To the People of the United States.

O. Friends and Fellow-Citizens,

The period for a new election of a citizen, to administer the executive government of the United States, being not far distant, and the time actually arrived, when your thoughts must be employed in designating the person, who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those, out of whom a choice is to be made.

I beg you, at the same time, to do me the justice to be assured, that this resolution has not been taken, without a strict regard to all the considerations pertaining to the relation, which binds a dutiful citizen to his country; and that, in withdrawing the tender of service, which silence in my situation might imply, I am influenced by no diminution of zeal for your future interest; no deficiency of grateful prospect for your past kindness; but am supported by a full conviction that the step is compatible with both.

The acceptance of, and continuance hitherto in the office to which your suffrages have twice called me, have been a uniform sacrifice of inclination to the opinion of duty, and to a deference for what appeared to be your desire. I constantly hoped, that it would have been much earlier in my power, consistently with motives, which I was not at liberty to disregard, to return
to that retirement, from which I had been reluctantly drawn. The strength of my inclination to do this, previous to the last election, had even led to the preparation of an address to declare it to you; but mature reflection on the then perplexed and critical posture of our affairs with foreign nations, and the unanimous advice of persons entitled to my confidence, impelled me to abandon the idea.

I rejoice, that the state of your concerns, external as well as internal, no longer renders the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty or propriety; and am persuaded whatever partiality may be retained for my services that in the present circumstances of our Country, you will not disapprove my determination to retire.

The impressions with which I first undertook the arduous trust, were explained on the proper occasion. In the discharge of this trust, I will only say, that I have with good intentions, contributed towards the organization and administration of the government, the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was capable. Not unconscious in the outset, of the inferiority of my qualifications, experience in my own eyes, perhaps still more, in the eyes of others, has strengthened the motives to diffidence of myself; and every day the increasing weight of years admonishes me more and more, that the shade of retirement is as necessary to me as it will be welcome. Satisfied, that if any circumstances have given peculiar value to my services, they
they were temporary, I have the consolation to believe, that while choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, patriotism does not forbid it.

In looking forward to the moment, which is intended to terminate the career of my public life, my feelings do not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgment of that debt of gratitude which I owe to my beloved Country, for the many honours it has conferred upon me; still more for the steadfast confidence with which it has supported me; and for the opportunities I have thence enjoyed of manifesting my inviolable attachment, by services faithful and persevering, though in usefulness unequal to my zeal. If benefits have resulted to our Country from these services, let it always be remembered to your praise, and as an instructive example in our annals, that under circumstances in which the passions, agitated in every direction, were liable to mislead, amidst appearances sometimes dubious, vicissitudes of fortune often discouraging, in situations in which not unfrequently want of success has countenanced the spirit of criticism, the constancy of your support was the essential prop of the efforts, and a guarantee of the plans by which they were effected. Profoundly penetrated with this idea, I shall carry it with me to my grave, as a strong incitement to unceasing pangs that Heaven may continue to you the choicest tokens of its beneficence, that your union and brotherly affection may be perpetual, and the free Constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained, that its administration in every department may be
stamped with wisdom and virtue— that, in fine, the happiness of the people, of these states, under the auspices of Liberty, may be made complete, by so careful a preservation and so prudent a use of this blessing, as will acquire to them the glory of recommending it to the applause, the approbation, and adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it.

Here, perhaps, I ought to stop. But a solicitude for your welfare, which cannot end, but with my life, and the apprehension of danger, natural to that solicitude, urge me on an occasion like the present, to offer to your solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments, which are the result of much reflection, of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all-important to the permanency of your felicity as a people. These will be offered to you with the more freedom, as you can only see in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias his Council. Nor can I forget, as an encouragement to it, your indulgent reception of my sentiments on a former and not dissimilar occasion.

Interwoven as is the love of Liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment.

The unity of Government which constitutes you one people, is also now dear

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to you. It is justly so; for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquility at home, your peace abroad; of your safety, of your prosperity, of that very Liberty which you so highly prize. But as it is easy to foresee, that from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth; as this is the point in your political defences against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (though often covertly and insidiously) directed, it is of infinite moment, that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national Union, to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual and immovable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the Palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can be any point be abandoned; and indignantly pronouncing upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to infringe the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

For this you have every inducement of sympathy and interest. Citizens by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of American, which belongs to you, in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of Patriotism, more than any appellation
appallations derived from local discriminations. —
With slight shades of difference, you have the same
religion, manners, habits, and political principles.
You have in a common cause fought and triumphed
together; the Independence and Liberty you
prosper, are the work of joint councils, joint
efforts, of common dangers, sufferings & successes.

But these considerations, however powerful
fully they address themselves to your sensibility,
are greatly outweighed by those which apply more
immediately to your interest. — Here every portion
of our Country finds the most commanding motives
for carefully guarding and preserving the Union
of the whole.

The North, in an uninterrupted intercourse with the South, protected by the equal laws
of a common Government, finds in the productions of
the latter, great additional resources of maritime and
commercial enterprise and precious materials of
manufacturing industry. — The South, in the same
intercourse, benefiting by the Agency of the North,
sees its agriculture grow and its commerce expand.
Turning partly into its own channels, the Streams
of the North, it finds its particular navigation invigo-
rated; — and while it contributes, in different ways,
to nourish and increase the general mass of the
national navigation, it looks forward to the protection
of a maritime strength, to which itself is uniquely
adapted. — The Coast, in a like intercourse with the
West, already finds, and in the progressive improvement
of interior communications, by land and water, will
more and more find a valuable part for the commodities which it brings from abroad, or manufactures at home. The West derives from the East supplies requisite to its growth and comfort—and what is perhaps of still greater consequence, it must of necessity owe the secure enjoyment of indispensable outlets for its own productions to the weight, influence, and the future maritime strength of the Atlantic side of the Union, devoted by an indissoluble community of interest as one nation. Any other tenure by which the West can hold this essential advantage, whether derived from its own separate strength, or from an apostolate and unnatural connection with any foreign power, must be intrinsically precarious.

While then every part of our country thus feels an immediate and particular interest in union, all the parts combined cannot fail to find in the united masses of means and efforts greater strength, greater resource, proportionally greater security from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their peace by foreign nations; and what is of incalculable value! They must derive from union an exemption from those broils and wars between themselves, which so frequently afflict neighbouring countries, not tied together by the same Government; which their own rivalships alone would be sufficient to produce, but which opposite foreign alliances, attachments and intrigues would stimulate and embitter. Hence likewise they will avoid the necessity of those overgrown military establishments, which under any form of government are insidious to Liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to Republican Liberty; in this sense it is, that your union ought to be considered
considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that
the love of the one ought to induce to you the preserv-
oration of the other.

These considerations speak a persuasive language to every reflecting and virtuous mind,
and exhibit the continuance of the union as a primary
object of Patriotic desire. Is there a doubt whether
a common government can embrace so large a sphere?
Let experience solve it. To listen to mere speculation
in such case were criminal. We are authorised to
hope that a proper organization of the whole, with the
auxiliary agency of governments for the respective sub-
divisions, will afford a happy issue to the experiments.
This is worth a fair and fall experiment, both such
powerful and obvious motives to union, affecting all
parts of our country, while experience shall not
have demonstrated its impracticability. There will
always be reason to distrust the patriotism of those,
who in any quarter may endeavour to weaken its bands.

In contemplating the causes which may
disturb our Union, it occurs as matter of serious
concern, that any ground should have been furnished
for characterising parties by geographical discrimi-
nations—Northern and Southern—Atlantic and
Western; hence designing men may endeavour to
excite a belief that there is a real difference of local
Interests and views. One of the expedients of party to
acquire influence, within particular districts, is to
disseminate the opinions and aims of other districts.
You cannot shield yourselves too much against
the jealousies and head burnings which spring from
these
These misrepresentations: they tend to under alienate each other, those who ought to be bound together by paternal affection. The inhabitants of our western country have lately had a useful lesson on this head: they have seen, in the negotiation by the Executive, and in the unanimous ratification by the Senate, of the Treaty with Spain, and in the universal satisfaction at the event throughout the United States, a decisive proof how unfounded were the suspicions propagated among them of a policy in the general government and in the Atlantic States unfriendly to their interests in regard to the Mississippi; they have been participators in the formation of two treaties that with great Britain and that with Spain, which secure to them every thing they could desire, in respect to our foreign relations, towards confirming their prosperity. Will it not be their wisdom to rely for the preservation of these advantages on the Union by which they were procured? Will they not henceforth be deaf to those advisers, if such there are, who would sever them from their brethren and connect them with aliens?

To the efficiency and permanency of your union a Government for the whole is indispensible. No alliances however strict, between the parts can be an adequate substitute; they must inevitably experience the infactions and interruptions which all alliances in all times have experienced. Sensible of this momentous truth, you have improved upon your first essay, by the adoption of a constitution of Government better calculated than your former for an intimate union, and for the efficacious management of your common concerns. This Government, the offspring of our own choice, uninfuenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in
its principles, in the distribution of its powers, uniting security with energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true Liberty. The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their Constitutions of Government—But the Constitution which at any time exists, is changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish Government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established Government.

All obstructions to the execution of the Laws, all combinations and associations, under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or evade the regular deliberation and action of the constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle, and of fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction, to give it an artificial and extraordinary force to put in the place of the delegated will of the nation, the will of party, often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community; and according to the alternate triumphs of different parties to make the public administration the mirror of the ill concerted and inconstant projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common councils, and modified by mutual interests.
Moreover combinations or associations of the above description may now and then answer popular ends. They are likely in the course of time and things to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people, and to use for themselves the puns of government; destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.

Towards the preservation of your government, and the permanency of your present happy state, it is requisite, not only that you steadily discountenance irregular oppositions to its acknowledged authority, but also that you resist with care the spirit of innovation upon its principles however specious the pretences. One method of assault may be to effect, in the forms of the constitution, alterations which will impair the energy of the system, and thus to undermine what cannot be directly overthrown. In all the changes to which you may be invited, remember that time and habit are at least as necessary to fix the true character of governments, as of other human institutions—that experience is the surest standard, by which to test the real tendency of the existing constitution of a country—that facility in changes upon the credit of mere hypothesis and opinion, exposes to perpetual change, from the endless variety of hypothesis and opinion; and remember, especially, that for the efficient management of your common interests, in a country so extensive as ours, a government of as much vigour as is consistent with the perfect security of liberty, is indispensable. Liberty itself will find in such
of a government with powers properly distributed and adjusted to the trust of guardians. It is, indeed, little else than a name, where the government is too feeble to withstand the enterprises of faction to confine each member of the society within the limits prescribed by the laws, and to maintain all in the secure and tranquil enjoyment of the rights of person and property.

I have already intimated to you, the danger of parties in the state, with particular reference to the founding them on geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party, generally.

This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. It exists under different shapes in all governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or suppressed; but in those of the popular form, it is seen in its greatest rankness and is truly their worst enemy.

The alternate dominion of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result, gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns
turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of Public Liberty.

Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely ought of sight) the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of faction are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise People to discourage and restrain it.

It serves always to distract the public councils and embitter the Public Administration. It agitates the community with ill founded jealousies and false alarms; stirs up the animosity of one part against another, foments occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which finds a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and the will of one country are subjected to the policy and will of another.

There is an opinion, that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the Government, and serve to keep alive the spirit of Liberty. This within certain limits is probably true; and in Governments of a Monarchical cast, patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in Governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose. And there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be, by force of public opinion, to mitigate and abate it. If it be not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest, instead of swelling it should consume...
It is important likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free country, should inspire caution, in those entrusted with its administration, to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power, and tendency to abuse it, which predominates in the human heart— is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power; by dividing and distributing it into different depositories, and constituting each the guardian of the public welfare, against invasions by the others, has been thought by wise ancients and moderns, some of them in our country, and some of our own age. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If, in the opinion of the People, the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for then is that, in one instance, maybe the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance in permanent evil any partial or transient benefit which the use can at any time yield.

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that
man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labour to
subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these joined
groups of the duties of Men and Citizens. — The mere Politic-
cian, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cher-
ish them. — A volume could not trace all their connections
with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where
is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the
sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the
instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us
with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can
be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conced-
et to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar
structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that
national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious prin-
ciple.

This substantially true, that virtue or mo-
rality is a necessary spring of popular government. The pulse
indeed pulsates with more or less force to every species of
free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can
look with indifference upon attempts to shake the founda-
tion of the fabric?

Promote, then, as an object of primary
importance, institutions for the general diffusion of know-
ledge. — In proportion as the structure of a government
yields force to public opinion, it is essential that public
opinion should be enlightened.

As a very important source of strength
and security cherish public credit. One method of preserv-
ing it is to use it as sparingly as possible; avoiding occasions
of expense by cultivating peace, but remembering also that
timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently
prevent.
prevent much greater disbursements to repel it; avoid ing likewise the accumulation of debt, not only by shun ning occasions of expense, but by vigorous actions in time of peace to discharge the debts which unavoid able wars may have occasioned, not ungenerously throw ing upon posterity the burden which we ourselves ought to bear. — The execution of these maxims belongs to your representatives, but it is necessary that public opinion should cooperate. To facilitate to them the performance of their duty, it is essential that you should practically bear in mind, that towards the payment of debts there must be Revenue; that to have Revenue there must be taxes; that no taxes can be devised which are not more or less inconvenient and unpleasant; that the principle of finance, inestimable from the selection of the proper objects (which is always a choice of difficulties) ought to be a decisive motive for a cautious construction of the conduct of the government in making it, and for a spirit of acquiescence in the measures for obtaining Revenue which the public exigencies may at any time dictate.

Observe good faith and justice towards all Nations, cultivate peace and harmony with all, Reli gion and Morality enjoy this conduct; and can it be that good policy does not equally enjoy it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and, at no distant period, a great Nation, to give to mankind the magnani mous and too model example of a people always guided by an unshakable justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that in the course of time, things the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantage which might be lost by a steady adherence to it? can it be,
that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature. Alas! is it rendered impossible by its price?

For the execution of such a plan, nothing is more essential than that permanent, inviolate antipathies against particular Nations, and passionate attachments for others should be excluded; and that in place of them just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated. The Nation, which indulges towards another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity, or its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it away from its duty to its interest. Antipathy in one nation against another disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intolerable, when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur. Hence frequent collisions, obstinate, unenamored, and bloody contests. The Nation, prompted by ill-will and resentment, sometimes inspits toward the Government contrary to the best calculations of policy. The Government sometimes participates in the national propensity and adopts through passion what reason would reject; at other times, it makes the animosity of the nation subservient to projects of hostility, instigated by pride, ambition and other sinister and pernicious motives. The peace, often, sometimes perhaps the liberty, of Nations has been the victim.

So likewise, a passionate attachment of one Nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favourite Nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary
imaginary common interest, in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter, without adequate inducement or justification. It leads also to conclusions to the favorite Nation of privileges denied to others, which is oft doubted to injure the Nation, making the Concessions, by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained; and by exciting jealousy, ill will, and a disposition to retaliate, in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld. And it gives to ambitious, corrupt, or deluded Citizens (who devote themselves to the favorite Nation's facility to betray, or sacrifice the interests of their own Country, without esteem), sometimes even without popularity; gaining with the appearances of a pious sense of obligation a commendable reliance on public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition, corruption, or subserviency.

As avenues to foreign influence in innumerable ways, such attachments are particularly alarming to the truly enlightened and independent Patriot. How many opportunities do they afford to lawyers, wheeler-dealers, to practice the arts of seduction? In moulding public opinion, to influence or awe the Public Counsellor? Such an attachment of a small or weak, towards a great and powerful Nation, dooms the former to be the Satellite of the latter.

Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence I conjure you to believe me, fellow-Citizens, the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake; since
Since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most dangerous foes of Republican Government. But that jealousy to be useful must be impartial; else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defence against it. Exclusive partiality for one foreign nation, and excessive dislike of another, cause them whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and move to evil and even seduce the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots, who may wish the indigence of the favourite, are liable to become suspicious and cautious, while its tools and dupes enjoy the applause and confidence of the people to surrender their interests.

The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign Nations, is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith.—Here let us stop.

Europe has a set of primary interests, which less have none, or a very remote relation. Since she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be our chief interest to intimate ourselves by artificial ties, in the ordinary preliminaries of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships, or enmities.

Our detached and intelligent situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain one people, under an efficient government, the period is not far off when we may avert material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality, we may at any time procure upon, to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent Nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard.
hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel.

Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, interest, humour or caprice?

Is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world, so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronising implicitly to existing engagements. Shield the mariño less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy. In fact it, therefore, let these engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But in any opinion, it is unnecessary and would be unwise to extend them.

Taking care always to keep ourselves by suitable establishments, on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.

Harmony, liberal intercourse, with all nations are recommended by policy, humanity and interest. But even our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand; neither seeking nor granting exclusive favours or preferences; consulting the natural course of things, establishing, with how much disposed, in order to give trade a stable course, to define the rights of our Merchants, and to
to enable the government to support them; conventional rules of intercourse, the best that present circumstances and mutual opinion will permit, but temporary, and liable to be, from time to time, abandoned or varied, as experience and circumstances shall dictate; constantly keeping in view, that it is folly, in one nation to look for disinterested favours from another; that it must pay with a portion of its independence for whatever it may accept under that character; that by such acceptance, it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favours, and yet of being reproached with ingratitude for not giving more. There can be no greater error than to expect, or calculate upon real favours from nation to nation. This an illusion, which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard.

In offering to you, my Countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression I could wish; that they will control the usual current of the passions, or prevent our nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the destiny of nations: But if I may even flatter myself, that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good; that they may now and then succeed in moderating the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigues, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism; this hope will be a full compensation for the solicitude for your welfare, by which they have been dictated.

How far, in the discharge of my official duties, I have been guided by the principles which have been
been delineated the public records and other evi
dences of my conduct must witness to you and to the world.
To myself the assurance of my own conscience is, that
I have at least believed myself to be guided by them.

In relation to the still subsisting war
in Europe, my proclamation of the 22d of April
1773 is the index to my plan. Sanctioned by your
approving voice and by that of your Representatives
in both Houses of Congress, the spirit of that measure
has continually governed me; uninfluenced by any
attempts to distract or divert me from it.

After deliberate examination, with the
aid of the best lights I could obtain, I was well satisfied that our country, under all the circumstances
of the case, had a right to take, and was bound in
duty and interest, to take a neutral position.

Having taken it, I determined, as far as should
depend upon me, to maintain it, with moderation,
perseverance and firmness.

The considerations which respect the
right to hold this conduct, it is not necessary on
this occasion to detail. I will only observe, that
according to my understanding of the matter, that
right, so far from being denied by any of the Belligerent Powers, has been actually admitted by all.

The duty of holding a neutral conduct
may be inferred, without any thing more, from the
obligation which justice and humanity impose on
every nation, in cases in which it is free to act,
to maintain inviolate the relations of peace and
amenity towards other nations.
The inducements of interest for observing that conduct will best be referred to your own reflections and experience. With me, a predominant motive has been to endeavour to gain time to our country to settle its yet recent institutions, and to progress without interruption to that degree of strength and consistency which is necessary to give it, Humanity speaking, the command of its own fortunés.

Though in reviewing the incidents of my administration, I am conscious of intentional error, I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also rely on his kindness in this as in other things, and actuated by that fervent love towards it, which is so natural to a man who feels in it the native soul of himself and his progenitors for several generations; I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat in which I promise myself to realize, without alloy, the sweet enjoyment of partaking in the midst of my fellow citizens, the benign influence of good laws under a free government— the ever favourite object of my heart, and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual cares, labours and dangers.

United States,

17th September, 1796.

G. Washington.