

Hope

...The Dreams of the Future...

We have acted together from the origin to the end of a memorable Revolution, and we have contributed, each in the line allotted us, our endeavors to render its issue a permanent blessing to our country. That our social intercourse may, to the evening of our days, be cheered and cemented by witnessing the freedom and happiness for which we have labored, will be my constant prayer.

We are likely to preserve the liberty we have obtained only by unremitting labors and perils. But we shall preserve it; and our mass of weight and wealth on the good side is so great, as to leave no danger that force will ever be attempted against us. I will not believe our labors are lost. I shall not die without a hope that light and liberty are on steady advance.

The spirit of 1776 is not dead. It has only been slumbering. The body of the American people is substantially republican. But their virtuous feelings have been played on by some fact with more fiction; they have been the dupes of artful maneuvers, and made for a moment to be willing instruments in forging chains for themselves. But time and truth have dissipated the delusion, and opened their eyes.

Our experience so far, has satisfactorily manifested the competence of a republican government to maintain and promote the best interests of its citizens; and every future year, I doubt not, will contribute to settle a question on which reason, and a knowledge of the character and circumstances of our fellow citizens, could never admit a doubt, and much less condemn them as fit subjects to be consigned to the dominion of wealth and force.

We shall never give up our Union, the last anchor of our hope, and that alone which is to prevent this heavenly country from becoming an arena of gladiators. Here we are pacifically inclined, if anything comes which will permit us to follow our inclinations. I hope we shall once more see harmony restored among our citizens, and an entire oblivion of past feuds. I will sacrifice everything but principal to procure it.

I indulge a single hope only, that the choice of President may fall on one who will be a friend of peace, of economy, of the republican principles of our Constitution, and of the salutary distribution of powers made by that between the general and the local

governments. To promote, therefore, unanimity and perseverance in this great enterprise, to disdain despair, encourage trial, and nourish hope, are the worthiest objects of every political and philanthropic work. We, too, shall encounter follies; but if great, they will be short; if long, they will be light; and the vigor of our country will get the better of them. Should things go wrong at any time, the people will set them to rights by the peaceable exercise of their elected rights.

We are sincerely anxious to see mankind raised from their present abject condition. The light which has been shed on the mind of man through the civilized world, has given it a new direction, from which no human power can divert it. The sovereigns of Europe who are wise, or have wise counselors, see this, and bend to the breeze which blows; the unwise alone stiffen and meet its inevitable crush. The ball of liberty is now so well in motion that it will roll round the globe.

That every man shall be made virtuous, by any process whatever, is, indeed, no more to be expected, than that every tree shall be made to bear fruit, and every plant nourishment. The brier and bramble can never become the vine and olive; but their asperities may be softened by culture, and their properties improved to usefulness in the order and economy of the world. And I do hope that, in the present spirit of extending to the great mass of mankind the blessings of instruction, I see a prospect of great advancement in the happiness of the human race; and that this may proceed to an indefinite, although not to an infinite degree. Nature has sown talents and virtues as liberally among the poor as rich, and which are lost to their country by the want of means for their cultivation.

The reformation of offenders, though an object worthy of the attention of the laws, is not effected at all by capital punishments, which exterminate instead of reforming, and should be the last melancholy recourse against those whose existence is become inconsistent with the safety of their fellow citizens; which also weaken the State by cutting off so many who, if reformed, might be restored sound members to society, who, even under a course of correction, might be rendered useful in various labors for the public, and would be, living, and long-continued spectacles to deter others from committing the like offenses.

I had rather be deceived than live without hope. It is so sweet! It makes us ride so smoothly over the roughness of life. My theory has always been, that if we are to dream, the flatteries of hope are as cheap, and pleasanter than the gloom of despair.

When I contemplate the immense advances in science and discoveries in the arts which have been made within the period of my life, I look forward with confidence to equal advances by the present generation, and have no doubt that they will consequently be as much wiser than we have been as we than our fathers were, and they than the burners of witches.

Withdrawn by age from all other public services and attentions to public things, I am closing the last scenes of life by fashioning and fostering an establishment for the instruction of those who are to come after us. I hope its influence on their virtue,

freedom, fame, and happiness, will be salutary and permanent. The form and distributions of its structure are original and unique, the architecture chaste and classical, and the whole well worthy of attracting the curiosity of a visit.

I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past. That yourself, your family and people may repose at length in freedom, happiness, and safety, shall be our constant prayer and that God may ever have you, great and dear friend and ally, in His safe and holy keeping.