Chapter 13

The Revolution of 1800

The People, Not the Plebes

THREE YEARS OF LIVING WITH JOHN ADAMS AS PRESIDENT LEFT Thomas Jefferson in a radical mood. He sounded almost like Thomas Paine when in 1800 he wrote to an old friend that "I have sworn upon the altar of god, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." Like many people at the time, he did not trust the post office to safely convey his correspondence, telling a political ally in Kentucky that he had been advised "it is better to get a friend to forward it by some of the boats."

Such unruly sentiments were one reason Hamilton despised Jefferson. But Hamilton hated Aaron Burr more, writing to a friend, "He is as unprincipled & dangerous a man as any country can boast; as true a *Cataline* as ever met in midnight conclave." He repeated the charge in another letter later that year, when it had become clear that either Burr or Jefferson would be the next president. "He is truly the *Cataline* of America," Hamilton wrote.

Burr had an odd way of bringing together people to oppose him. Hamilton was so appalled by Burr that he found himself in the startling position of supporting Jefferson, albeit privately. "It is too late for me to become his apologist," he wrote about Jefferson, perhaps with a wry smile. He continued:

> *Nor can I have any disposition to do it. I admit that his politics are tinctured with fanaticism, that he is too much in earnest in his democracy, that he has been a mischevous enemy to the principle measures of our past administration, that he is crafty*

& persevering in his objects, that he is not scrupulous about the means of success, nor very mindful of truth, and that he is a contemptible hypocrite.

But, he added, Jefferson would not act merely to benefit himself. Burr, by contrast, Hamilton wrote, was "a man of extreme & irregular ambition—that he is selfish to a degree which excludes all social affections & that he is decidedly profligate. . . . a man who on all hands is acknowledged to be a complete Cataline in his practice & principles."

Hamilton also considered John Adams to be incompetent and unequipped for the tasks of the presidency, though presumably Adams' reluctance to give Hamilton a top position in the Army played some role. "Not denying to Mr. Adams patriotism and integrity, and even talents of a certain kind, I should be deficient in candor, were I to conceal the conviction, that he does not possess the talents adapted to the Administration of Government, and that there are great and intrinsic defects in his character, which unfit him for the office of Chief Magistrate." Oddly, no one seemed to consider that Hamilton's attack on the president might have violated the Sedition Act. Adams, for his part, would later write of Hamilton that he possessed "all the Vanity and Timidity of Cicero, all the Debauchery of Marc Anthony and All the Ambition of Julius Caesar."

Typically vituperative, Adams twice referred to Hamilton as the "bastard brat of a Scotch Pedler." Yet for all their differences, Hamilton and Adams agreed that Burr was a danger to the nation. "Burr was a Catiline, a Bankrupt, an unprincipled Scoundrell, a damn'd Rascall and a Devil," Adams concluded.

One of the more popular texts of the eighteenth century was a history of the ancient world by a philosophical French priest, the Abbe Millot. His epitaph for Catiline also summarizes Burr well: "He was one of those men who are born to perform great actions, but by being slaves to their passions, seem to be only capable of, enormous wickedness." Jefferson, Adams, and Hamilton likely knew those words—Jefferson recommended Millot to oth-

ers frequently, Hamilton and Madison cited him in the Federalist Papers, and Adams had eight volumes of Millot in his library.

Jefferson and Burr emerged from the election of 1800 tied in the vote of the Electoral College. The result, writes Yale law professor Bruce Ackerman, was that "for a week in February 1801, America teetered on the brink of disaster." The House of Representatives voted some thirty-five times, with a tie each time. It was possible, Ackerman writes, that the constitutional system devised in 1787, which itself had replaced the Articles of Confederation of 1781, would collapse, and would have to be replaced by a new Constitution of 1802. The core problem, he continues, was that the authors of the Constitution had adhered to "the teachings of classical republican thought [which] . . . equated parties with factions and considered them unmitigated evils."

Finally, on the thirty-sixth ballot, James Bayard (Princeton, 1784), the representative from Delaware, perhaps having received some reassurances from the Jeffersonians that they would act moderately while in power, withdrew his support from Burr. That broke the deadlock, and Jefferson won.

Jefferson's First Inaugural Address

THE TRUEST TEST OF A NEW DEMOCRACY IS NOT WHETHER A NEW leader is elected, but whether that new leader holds a second election and eventually turns over power. In that sense, the election of 1800, and the peaceful transition from Adams to Jefferson in 1801, is as historically significant as was Washington's stepping down four years earlier. "The revolution of 1800," Jefferson thought,

> *was as real a revolution in the principles of our government as that of 76 was in it's form;. . . . The nation declared it's will by dismissing functionaries of one principle, and electing those of another, in the two branches, executive and legislative, submitted to their election.*

John Adams, for all his disagreements with Jefferson, had a similar perspective on the degree of turmoil, writing that Hamilton's actions undermining his presidency laid the "foundation of the overthrow of the federal party, and of the revolution that followed."

Jefferson's first inaugural address, delivered on March 4, 1801, is a statement of an opposition party taking over. It was also the first inaugural address delivered in Washington, DC. In it, Jefferson made clear that he and his party had won, and that the Federalists had lost. But he vowed that he would not be vindictive. The will of the majority would prevail, but "the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression." He promised "equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political." Indeed, anti-Republicanism views would be left to "stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated."

He also called for people to tone down their rhetoric, emphasizing that "every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle." He then listed his own principles, pointedly including freedom of the press. His argument at least in part was that this was a revolution of principle, not of opportunism.

"Virtue," that old warhorse, hardly made an appearance in this historically significant speech, one of Jefferson's best pieces of writing. Jefferson said he was sure that others in government would help provide the required "resources of wisdom, of virtue, of zeal." The notion of virtue, once so central to how people guided their lives, had shrunk to something nice to have. Jefferson concluded by stating that he saw his job as working for "the happiness and freedom of all."

Jefferson was indeed focused on the freedom of the press, quite literally. Just five days into office, one of his first actions as president was to reverse the fortunes of Thomas Cooper, the Pennsylvania newspaper editor who had been jailed the previous year for criticizing President Adams. Cooper soon was named to a post investigating a continuing land dispute between Pennsylvania

and Connecticut. Jefferson pardoned Callender, the muckraking Scottish journalist who had been jailed under the Sedition Act. But Callender wanted much more, something like a nice, well-paid government job. He hoped to be rewarded for his efforts and imprisonment by being named postmaster of Richmond, Virginia. When the president did not do that, Callender turned on Jefferson, darkly warning that "he was in possession of things which he could & would make use of in a certain case." When Jefferson shunned him, Callender published those "things," which were the rumors—confirmed by DNA tests centuries later—that Jefferson kept an enslaved woman, Sally Hemings, as his mistress, and had fathered children with her. Callender wrote that Hemings' oldest son bore "a striking though sable resemblance to those of the President himself." Two years later, in July 1803, Callender's corpse would be found floating in shallow water in the James River.

At about the same time, Thomas Jefferson, that most unmilitary of presidents, did something that is often forgotten: He introduced and signed into law a bill to establish the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. The new school soon would illuminate one path toward nonclassical higher education in America, with a curriculum that, by the 1820s, featured civil and military engineering, mathematics, French, chemistry, and geography. Henry Adams, a great-grandson of John Adams, would write in one of his histories that "the West Point engineers doubled the capacity of the little American army for resistance, and introduced a new and scientific character into American life."

Adams Trades "virtues for manure"

JOHN ADAMS DID NOT ATTEND JEFFERSON'S INAUGURAL. HE FELT HUmiliated by losing the election, being the first president so rejected. "I was turned out of Office, degraded and disgraced by my Country," he would state, his feelings as usual on his sleeve. He

left the capital at four A.M. on the morning of Jefferson's inauguration, catching the early coach to Baltimore. Adams' defeat came atop a personal tragedy, the premature death of his son Charles, a severe alcoholic.

In a letter to a party loyalist written weeks after the inauguration, Adams sounded crushed. Back at his farm, he wrote, "I thought I had made a good exchange . . . of honors & virtues, for manure." Given his deeply held classical perspective and his equally intense self-esteem, Adams could conclude only that the American people, having rejected him, lacked sufficient virtue. "The Virtue and good Sense of Americans, which I own I once had some dependence on, and which have been trumpetted with more extravagance by others, are become a byword," he mourned. "It behoves all men to consider whether that intelligence & piety and virtue in the great body of the people, upon which we have all acknowledged our whole security to depend, has not failed our expectations & disappointed all our hopes."

Back in private life, Adams' next step was typical of his brilliant but sour personality. He began to write a memoir to settle old scores. George Washington would have seen writing an explanatory autobiography as stooping to respond to critics. Instead, Washington got the word out more discreetly, by having his biography written by an old friend—and then taking pains to go over it thoroughly, making extensive notes.

Adams, by contrast, could hardly wait to take on his many critics personally. In October 1802, he began his memoir by stating in the first paragraph that

> *My Excuse is, that having been the Object of much Misrepresentation, some of my Posterity may probably wish to see in my own hand Writing a proof of the falsehood of that Mass of odious Abuse of my Character, with which News Papers, private Letters and public Pamphlets and Histories have been disgraced for thirty Years.*

Later in the same document he would bewail "the torment of a perpetual Vulcano of Slander, pouring on my flesh all my life time."

This is a man who seemingly retained every barbed word ever aimed at him.

He watched the Jefferson administration with horror, but reassured himself that at least the president lacked the strength of nerve to seek dictatorship. "Jefferson is not a Roman," he said jovially in a letter to Benjamin Rush. He seemed to understand, correctly, that the man in the White House was more Greek than Roman, and was in fact a follower of what he disparaged as "the poisonous pestilential & most fatal doctrine of Epicurus."

In another letter to his friend Rush, one that is quite extraordinary, he listed all his foes who came to ill fortune, reveling in their downfalls. Most notably, Adams here celebrated the fact that one pamphleteer "could not long refrain from abusing me, till his House was burnt and his Wife and Children in it, and himself Scortched to Such a degree that he died in a few days." This likely is the ugliest thing ever to emerge from Adams' pen.

Adams would never finish writing his memoirs, perhaps because he found it so difficult to counter what he considered "a Secret and deliberate design" to destroy his reputation. Putting that project aside, he retreated into rereading a biography of Cicero. There he found eerie parallels between the decline of the Roman Republic and the condition of the United States. "I Seem to read . . . the History of our own Country for forty years past. Change the Names and every Anecdote will be applicable to Us." Viewing himself through the prism of ancient history seems to have assuaged his embittered mind. His heart bled for Cicero—and so, inseparably, for himself. "Poor Cicero, watched, dreaded, envied, by all: no doubt Slandered by innumerable Emissaries, despized, insulted, belied." He utterly rejected the notion that Adams or Cicero wallowed in self-regard. "Do you call this Vanity? It was Self Defence, Independence, Intrepidity."

But there was more. With Adams, there was always more:

> *Cicero was libelled, Slandered insulted by all Parties; by Caesars Party, by Catilines Crew, by Clodius's Mermidons, Aye and by Pompey the Patricians and the Senate too—He was persecuted and*

tormented by turns and by all Parties and all Factions, and sometimes by combinations of all of them together, and that for his most virtuous and glorious Councils and Conduct. . . . Injured, insulted and provoked as I am, I blush not to imitate the Roman. . . .

As the historian Linda Kerber notes in an aside, Adams had an image of himself as "The Last Roman." He was stuck in time. It is probably fortunate for him that he never produced a finished memoir. It would only have diminished his reputation further, had he written it in the tone he used years later in a letter to Jefferson: "How many Martyrdoms must I Suffer?"

A Jeffersonian Plum on Federalist Turf

JEFFERSON TOOK OFFICE ANGERED BY THE RASH OF LAST-MINUTE APpointments Adams had made just before leaving the federal government. Of everything Adams ever did, Jefferson later told Abigail Adams, this was the sole act that truly antagonized him:

I did consider his last appointments to office as personally unkind. They were from among my most ardent political enemies, from whom no faithful cooperation could ever be expected, and laid me under the embarrasment of acting thro' men whose views were to defeat mine; or to encounter the odium of putting others in their places. It seemed but common justice to leave a successor free to act by instruments of his own choice.

After some brooding, Jefferson devised his response to Adams' "scenes of midnight appointment." It seemed at times that everybody in the country wanted a job from Jefferson. Early in his first term a contentious episode arose in Connecticut, that most determinedly Federalist of states—even more than Massachusetts, because it was more politically stable.

Celebrating Jefferson's election, Abraham Bishop (Yale, 1778), a prominent Republican in Connecticut, and so a notable figure in the political minority there, claimed in a celebratory speech that Jefferson had prevented a Federalist monarchy from being established. Rather, he stated, the Democratic Republican victory amounted to a bloodless revolution. Bishop concluded by assuring his happy audience that "the reign of terror is no more: The alien and sedition acts have expired: Aristocratic federalism is suffering its last pangs."

Jefferson's administration rewarded Bishop indirectly, by making his aged and milder father the collector of customs for the port of New Haven, a position so desirable and lucrative that the new vice president, Aaron Burr, wrote to Jefferson about who should get it. The post brought with it an income of $5,000 a year, equaling that of the treasury secretary and surpassing that of the chief justice. It was, writes one biographer of Jefferson, "the best political plum in Connecticut."

The appointment outraged Connecticut's Federalists. One, Theodore Dwight, brother of the president of Yale College, penned a satire denouncing "Ye tribes of faction" made up of "Drunkards and Whores/ And rogues in scores." Some eighty leading merchants of New Haven wrote to Jefferson to object to what they saw as the politicization of the customs office.

Jefferson replied forcefully. Dumas Malone, his encyclopedic biographer, says that Jefferson's defense of the appointment was the first statement written by a president expressly as a leader of a political party. The new president declared that he was just doing openly what Adams had done without admitting it. Did you Federalists think you held a monopoly on government jobs? he asked. He did not attempt to invoke "virtue" in his response. That measure was gone. Open patronage had become the coin of American politics.

Privately, Jefferson was more disparaging of the Federalist claim on offices. Just a handful were ousted, he wrote, but "the whole herd have squealed out, as if all their throats were cut."

Throwing Classicism Out with Federalism

THE ELECTORAL WINNERS, IN ASSERTING THEMSELVES, WENT AFTER not just elites, but the classicism that elites had so long used as their political vocabulary. They saw classicism as a symbol of elitism—and they were right in doing so. But in the course of that, classical learning became something of a political punching bag for the new men. An essay in the newspaper *Argus* asserted that Federalists despised workingmen who "have not snored through four years at Princeton."

The cultural climate was changing even among some younger Federalists. Edmund Trowbridge Dana (Harvard, 1800) charged in an essay in a Boston magazine that American poetry of the time was mired in the ancient world. "One is hagridden . . . with nothing but the classicks, the classicks, the classicks!" He continued:

> *. . . our posies are all senseless; forced exoticks nourished by foreign fire, painted leaves of tiffany wound on formal wire. When, oh when, shall the winter of criticism be passed and the springtime of passion return! when shall the library be deserted for the fields. . . . when, oh when, shall the idolatry of learning be superseded by the worship of truth!*

He was tired of sitting "primly with Addison," of reading Pope. It was time for a new "vigour," for more "passion." Less rhetoric and thinking, more nature and feeling was the call of the day. "We have striven to be faultless, and neglected to be natural," he wrote. In this sweeping dismissal of library learning, of the ancient world, of musty metaphors, and the emphasis instead on the need for personally discovered truth, one can sense the advent of American Romanticism. Appropriately, this was written during the presidency of Thomas Jefferson, who as discussed earlier had his own tendencies toward Romanticism in his preference for the possible over the real, as well as for the Greeks over the Romans.

But cultures generally do not change overnight, and reformers

remained in a minority among Federalists. Strikingly, the same issue of *The Monthly Anthology and Boston Review* that began with Dana's sharp rejection of classicism concluded with an old school poem that compared George Washington to—who else?—old Cato:

The grateful incense Heaven's high favour won,
And CATO liv'd again——in WASHINGTON.

Perhaps inevitably, the anonymous poet hoped that

No sordid passions e'er possess the soul,
But publick Spirit animate the whole——

But the Federalist shelf was bare. The party's intellectuals had little to offer except to insist that the old ways were the best ways, which was an increasingly tough sell in a dynamic new nation. "The best ages of Rome afford the purest models of virtue that any where are to be met with," advised an essayist in the short-lived *New England Quarterly Magazine*. "The Roman historians are the best that ever existed. The dramatic merit and eloquence of Livy; the profound philosophy of Sallust; the rich and solemn pencil of Tacitus, all ages of the world will admire." The argument mounted here assumes that the issue at hand was about the best model of virtue to pursue. That was, at best, a doubtful proposition in early nineteenth-century America.

Likewise, an anti-Jefferson satire of the time by Thomas Green Fessenden (Dartmouth, 1796) charged that the Jeffersonians were "wretches [who] announce hostility/ To talents, virtue, and civility." Fessenden mourned the decline of public-spiritedness and advised "the scum" who had risen to power to heed their "betters." His solution to the tensions of the time was for every man in the nation to "be contented in his station." Know your "rank," he admonished, and remember that,

Blest is the man with wooden head
Who labours for his daily bread.

He also railed against permitting propertyless men to vote. Such raw condescension was no way to win popular support in the new America. What we have here is someone challenging against almost every cultural and societal trend he sees around him—most especially the very notion of seeking popular support.

The world the Federalists had known and briefly ruled was going away. Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts, by then the speaker of the house, mourned that "the aristocracy of virtue is destroyed." He was right, even if he did not like the fact of the matter.

Eventually the Federalists, realizing that to survive they would have to act like a party, formed more than two hundred chapters of a new Washington Benevolent Society. These were, writes Gordon Wood, "ostensibly charitable organizations but in reality arms of the party." Yet even this effort was halfhearted, he adds, because "they saw themselves as the wise, natural rulers of society, and thus found it virtually impossible to conceive of themselves as an opposition party."

But it was too late to save the Federalists. A new social order, stripped of classical republicanism, and even opposed to it, was emerging in America. The Federalists rejected it, and it in turn rejected them. In the following decades the party slowly would evaporate, absent from the ballot box, but still present for a while in the judiciary. In 1807, for example, Theophilus Parsons (Harvard, 1769), the Federalist chief justice of Massachusetts, ruled that not all citizens were equal before the law in the case at hand, a slander charge, because "rank and condition" affected the degree of injury caused by act. The judge seems not to have understood that America was rapidly becoming a nation where the notion of social rank no longer existed.

"This American world was not made for me"

AARON BURR SPITEFULLY REVELED IN HAMILTON'S PLIGHT, CHUCKling to Jefferson that "Hamilton seems to be literally Mad with

spleen and envy and disappointment—as far as I can yet judge, his efforts are perfectly impotent."

Hamilton was indeed at sea. The following year, he confessed his dismay in striking terms in a letter to Gouverneur Morris:

> *Mine is an odd destiny. Perhaps no man in the UStates has sacrificed or done more for the present Constitution than myself—and contrary to all my anticipations of its fate, as you know from the very begginning I am still labouring to prop the frail and worthless fabric. Yet I have the murmurs of its friends no less than the curses of its foes for my rewards. What can I do better than withdraw from the Scene? Every day proves to me more and more that this American world was not made for me.*

This was a painful conclusion for him to reach, that the new nation that he had worked so hard to build seemed to have no place for him. One can only wonder about the psychological strain this brilliant, ambitious man must have felt. He had voluntarily moved to America, only to see the country move away from him. It clearly was not becoming the nation he had envisioned.

Two years later, after Hamilton was shot and killed in a duel with Aaron Burr, Morris would deliver Hamilton's eulogy. He noted in his diary the difficulties of preparing his remarks:

> *The first Point of his Biography is that he was a Stranger of illegitimate Birth. Some Mode must be contrived to pass over this handsomely. He was indiscreet, vain and opinionated. These things must be told or the Character will be incomplete—and yet they must be told in such Manner as not to destroy the Interest. He was on Principle opposed to republican and attached to monarchical Government—And then his Opinions were generally known and have been long and loudly proclaimed. . . . I must not either dwell on his domestic Life—He has long since foolishly published the Avowal of conjugal Infidelity.*

Morris nicely elided the issue of Hamilton's illegitimacy by assigning him a divine origin: "It seemed as if God had called him

suddenly into existence, that he might assist to save a world!" As for Hamilton's many indiscretions, well, Morris declared, "He disdained concealment."

Another prominent Federalist, Fisher Ames, eulogized Hamilton more conventionally: "No man, not the Roman Cato himself, was more inflexible, on every point that touched, or only seemed to touch, integrity and honor." He was akin to a "Hercules, treacherously slain in the midst of his unfinished labors, leaving the world overrun with monsters." He was "fervid as Demosthenes, like Cicero full of resource." He had "virtue so rare, so bold." And so on, in the vocabulary of a political era that, fittingly, already had passed even before Burr's bullet struck Hamilton's abdomen.

Privately, Ames also was giving up on the United States. "Our country is too big for union, too sordid for patriotism, too democratick for liberty," he confided to a friend at about this time.

Burr's Conspiracy

DESPITE BURR'S ACTIONS, JEFFERSON'S POPULARITY GREW STEADILY. In the election of 1804 he overwhelmed the Federalist opposition, taking fifteen of seventeen states, including even Massachusetts, for 162 electoral votes to just 14 for the Federalist candidate, Charles Pinckney.

But Aaron Burr had more trouble up his sleeve. From early on, Burr's conduct "inspired me with distrust," Jefferson wrote. The Virginian did not know the New Yorker well when the two became president and vice president. "There has never been an intimacy between us, and but little association." In the spring of 1806, Burr—having killed Hamilton and been dropped as vice president—protested to Jefferson that he had been little rewarded for his support and to warn "that he could do me much harm."

Jefferson responded to this threat by saying that, "as to any harm he could do Me, I knew no cause why he should desire it."

Burr went west and fell into some kind of murky plot. In 1807, Jefferson reported to Congress on Burr's efforts to somehow establish an independent nation in the Ohio River Valley, or perhaps attack into Mexican territory, or maybe both. This was the greatest conspiracy of them all. During the winter of 1800–1801, Aaron Burr had nearly become president of the United States. Six years later, he was put on trial for treason against it. "His conspiracy has been one of the most flagitious of which history will ever furnish an example," Jefferson reported to the Marquis de Lafayette. "He meant to separate the Western states from us, to add Mexico to them, place himself at their head."

Burr was, Gordon Wood concludes, a man of secrets and lies. The biggest difference between him and the founders was not ideological. Rather, it was that he just did not care about the things they cared about. "One searches Burr's papers in vain for a single thoughtful letter about political philosophy or government," Wood wrote. He was "immune to the ideology and values of the Revolution," especially its "classical conception of leadership." Jefferson took to calling him "our Cataline."

Madison Succeeds Jefferson

MADISON SERVED UNDER JEFFERSON FOR EIGHT YEARS AS HIS SECRETARY of state, but—given Jefferson's rich overseas experience—his job really was more to be the president's closest friend and political advisor, helping him solidify the Jeffersonian victory over the Federalists.

When Madison succeeded Jefferson as president in 1809, he trotted out some of the old classical rhetoric. In his first inaugural address, he said he was grateful for the confidence expressed in him by "a free and virtuous nation" and said he planned to rely on "the well tried intelligence and virtue of my fellow Citizens." But the phrases feel tired and obligatory. Indeed, he would almost repeat

himself in his second inaugural, describing the United States as "composed of a brave, a free, a virtuous, and an intelligent people." This was inaugural mush.

Madison nowadays is regarded as having been an uncertain president who led the country into the largely unnecessary War of 1812. Yet his contemporaries seem to have valued him more highly. More than fifty-seven American towns and counties are named for him, the most for any president. Even John Adams, in his own backhanded way, rated Madison above himself, Jefferson, and even Washington. He would later tell Jefferson that, "I pitty our good Brother Madison. . . . I pitty him the more, because, notwithstand a thousand Faults and blunders, his Administration has acquired more glory, and established more Union, than all his three Predecessors Washington Adams and Jefferson put together."

Meanwhile, the aging Jefferson, after presiding over the national political shift away from classical values, began himself to recede into the classical world. He may have helped unleash American culture, but did not necessarily like the direction the people were taking it. Rather than change with the times, he reverted to the ways of his youth, to his classical pursuits, especially the Greeks, favoring Homer over Virgil, for example. His granddaughter reported that in his last years, "He went over to the works of Eschylus, Sophocles and Euripides."

In a letter to President Madison mainly about his sheep Jefferson concluded with a quotation from Horace's very Epicurean sixth epistle:

> Vive, vale, et siquid novisti rectius istis
> Candidus imperti sinon, his ulere mecum.

That is, in the translation of the eighteenth-century English poet Christopher Smart, "Live: be happy. If you know of any thing preferable to these maxims, candidly communicate it: if not, with me make use of these."

Jefferson told Adams that he was turning away from attending

to current events and going back to his books. This may have been in part because his cohort in life had died off—he noted to Adams that he was the sole surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence living south of the Potomac. At the age of sixty-nine, he was still on horseback every day, he noted, but walked little, "a single mile being too much for me." As for politics, he said, "I think little of them, and say less. I have given up newspapers in exchange for Tacitus and Thucydides, for Newton and Euclid; and I find myself much the happier."