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THE AUTHORSHIP

OF THE

Quatre Lettres d'un Bourgeois de New-Heaven

PUBLISHED IN MAZZEI'S

RECHERCHES HISTORIQUES, etc.

BY

SIMEON E. BALDWIN, LL.D.

Read before the New Haven Colony Historical Society, and reprinted  
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THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE  
“QUATRE LETTRES D'UN BOURGEOIS  
DE NEW-HEAVEN SUR L'UNITÉ  
DE LA LÉGISLATION,”

PUBLISHED IN MAZZEI'S

“*Recherches historiques et politiques sur les États-Unis de  
l'Amérique Septentrionale.*”

By SIMEON E. BALDWIN, LL.D.

[Read February 25, 1895.]

AN insignificant man occasionally secures a place in history by some trivial incident, which links his name to that of one of the leaders of his day. Such was the fortune of Filippo Mazzei, an Italian who, before the Revolution, had taken up his residence in Virginia, where he soon became an intimate acquaintance and ardent admirer of Jefferson.\*

He came to America in November, 1773, bringing with him a dozen Italian laborers, with the purpose of introducing the culture of the olives, lemons, and grapes of his native country. The Grand Duke of Tuscany gave some encouragement to the undertaking,† and he was aided by a subscription of £2,000 from a few planters in Virginia. A suitable farm was secured,‡ adjoining Monticello, in Albemarle County, and the little colony began work there early in 1774. The laborers were brought over under a contract to remain in Mazzei's employment for a term of four or five years. He called his estate “Colle in Albemarle,” after Colle in his native duchy of

\* *Memorie della vita di Filippo Mazzei*, I, 339.

† *Works of Franklin*, Sparks' Ed., VIII, 188.

‡ The title was not transferred to him, so far as appears from the County Land Records.

Tuscan, one of the minor cathedral cities of Italy, not far from Sienna.\* A large vineyard was planted and thrived kindly; but the winters proved too cold for the olive and lemon trees which he also set out. As soon as the time for which his men had been engaged ran out, they all left him, some enlisting in the Revolutionary army, and the rest seeking more remunerative employment as gardeners, on neighboring estates. His capital was sunk, and early in 1779 he determined to return to Europe, in the hope of procuring funds to continue and extend his experiments.† He was also commissioned by the State of Virginia to purchase army stores, and negotiate a foreign loan in her behalf. Not long after he had left the country, Major General Reidesel, the Hessian commander, who had been captured with Burgoyne at Saratoga, and was awaiting his exchange (which took place in 1780), came to Virginia to reside, and hired Mazzei's estate. His horses were given the run of the fields, and in a week had eaten up and utterly destroyed the vineyard which had been so carefully planted, and from the vintage of which so much had been expected.‡

The vessel on which Mazzei sailed was taken by an English cruiser, and his papers seized, but after a brief detention at New York, he was released, and was soon in Europe again.

In 1780, he spent some months in Paris, where, says John Adams, then one of our Commissioners at the Court of Versailles, "he kept good company and a good deal of it," and was "a zealous defender of our affairs."§ Soon after this, he wrote and published some tracts on the American Revolution,|| and visited Genoa, Florence, and Amsterdam, in the hope of negotiating the loans desired by Virginia. While Mr. Adams was at the Hague, in 1782, they were in correspondence on political matters, and Mazzei seems to have been a prompt but too credulous reporter of the rumors of Courts.¶

\* His letters are dated at Colle, as early as 1776; Life of Patrick Henry, by Wm. Wirt Henry, I, 376; Sparks' Correspondence of the Revolution, II, 250; see Tucker's Life of Jefferson, I, 122, note. The place is still known by this name.

† Sparks' Correspondence of the Revolution, II, 250.

‡ Jefferson's Writings, Washington's Ed., III, 505.

§ Life and Works of John Adams, Vol. VII, p. 210.

|| *Memorie, &c.*, I, 457, 461.

¶ Life and Works of John Adams, Vol. VII, p. 608.



The interest which France took in our Revolutionary struggle was shown not less by her people than by her government. It became a favorite theme of her essayists and philosophers. Among the leading publications of French writers on American history and institutions, before the adoption of the Constitution of the United States, may be mentioned the Abbé Raynal's *Revolution de l'Amérique*, appearing in 1781; a volume by Michel René Hilliard d'Auberteuil on the same subject, coming a few months later; the Abbé de Mably's *Observations sur le Gouvernement et les Loix des États-Unis d'Amérique*, his last work, published in 1784, the year before his death; and a brief essay by Condorcet, on the "*Influence de la Revolution de l'Amérique sur l'Europe*,"\* addressed to LaFayette.

In the Summer of 1783, Mazzei returned to Virginia, and in the following Spring his accounts as a financial agent of the State were adjusted, and a proper compensation paid for his services in that capacity from January 8, 1779 to April 17, 1784.† He was in correspondence at this time with some men of distinction in France, among whom were the Duke de la Rochefoucauld and the Marquis de Condorcet.‡ His agricultural experiments had failed, and although he was a naturalized citizen of Virginia,§ he found little to attract him in the quiet life of a country home, where his only share in matters of a public character was that of one of the overseers of the poor of his parish, an office to which he was elected in 1784.¶

In June, 1785, he left America, never to return, and by midsummer was again enjoying the brilliant society of Paris.¶ But a few months had elapsed since de Mably's treatise came from the press.\*\* It seemed to him founded on an insufficient acquaintance with the facts of American history, and likely, from the reputation of the author, to mislead public opinion. The books of Raynal and d'Auberteuil which I have mentioned, he also deemed of little value, and he determined to write an account of the American systems of government which should

\* *Memorie, &c.*, II, appendix.

† *Ib.*, I, 437, 497.

¶ *Ib.*, I, 360.

\*\* *Recherches Hist. et Polit.*, I, xii.

† *Memorie*, I, 432, 507.

§ *Ib.*, I, 356.

¶ *Ib.*, I, 523.

give the results of personal observation and experience, upon the ground. He was strongly encouraged in this undertaking by de la Rochefoucauld and Condorcet, who declared that a good history was needed of the American Revolution and of the development of constitutional government in the United States.\*

The work was mainly composed at Roche-guyon, a chateau of the Duchesse d'Enville on the confines of Normandy. She was the mother of de la Rochefoucauld; and the Marquis and Marchioness de Condorcet were among her guests, at the same time.

Mazzei apparently had at hand a copy of Jefferson's Notes on Virginia, and another of Douglass' Historical Account of the British Settlements. For some of his facts he depended on letters from correspondents in England,† where he had lived for nine years before going to Virginia.

Mazzei wrote English but awkwardly,‡ and French not much better. He, therefore composed his book in Italian, and employed a parliamentary advocate, M. Faure, who was quite a linguist, to translate it into French. The translation satisfied everybody at the chateau except Madame de Condorcet, who after it was three-fourths done, urged her husband to make another with her assistance, and finally prevailed on him to put two chapters into French—those on the Order of the Cincinnati and the connection with it of Washington and Lafayette.§

Mazzei had an active mind, and nearly a quarter of his book was finished in four weeks from the time he began it.||

The first part was sent to the press in 1786. As it was being composed, however, the Confederation of the United States became daily weaker; the Annapolis Convention pronounced its doom; and the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 began its session. He delayed publication until he could incorporate in his work the text of the new Constitution, with notes by himself, and it was not until 1788 that the book was

\* *Memorie*, I, 528, 533, 535.

† *Ibid.*

‡ See his letter of June 26, 1776, to Patrick Henry, printed in Wm. Wirt Henry's *Life of the latter*, I, 376.

§ *Memorie*, I, 537, 538.

|| *Ib.* I. 535.

given to the public. It is entitled *Recherches historiques et politiques sur les États-Unis de l'Amérique Septentrionale, où l'on traite des établissemens des treize Colonies, de leurs rapports & de leurs dissensions avec le Grande-Bretagne, de leurs gouvernemens avant & après la revolution, &c., par un citoyen de Virginie, avec quatre Lettres d'un Bourgeois de New-Heaven sur l'unité de la législation.*

It was published in three volumes, and bears this imprint: "A Colle, et se trouve a Paris, Chez Froullé, libraire, quai des Augustins, au coin de la rue Pavée." No publisher's name appears on the title page, and I am inclined to think that the reference to Colle was a mere blind. With the world at large, it would indicate Colle in Italy. To those who knew the author, it might suggest Colle in Albemarle. The government censorship of the press still existed in France; and while a Paris bookseller might venture to assist in putting a foreign work of this kind on the market, he would hardly care to announce himself as its publisher, whether he were so in fact or not. It was deemed doubtful, in 1787, whether a translation of Adams' Defence of the American Constitutions would be permitted to appear from a French press, although the author was then the minister of the United States at the Court of St. James.\* The Parliament of Paris pronounced for the abolition of government censorship in December of that year; but it did not come until the National Assembly had begun its work of destruction.

Mazzei's volumes are somewhat carelessly arranged and the material was evidently prepared at different times, and hastily put together at last. This was the fashion of the day. The press, through the troubled hours that brought in the French Revolution, in the words of Lamartine in his History of the Girondists, "no longer produced books; it had not the time." It contented itself first with pamphlets, and then with broadsides and newspaper articles.

The work commences with an historical sketch of each of the old thirteen Colonies, and of the United States down to the last days of the old Confederation. Then follow the four

\* Life and Works of John Adams, IX, 552, Letter to Mazzei of June 12, 1787.

letters from a citizen of "New-Heaven." Next comes a lengthy refutation of some of the views of the Abbé de Mably, expressed in his *Observations sur le gouvernement et les lois des États-Unis d'Amérique*. Mazzei then criticises with considerable severity the Abbé Raynal's account of the United States in his *Histoire Philosophique des deux Indes*. A review of some of the leading features of the existing face of affairs in the United States concludes the work. In this connection he discusses our paper money, public debts, immigration, the Society of the Cincinnati, slavery and the Indian character. The notes are numerous, and constitute, perhaps, the best part of the work. One of them gives in full the essay on the Influence of the American Revolution on Europe, to which allusion has been made.\*

Mazzei writes throughout in the tone of a native Virginian. "Some say," he observes in one place, "that the great number of Europeans who have come to our country have corrupted us."† And again, in speaking of the Indians, he remarks that "our ancestors found the game of football in use among them."‡ Jefferson's Notes of Virginia, he declares, is the best book to give one any notion of what Virginia is. It was written by one of his fellow citizens, and, he adds, it treats of that State only: "in our country we speak only of what we know. The talent of making great books about countries one has never seen, we have not yet acquired."§

He had lived long enough in Virginia—filling even, as has been said, one of her local offices, as a parish overseer of the poor||—to have that kind of knowledge of American institutions and manners that only a long residence on the soil could furnish, and he is constantly illustrating his points by anecdotes and reminiscences of American life.

In speaking of the Indian character for instance, he says that in 1774 and 1775, some hostages of the Shawanee tribe were at Williamsburgh, and dined one day at the Governor's house. The author was one of the party, and noticed that one of the younger Indians, in helping himself from a dish, took half its contents upon his plate. "Wolf," the oldest of the tribe, who

\* Vol. III, p. 237.

† Vol. III, p. 41.

‡ Vol. III, p. 161.

§ Id. 215.

|| Id. 190.

was présent, immediately fixed so stern a look upon him, that the youth blushed and became much confused. After dinner Mazzei asked Wolf what his look meant, who responded briefly that his comrade should have counted the number of the guests.\*

Virginians, he declares, are too free with the bottle. A European traveller who had been some time in the country asked me one day, at table, he says, how much water cost. "When I replied that it cost only the trouble of going to the well, he observed that he had believed it must be the dearest of drinks, for he could never get a glass without the greatest difficulty, while those who wanted wine, cider, beer, grog, or toddy, were served at once."†

The misspelling of local names throughout the work, indicates either that they were known to the author only by the ear, or that he had prepared his manuscript for the translator by dictation to an amanuensis. Thus Warwick, is given Warwich; Roxbury, Rocksury; Wethersfield, Watersfield; Springfield, Sprinfield; New Haven, New-Heaven‡; New Hampshire, New Hamshire; Norfolk, Norfolck.

At the time when Mazzei wrote, eleven States had adopted the plan of dividing their legislature into two houses: two kept them together as a single chamber. He preferred, himself, the latter course.§

The Four Letters from the citizen of New Haven are professedly upon this subject,—unity of legislation, and in his prefatory address to the people of the United States he refers to them in these words:

"The interest which the cause of liberty inspires in the friends of mankind, has induced one of the greatest men of the age to trace the plan of legislation, which he regarded as the most proper to follow. This plan is contained in four letters which he has been kind enough to address to me, and which I have put by themselves towards the end of the first part, on account of the analogy of the subject. Though I am unable to bring myself to be quite of the opinion of this philosopher in regard to the right of suffrage and of representation, I think

\* Vol. III, p. 146.

† Id. 201.

‡ Vol. I, p. 45; III, 223.

§ Id. p. 201.



his letters present many profound views, of which great use may be made."\*

There were few men on this Continent in that day, whom an Italian, even if writing in the character of an American citizen, would have described, in a work addressed to foreign readers, as a "philosopher," ranking as "one of the greatest men of the age." Such a reference might fairly have been made to Franklin, Jefferson, or Thomas Paine; and, perhaps, to Rittenhouse, Adams, Jay or Hamilton; but except upon the principle of *omne ignotum pro magnifico*, it is hard to imagine why the reasons which made Mazzei conceal his own share in the work, and introduce his unknown philosopher as an American, did not also induce him to give his correspondent at least the range of the thirteen Colonies, instead of tying him down to a residence in an obscure city, in one of the smaller States, from which certainly none of the men came, who would most naturally be thought of as the probable or possible authors of the contribution.

New Haven, however, when Mazzei was collecting the materials for his work, had a certain prominence in the country as being the first city organized in New England. Its charter was granted in 1784, and, by making it a free port for seven years, gave promise of a rapid development of trade and population. Roger Sherman was then elected its Mayor, and the term of office being during the pleasure of the General Assembly, retained the position until his death, in 1793. He was well known to Jefferson, with whom he had served on the committee to prepare the Declaration of Independence, and who might naturally have discussed his character and political views with Mazzei.

New Haven was, also, as the seat of Yale College, in some sort a literary center. Sherman was by no means the only citizen of national reputation. President Stiles was widely known as an active and intelligent student of history and political institutions, and an enthusiast in his faith in the future of the United States. As early as 1774, while still a minister at Newport, he had said: "If oppression proceeds, despotism may force an annual Congress; and a public spirit of enter-



prise may originate an American *Magna Charta* and Bill of Rights, supported by such intrepid and persevering importunity as even sovereignty may hereafter judge it not wise to withstand. There will be a Runnymede in America."\*

Among the younger men of the city, who, in 1786, were beginning to take a leading part in public affairs, may be mentioned James Hillhouse, who had been for four years Treasurer of Yale College, and was to serve the State in Congress from 1790 to 1810, when he resigned his seat in the Senate to take charge of the Connecticut School Fund; Pierpont Edwards, a son of the great metaphysician, long the leading Democrat in the State, whom Jefferson made Judge of the District Court of the United States; and Jonathan Ingersoll, by whose powerful aid the Toleration party afterwards rose into power.

There was probably no place in the country from 1786 to 1788, of the size of New Haven, which could have furnished so many men capable of writing effectively on topics of constitutional government, and of treating them from so many different points of view. Dr. Stiles, during this period, was in correspondence with Jefferson at Paris,† and it is not improbable that Mazzei may have read some of their communications. Soon after his accession to the Presidency of Yale, the degree of Doctor of Laws had been conferred upon a distinguished Italian,‡ and it was his endeavor to keep himself and his College in touch with the scholars of all countries.

The term *bourgeois*, by which the author of the *Quatre Lettres* is described, is used, of course, not in any disparaging sense, but in its primary signification to denote the citizen of a city, in distinction from *citoyen*, the citizen of a State or nation.

The writer, at least, as regards the main part of the work, it now appears, was in fact the Marquis de Condorcet, and the letters are included in the collection of his works, published in 1847 by his son-in-law, Gen. O'Connor, and Arago, then Secretary of the French Academy (Vol. IX, p. 1).

\* Johnson's Yale in the Revolution, 7.

† Writings of Jefferson, Ford's Ed. IV, 250.

‡ Count Zavattarelli.

They purport by their title to treat of the inutility of dividing the legislative power between several bodies, but the hundred pages or more, over which they extend, are not wholly confined to the subject thus specified. Free trade is one of the author's cherished principles of legislation, and another is like freedom in matters of religion.\* Woman suffrage also receives his favorable consideration. "You admit, no doubt," he says, "the principle of the English that one can be legitimately subjected only to those taxes for which he or at least his representatives have voted; and it follows from this principle that every woman has a right to refuse to pay parliamentary taxes. I see no solid answer to this reasoning, at least as to widows or single women."† Nor does he stop here. "Women," he continues, "have a similar right to be eligible to public office. Physical constitution and condition may unfit them, during part of their life, at least, for certain occupations, but in other respects no difference can be pointed out between them and men, which is not the work of education. The woman of the future should be better educated." "But though we should admit that inequality of strength, whether of body or of mind, might still continue the same as now, it would only follow that women of the first order would be equal to men of the second, and superior to those of the third, and so on. It is agreed that they have every talent except that of invention. This is the opinion of Voltaire, one of the men who has been most just to them, and who has known them best. But to begin with, if we ought to admit to office only those men who are capable of invention, there would be plenty of vacancies, even in the academies."‡

Members of the legislature he would have elected for two years, and disqualified during that time from holding any other office. They should not be given a second term save by a three-fourths vote of the entire poll, nor a third without a four-fifths vote.§ As to the form of elections, he adds: "I will not repeat what the Marquis of Condorcet has said on this subject, in his work on the 'Probability of Decisions'; but he would seem to me to have demonstrated, what had been

\* Vol. I, p. 275.

† Id., p. 281.

‡ Vol. I, 284.

§ Vol. I, p. 289.

demonstrated before by another mathematician, the Chevalier de Borda, that the ordinary method proves unsatisfactory as to a plurality vote, whenever there are more than two persons to be elected, and the result is a tie."\* The author's remedy is to divide the State into small election districts, and allow any four electors to make nominations for representatives in the legislature. These are submitted to the consideration of the whole body of electors assembled together, on the day of election, and each man then votes for the ten nominees, out of whom he would prefer to choose. The twenty having the most votes, on these nomination papers, would then be the only candidates for election, and each elector would proceed to arrange their names on another ballot in the order of preference which seems to him best. If any one name stands first on a majority of ballots, he is to be declared elected; and the process goes on in those lines, in a manner somewhat complicated, except to a professed mathematician, to the end.

The legislative assembly, he says, should be so limited in its powers that it cannot establish any distinctions between citizens, lay a poll tax, make that criminal which is not contrary to natural right, nor hinder citizens from engaging in business, and buying and selling, according to their own pleasure; these being all matters pertaining to the fundamental rights of man.†

He advocates the single tax doctrine; putting all the expenses of the State upon land, in proportion to its net income.‡

The general plan of administration, which is proposed is, for a country of large territorial extent, a central legislature to act on national matters, and provincial assemblies to elect deputies to the former, and to guard against its encroachments on the rights of the citizen.§

Every fundamental law which is absolutely irrevocable is, he says, an evil.||

An unguarded expression occasionally occurs, which bespeaks the real rather than the assumed character of the writer. Thus, the second letter begins with the remark that it is much

\* Another reference to the same work is made in the fourth letter, p. 352.

† Vol. I, p. 326.

‡ Vol. I, p. 303.

§ Id., p. 323.

|| Id., p. 330.

safer to rely on a single legislative chamber for "destroying the abuses inseparable from all human institutions,"\* than on the ordinary method of multiplying depositaries of power, with the design of making one balance the other.

It will be seen that there is little in these letters that reflects the political ideas prevalent at the time, in any of our American States. It is very possible that to a Frenchman they might have seemed a natural outcome of the observations and experience of some Franklin of the New World; but no Connecticut man would ever have dreamed that they could have been written by one of his fellow citizens, even though he were the most ardent disciple of Jefferson and friend of democracy. Jefferson, indeed, was always in favor of the division of a legislature into two chambers,† and although in Paris when Mazzei's volumes appeared, does not think them worth mention in his correspondence, although frequently referring to the leading publications of the day, on legislation and government.

Least of all could these letters have proceeded from Roger Sherman. His views on many of the subjects of which they treat had been publicly expressed. As a member of the Convention which framed the Constitution of the United States, he had favored the bicameral system of legislation,‡ with annual rather than biennial elections for representatives in Congress,§ and disapproved making Senators ineligible to State offices.|| Almost the only point in which his sentiments agreed with those expressed in the *Quatre Lettres* was as to the use of intermediate electoral bodies. "The people, immediately," he said on the floor of the Convention of 1787, in discussing methods of choosing Senators, "should have as little to do as may be about the government—they want information, and are constantly liable to be misled."¶

It is true that at one time, during the sessions of the Convention of 1787, Sherman had argued that two branches were

\* *Id.*, p. 275.

† *Writings*: Washington's Ed., II, 586.

‡ *Madison's Journal of the Convention*, 78, 159, 205.

§ *Ibid.*, 216.

|| *Ibid.*, 223.

¶ *Ibid.*, 78.

unnecessary in the legislature of a federal government.\* But the four letters are discussing the true basis of a national, not a federal government, and there was nothing during the course of Sherman's long service in the upper house of the General Assembly of Connecticut (which ended only with his election to the bench, in 1785, a statutory disqualification) to indicate any dissatisfaction with its existence as a separate chamber.

The work of Condorcet on the Probability of Decisions referred to in one of the letters, is his *Application de l'analyse aux décisions rendues à la pluralité*, which had been published three years before. The commendation bestowed upon it is warmer than that which an author would be apt to give to one of his own productions; and while it may have been dictated by a desire to maintain the character of a third party, it seems more likely that the words are really those of another.

The key to the truth is probably given in a letter written by John Adams to President Madison, in 1817. In speaking of another book published under the name of Condorcet, he says it "was understood to be written in concert between him and his great patron the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, as well as the 'New Haven,' and several other publications in favor of a government in one centre,—genuine disciples of M. Turgot."†

The Duke de la Rochefoucauld, to whom this reference is made, was a member both of the Assembly of the Notables in 1788, and of the States General in 1789. In July, 1788, he wrote to Franklin, in reference to the constitution of the latter body, that the distinction of the "three orders is a great obstacle to the public good, and the Tiers État should be the only one."‡ A year later, he was one of the few nobles who united with the Third Estate, in constituting the National Assembly. There could have been no stronger proof of his fidelity to the principles asserted in the *Quatre Lettres*; but three years later the Jacobins made him one of the early victims of the Revolution.

\* On June 18th or 19th: Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, Vol. I, 604. Senator Hoar informs me that this is confirmed by a Ms. memorandum of Alexander Hamilton, in the archives of the Department of State.

† Life and Works of John Adams, Vol. X, p. 256.

‡ Bigelow's Works of Franklin, X, 4.



The Four Letters were written by Condorcet for a purpose, and that purpose can hardly have been anything else than to influence public opinion in France.

Turgot had labored for years to abridge class privileges, to advance the authority of the provincial parliaments, and to educate the people for something like free institutions. He had hoped to live to see the States General again convoked; but died seven years too soon. Condorcet was his disciple, and eulogist. Mazzei's book was published in the year when the States General was called together for the first time since 1614. The expediency of this measure had been the subject of general discussion for several years. The manner in which such a body should be made up, and should transact its business, was also a common topic of debate. De Brienne, archbishop of Toulouse, then the prime minister, in dismissing the Assembly of the Notables in May, 1787, referred to the subject with the remark that the King, in recognition of the rights of the people, would direct that the States General, whenever it met, should vote "not by orders, in separate houses, but by head"; and not long afterwards issued, by royal order, an invitation to all citizens of France to publish their views as to the basis on which that body should be constituted.

The edict for its convocation was registered in the Parliament of Paris on September 29th, 1788. Mazzei's book was then either in press, or already, according to its title page, on sale at the book store of Froullé, in the Latin Quarter.

Two great questions were before the French people,—How should the organization of the States General be effected? and What should be the future manner of the exercise of legislative power in the kingdom, in ordinary course?

Condorcet agreed with Franklin in the opinion that for ordinary purposes of legislation one chamber was sufficient; but he also thought that the historic character and weight of the States General would be lost, if they were to meet in any other way than by orders, each of the three sitting and deliberating by itself. Great concessions were to be made, if anything was to be accomplished, by the nobles and the clergy in favor of the people. If they were made freely, the gain



would probably be permanent. If, by following De Brienne's plan, they could be voted by the people for the people, they would be the fruit of a revolutionary procedure, and their continuance after the revolution had spent itself, would be, at least, doubtful.

But Condorcet was equally pronounced (and with entire consistency) in favor of maintaining and extending the ancient parliamentary system of France; and her parliaments had for centuries met as one assembly in a single chamber. In 1771, they had been suppressed. In 1779, their restoration had been commenced; and in 1787, they received from the crown greater powers of local government. A year later (May 5, 1788) had come the attempt of De Brienne to supplant them by resort to the *Lit de justice* and the establishment of the *Cour Plenière*.

The Four Letters expressed Condorcet's views in regard to the proper constitution of a legislative body, but do not touch on the peculiar circumstances of France, or the composition of the States General. Their effect, so far as they carried conviction, would naturally be in favor of the continuance of the plan of one chamber for all provincial parliaments or assemblies. The arguments which they presented came with an air of impartiality, for they appeared to emanate from a distant country, thinking only of its own welfare.

In the edition of Condorcet's works, published by O'Connor and Arago, they are followed immediately by two letters "*d'un citoyen des États-Unis à un Français sur les affaires présentes.*"\* These were written in 1788, after May 8th, and, the concluding part, after September 29th, when the decree for the convocation of the States General appeared.\* They deprecate any revolutionary violence except in the last resort, but insist that every citizen should have a right to participate on equal terms in the legislation of France, and that no such right can be said to exist if a nobleman or a priest has a greater share in it than "*un propriétaire du nombre de ceux que vous nommez roturiers.*"† This, however, it is argued, is a rule not to be applied in the case of the States General, since its representation of the three orders, separately, was too

\* Pages 95, 108, 122.

† Page 102.

firmly established by ancient usage to be suddenly broken in upon.\*

The assumption that the writer is an American, writing to a Frenchman, is maintained throughout, the time during which he has been in France being stated, in one place, as two years,† while in another he urges his citizenship in a republic as a reason for not suspecting his attachment to republican principles.‡

A third letter comes next in the volume, entitled "*Sentiments d'un Republicain sur les Assemblées Provinciales et les États Generaux.*" This asserts the importance of the provincial assemblies, expresses a fear lest the States General may have been called as a means of diminishing their authority, and defends the manner prescribed for the election of its members, as less unfavorable to the people than in any former instance, and one that should be accepted as a means toward getting something better, in the end."§

This letter refers to the two preceding ones, as having been published by the person to whom they were addressed, with the initials of his name, as those of the author. This, he says, has caused them to be attributed to five or six persons who have all denied their authorship, and declared that they would not have made anything quite so bad; but, nevertheless, he will maintain that his style, despite its foreign air, can hold its own by the side of the pamphlets of the day, and happily the people of his country write not for glory, but to speak the truth, where they think it will be of use.||

With the same care to avoid disclosing his identity, his essay on the Influence of the American Revolution on Europe is published in the *Recherches Historiques et Politiques*, as well as in his own works, as written "*par un habitant obscur de l'ancien hemisphere.*"¶

Condorcet was a prolific pamphleteer, during the years that brought in the French Revolution, but seldom under his own name. In 1789, he published three letters from a gentleman

\* Page 122. The rapid course of events soon drove him to opposite conclusions. See Condorcet's Memoirs and Correspondence on the French Revolution, I, 320, 334, and the biographical sketch by Arago, Oeuvres de Condorcet, III, 401, 413; IX, 333.

† Page 113.

‡ Page 123.

§ *Ib.*, p. 135.

|| *Ib.*, p. 143.

¶ VIII, 1.

to the members of the Third Estate, urging them to elect the best men as their representatives, without regard to whether they were of the nobility or of the common people.\*

The same year found him one of the original members of the "Chiamorono" club, founded to oppose the Jacobin club. Among those who were with him in this effort to fight fire with fire were de la Rochefoucauld, La Fayette, Talleyrand, Mirabeau, Sieyes and Mazzei.†

While Mazzei was in Paris in the Summer of 1788, he received an appointment as a secret agent of the King of Poland, to keep him informed of the course of political events.‡ His wife died about this time, from whom he had been estranged, and who was living with a sister in Italy.§ The matter is thus alluded to in a letter from Jefferson to Signor Bellini, written from Paris July 25, 1788:

"It is with sincere pleasure I congratulate you on the good fortune of our friend Mazzei, who is appointed here to correspond with the King of Poland. The particular character given him is not well defined, but the salary is, which is more important. It is eight thousand livres a year, which will enable him to live comfortably, while his duties will find him that occupation without which he cannot exist. Whilst this appointment places him at his ease, it affords him a hope of permanence only. It suspends, if not entirely prevents, the visit he had intended to his native country, and the return to his adoptive one, which the death of his wife has rendered possible. This last event has given him three-quarters of the globe elbow-room, which he had ceded to her, on condition she would leave him quiet in the fourth. Their partition of the next world will be more difficult, if it be divided only into two parts, according to the Protestant faith."||

After the issue of *assignats* by the National Assembly, Mazzei wrote a tract criticising the measure, addressed to the French people "by a citizen of the United States of America," the tone of which was so little relished by them that the street hawkers of political broadsides were afraid to sell it, and the booksellers refused to have it on their shelves, for fear of being mobbed or massacred.¶

\* *Ib.*, p. 215.

† Mazzei gives the complete list of the members, in his memoirs.

‡ Writings of Jefferson; Washington's Ed., II, 444; *Memorie della vita*, I, 543.

§ *Memorie*, I, 403, 458.

|| Writings of Jefferson, Wash. Ed., II, 440.

¶ *Memorie della vita*, II, 49.

Mazzei's name is remembered in American history, not by the anonymous and crude work which we have had under review, but by his unlucky connection with the estrangement between Washington and Jefferson, which took place soon after the latter entered on his term of office as Vice-President of the United States.

In 1793, Jefferson, in writing to Gallatin of the experimental vineyard at Colle in Albemarle, had alluded to its owner as "a Mr. Mazzie";\* but a few years later they seem to have renewed something of their old relations of intimacy, so far as correspondence could serve to reëstablish them.

In April, 1796, Mazzei was in Italy, and Jefferson sent him a friendly letter, in which he discussed the situation of American political affairs. It had changed wonderfully, he wrote,

"since you left us. In place of that noble love of liberty and republican government which carried us triumphantly through the war, an Anglican monarchical aristocratical party has sprung up, whose avowed object is to draw over us the substance, as they have already done the forms, of the British government. The main body of our citizens, however, remain true to their republican principles; the whole landed interest is republican, and so is a great mass of talents. Against us are the Executive, the Judiciary, two out of three branches of the legislature, all the officers of the government, all who want to be officers, all timid men who prefer the calm of despotism to the boisterous sea of liberty, British merchants, and Americans trading on British capitals, speculators and holders in the banks and public funds, a contrivance invented for the purpose of corruption, and for assimilating us in all things to the rotten as well as the sound parts of the British model."

Mazzei very imprudently published a translation of this letter in a Florence newspaper.† It was soon retranslated for the *Moniteur*,‡ and from Paris found its way back to the United States, in the Spring of 1797. Noah Webster translated it for the third time for the *Minerva* and *Herald* of New York, of both of which he was then the editor.§ He

\* Writings of Jefferson; Washington's Ed., III, 505.

† The word *forms* was given a different shade of meaning by the translation, which ran thus: "la sostanza del governo inglese, come ce ne hanno già terate le formalità." *Memorie*, II, 281.

‡ It appeared in the issue of "6 Pluviose, l'an 5 de la Republique," Jan. 15, 1797). Noah Webster's *Miscellaneous Papers*, 328.

§ *Ib.*, 327.

faithfully followed the French copy, and the letter appeared again in an English dress, not exactly such as it had worn when it first left Virginia, but with only one or two really important differences. It was a frank and severe criticism of the men and methods of the Federalist party. To say that the Executive was against the republican principles to which the main body of the citizens was attached, was to say that Washington was against them; for Washington, in 1796, was still in office. All the officers of the government were, indeed, arraigned as monarchists at heart. Jefferson's pen always ran rapidly. He had written in a confidential strain to an old friend, on the other side of the ocean, and with no thought that it would ever come under American eyes. Few public men, who have held great places, have ever been so unguarded in their correspondence as was Jefferson. He was a man of moods, and wrote as he happened to feel at the particular moment; always with spirit; often with extravagance of expression, if not of thought.

The "Mazzei letter" at once sharpened the issue between the Federalists and the Republicans. It burned the bridges behind the position in which Jefferson found himself. Perhaps no single political document had more to do with the consolidation of the opposition to the party in power, and the change of administration which came in with the century.

After Jefferson attained the Presidency, Mazzei sought to renew their correspondence, but his advances were not very warmly received. The President wrote\* that he had found himself obliged to be careful as to what letters he wrote. They often miscarried, were opened by unfriendly hands, and a bad use was made of them.

The Polish engagement, which Mazzei made in 1788, proved a turning point in his life. It led to his becoming a Privy Councillor to the King of Poland, and after Poland was absorbed into Russia, he was able to retire on a Russian pension to end his days in his native land, where, a year before his death, which occurred at the age of eighty-five, he wrote the autobiographical sketch from which have been derived many of the facts stated in this paper.

\* In 1804.







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