

undeniable object—the object of contributing my feeble efforts towards allaying the effervescence, the turbulence, the animosity that pervade the community, and are pregnant with such alarming consequences.

Of the time that has elapsed since its first appearance, I have availed myself, to amplify—to methodise—and to improve it. And although I am very far indeed from presuming it to be perfect, yet I hope it will be found more entitled to patronage than it was in its original dishabille.

It embraces a very convulsed period of our history; and has been written under no common disadvantages. I have labored under a deficiency of various materials and documents, which no exertions have enabled me to procure—and it has been begun, carried on, and completed in moments constantly subject to those interruptions inevitable in the pressure of business. To suppose, then, it were perfect, would argue a degree of insanity which the fondest and most doting delirium of paternal vanity could hardly palliate. It would be a case unparalleled in the annals of literature. The world has had numerous instances of men of most splendid talents—of laborious research—with abundant materials and documents—enjoying full leisure to do justice to their subjects—and employing years for the purpose—yet falling into egregious errors. It could not then be expected that a work embracing such a variety of objects, and written under the circumstances I have stated should be free from them. But the reader may rest assured that whatever they may be, they have not resulted from design. They are the offspring of slenderness of talents—deficiency of materials—inadvertence—or that bias to which all men are subject in a greater or less degree, when treating on subjects wherein they feel deeply interested: of the latter, however, I have labored to divest myself.

Had I written with any view to literary reputation, the work would have made a totally different appearance. Instead of presenting the reader with so many documents verbatim, I should, as is usual, have given abstracts of them in my own words—and thus formed a regular connected narrative of events, far more agreeable to read than the work in its present form, and rather easier to write; for the reader may rest assured, that I have written three pages in less time than I employed in the search for a single document, which does not occupy one, and whereof I could readily give an analysis; and long, laborious researches for a document or newspaper paragraph or essay, have not unfrequently been wholly in vain.

But though a thirst for literary reputation is far from illaudable—and though it inspires to great exertions, and has been the honored parent of some of the most stupendous efforts of the human mind—it has not had the slightest influence on me in this case. It would have been utterly unavailing to counteract the loathing, the abhorrence I felt for entering into political discussion or for making myself once more an object of newspaper assault, of which few men in private life have been honored with a greater share.

No. I appeal to heaven for the truth of what I now declare. I soared to higher objects far beyond such narrow views. I believed—I still believe—that a dissolution of the union is contemplated by a few ambitious and wicked men; that in the state of excitement to which the public mind is raised, and which is hourly increasing by the most profligate disregard of truth and the welfare of the country—and by the utmost prostitution of talents—a mere trifle would suffice to produce a convulsion—(as, when you have collected together a quantity of highly combustible materials, a single spark suffices to produce a conflagration)—that a dissolution of the union would infallibly produce a civil war; that in the event of a civil war, there would be a struggle throughout the country for the ascendancy, wherein would be perpetrated atrocities similar to those which disgraced the French revolution; that even if we should be so fortunate as to escape a civil war, or, (if we should not,) after its termination, and the establishment of separate confederacies, the country would be cursed with a constant border war, fomented by the nations of Europe, to whom we should be a sport and a prey; and that, in one word, a nation most highly favored by heaven is on the very verge of perdition.