

ed, against abuse, the opposition to it was carried to as great an excess, and it excited as much horror and indignation, as if it had wholly destroyed the liberty of the press, and "*left not a trace behind.*" And in this senseless and disgraceful clamour, were engaged vast numbers of the best and most intelligent men of the community. The Alien and Sedition Laws were made the subject of an elegant, but violent and inflammatory report, agreed to by the legislature of Virginia, as respectable and enlightened a deliberative body as any in the United States, or perhaps in the world. But they were bitten by the mad dog of faction in common with so large a portion of their fellow citizens, and were seized with the prevalent disorder. They regarded the two obnoxious laws, as inroads upon public liberty, that required to be repelled with the utmost firmness.

It would be uncandid not to state, that the trials under this act, for libels against the president, and, as far as my recollection serves me, against some of the other public functionaries, were managed with very considerable rigour; and from the abuse of the law, tended to give an appearance of propriety and justice to the clamour against it. The cases of Thomas Cooper and Matthew Lyon, Esqrs. who were both treated with remarkable severity, excited a high degree of sympathy in the public mind. I have strong doubts, whether under all the circumstances, a jury could be found in London to pronounce a verdict of "guilty" against either of them. Of the two cases, it may be justly said—*summum jus, summa injuria*. But the censure did not attach to the law. It lay at the door of the juries.

I have little to say respecting the alien law. It was liable to strong objections. It invested the president with powers that might be much abused. But it certainly never warranted the awful outcry that was raised against it. To enable the reader, however, to form his own opinion—and, if mine be erroneous, to reject it altogether, I annex the most obnoxious clause of the act.