftentimes addresses the House, but with the tear in his eye. Among other things he told the House, that it was far from being improbable that the future sovereign of America, in whose veins flowed the blood of the Bonapartes was now in the United States, and that the future regent during the minority of the now ruling infant was now in this nation, perhaps in this House. * * *

N. B. Since I wrote this letter in the morning it is reported that an army of 70,000 French have entered Madrid and dethroned and assassinated the King of Spain, and imprisoned the Prince of Asturias. Should this prove true it I think will soften our tone a little towards Great Britain. One in particular, Coll. Durell a very warm Republican, and a man of a very sanguine disposition who has appeared peculiarly inimical to Britain has talked in a much milder strain than heretofore. I have no suspicion that those who voted in the affirmative would wish to throw their country into the hands of France, but they appear totally blind to the connection which to me appears so plain as to need no elucidation, and with regard to Thomas the first, and last, I hope of such

kind of Thomases they have adopted the doctrine in full, that the king can do no wrong.

With regard to some of the minority who are called Republicans, Mr. Milnor is one of our Mess. is a man of respectability set out as a Republican, but wants nothing of Federalism only the name; Rowan of Kentucky does not think higher of T. J. than I do. He is a firm independent man, and a man of undoubted talents. Russell and Kirkpatrick, and Masters are Republicans, but always, or almost always vote with the Federalists, VanHorne is denounced by the Jacobins of his own state as an apostate Republican. I have no acquaintance with him, but I heard him say today in conversation with another gentleman, that had he voted for the bill and found it to produce a war, he never could have acquitted himself of the guilt of the blood which would have been shed.

[This letter is not signed in the original manuscript]

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