

## THOMAS JEFFERSON

by L. Carroll Judson

When the Great Ruler of the universe resolved to set his people free from Egyptian bondage, he raised up able and mighty men, to effect his glorious purposes. These he endowed with wisdom to plan, and energy to execute his noble designs. There is a most striking similarity between the history of the Israelites, bursting the chains of slavery riveted upon them by Pharaoh; and that of the American colonies, in disenthraling themselves, by the aid of Heaven, from the oppressions of the British king. Like Moses, Washington led his countrymen through the wilderness of the revolution, and planted them, when the journey was terminated, upon the promised land of freedom and independence. Like Moses, he placed his trust in the God of Hosts, and like him, he was aided and sustained by a band of sages and heroes, unrivalled in the history of the world.

In the front of this band stood THOMAS JEFFERSON, who was born at Shadwell, Albemarle county, Virginia, on the 24th of April, 1743. His ancestors were highly respectable, and among the early emigrants to the Old Dominion. They were true republicans, in affluent circumstances, and exercised an influence that radiated to a considerable extent. Thomas was the son of Peter Jefferson, a man much esteemed in public and private life. The feelings imbibed from him by this son, were conspicuous at an early age, and decidedly of a liberal character. From his childhood, the mind of Thomas Jefferson assumed a high elevation, and took a broad and expansive view of men and things. He was educated at the college of William and Mary, at Williamsburg; and was always found at the head of his class. For assiduity and untiring industry in the exploration of the fields of science, he had no superior. He analyzed every subject that came under his investigation, closely and carefully; passing through the opening avenues of literature with an astonishing celerity. His mind became enraptured with the history of classic Greece and republican Rome, and, in early youth, his political opinions appear to have been distinctly formed, and opposed to every kind of government, tinctured with a shade of monarchy or aristocracy.

After having completed his collegiate course, he commenced the<sup>14</sup> study of law under chancellor Wythe, whose liberal views were well calculated to strengthen and mature those already preponderating in the mind of Jefferson. With regard to the oppressions of the mother country, and the justice and necessity of resistance by the colonies, their kindred bosoms were in unison. By a thorough investigation of the science of law and government, Jefferson soon became prepared to enter upon the great theatre of public action, and into the service of his injured country. Planting himself upon the broad basis of Magna Charta, encircling himself within the pale of the British constitution, he demonstrated most clearly, that the ministry of the crown had long been advancing, with rapid strides, beyond the bounds of their legitimate authority, by exercising a tyrannical power over the American colonies, not delegated to them by the monarchy they corruptly represented. So conclusive and luminous were his expositions of chartered rights on the one hand, and of accumulating wrongs on the other, that he soon became the nucleus of a band of patriots, resolved on deeds of noble daring—on liberty or death.

At the age of twenty-two, he was elected to the provincial legislature, and commissioned a justice of the peace, which gave him an opportunity of disseminating his liberal principles to a considerable extent. He proclaimed himself the unyielding advocate of equal rights, and had engraved upon his watch seal as his motto, “Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God.”

By his eloquence and unanswerable reasoning, he soon kindled the flame of opposition in old Virginia, which increased as tyranny advanced; and, in 1769, assumed the shape of a resolution, offered and advocated by Mr. Jefferson in the legislature, not to import a single article from Great Britain. The

boldness and firmness with which he maintained his position, astonished the adherents of the crown, and gave a fresh impetus to the glorious cause then in embryo. With ample pecuniary means, with talents unsurpassed, his soul illumined with the fire of patriotism, his indignation roused against the hirelings of the king, his sympathies excited by the sufferings of his country, Mr. Jefferson was well calculated to become one of the master spirits of the revolution; one of the giant champions of universal freedom; a pillar of fire in the cause of liberty, flashing terror and dismay into the ranks of his enemies.

The plan of organizing committees of correspondence throughout the colonies, was devised by him in the early part of 1773, and proved eminently useful in producing unity of sentiment and concert of action among the patriots. About that time, he wrote and published "A Summary View of the Rights of British America," which also set forth the wrongs inflicted upon his countrymen, in bold and glowing colours. This he addressed to the king in respectful, but plain and impressive language, in the following eloquent strain. "Open your breast, Sire, to liberal and expanded thought. It behooves you to think and act for your people. The great principles of right and wrong are legible to every reader: to peruse them, needs not the aid of many counsellors. The whole art of government consists in the art of being honest," etc.

So exasperated was Lord Duninore on perusing this article, that he threatened to arrest its author for high treason. Written and published during the session of the legislature of which Mr. Jefferson was an influential member, and finding that resolutions had been passed by the representatives, quite as treasonable in their character as the publication in question, his lordship immediately dissolved the farther action of that body.

The following year, the British ministry, in answer to petitions for redress of grievances, sent to the assembly of the Old Dominion, a series of propositions that they termed conciliatory, but which, in truth, added insult to injury. Their hypocrisy and fallacy were unmasked and exposed by Mr. Jefferson, in a masterly strain of eloquent and withering logic and sarcasm, that carried conviction to a large majority of his colleagues. They were referred to a committee, which reported an answer, drawn by the author of the declaration of independence, similar, in its main features, to that much admired document, which was immediately adopted. The ball of resistance was put in motion, the electric fluid of patriotism commenced its insulating powers in the north and in the south; and, extending from sire to son, from heart to heart, the two streams met in the centre, and rising in grandeur, formed the beautiful and luminous arch of FREEDOM, with its chord extending from Maine to Georgia, its versed sine resting upon the city of Penn. Under its zenith, at the city of Philadelphia, the continental congress convened, in which Thomas Jefferson took his seat on the 21st of June, 1775. Although one of the youngest members of that venerated assemblage of sages and patriots, he was hailed as one of its main pillars. Known as a man of superior intelligence, of liberal sentiments, of strict integrity, of stern republicanism, and of unbending patriotism, his influence was strongly felt and judiciously exercised. From the beginning, he advocated a separation from the mother country, and met, at the threshold, every argument that was urged against it. He considered that allegiance to the crown had been dissolved by oppression, and the original contract cancelled by American blood. Submission was no longer a virtue; the measure of wrongs was filled and overflowing; public sentiment demanded the dissolution of the gordian knot; and a voice from heaven proclaimed, "let my people go."

The following year, the declaration of independence was proposed, and Mr. Jefferson appointed chairman of the committee to draft a form. He was requested, by his colleagues, to prepare the important document. He performed the task with a boldness of design, and beauty of execution, before unknown and yet unrivalled. The result of his labour is before the world. Admiring nations have united in applauding the declaration of our rights, penned by Jefferson, and sanctioned by the continental congress on the 4th of July, 1776. As a master piece of composition, as a clear and lucid exposition of

the rights of man, the principles of free government, the sufferings of an oppressed people, the abuses of a corrupt ministry, and the effects of monarchy upon the destinies of man, it stands unequalled. Pure in its origin, graphic in its delineations, noble in its features, glorious in its career, benign in its influence, and salutary in its results, it has become the chart of patriots throughout the civilized world. It is the *ne plus ultra* of a gigantic mind, elevated to a lofty eminence by the finest touches of Creative Power; displaying its boldest efforts, its brightest conceptions, its holiest zeal, its purest desires, and its happiest conclusions. It combines the attributes of justice, the flowers of eloquence, the force of logic, and the soul of wisdom. It is the grand palladium of equal RIGHTS, the polar star of rational LIBERTY, the Magna Charta of universal FREEDOM, and has crowned the name of its author with laurels of immortal fame.

A Nothing beyond—the utmost point.

In the autumn of 1776, Mr. Jefferson, in conjunction with Dr. Franklin and Dr. Deane, was appointed a commissioner to the court of France, for the purpose of forming a treaty of alliance. Ill health of himself and family, and an urgent necessity for his services in his native state, induced him to decline the proffered honour, and also to resign his seat in congress.

He was immediately elected a member of the first legislature of Virginia convened under its new constitution, and was looked upon as one of the main bulwarks of her future safety. After taking his seat in that body, his first business was, to demolish the superstructure of the judicial code, that had been reared, either by, or under the supervision of the British parliament. Although sustained and aided by able and willing colleagues, the great work of revision fell most heavily upon him. The first bill he introduced was aimed at the slave trade, and prohibited the farther importation of negroes into Virginia. This act alone is a triumphant confutation of the accusation often reiterated against Mr. Jefferson, that he was an advocate of slavery. To its principles he was always opposed, and submitted to it practically only by entail. That he struck the first blow at the unhallowed trade of importing human beings for the purpose of consigning them to bondage, is a fact beyond dispute. That this was the first grand step towards a correction of the most cruel features of the traffic, will not be denied. To transfer those born in America, from one state to another, bears no comparison to the heart-rending barbarity of dragging the African from his native home.

He next introduced and effected the passage of bills destroying entails, the rights of primogeniture, the church as established by the English law; and also various others, calculated to assimilate the entire system of jurisprudence in the state, to its new and republican form of government; amounting, in all, to one hundred and twenty-six, most of which were passed, and form the present much admired statutory code of Virginia.

In 1779, he was called to the gubernatorial chair of the Old Dominion, surrounded by dangers and perils on every side. The British troops, headed by the proud Tarleton and the traitor Arnold, were spreading death and destruction over the state, and contemplated the capture of Jefferson, to cap the climax of their triumphant victories. Terror and dismay were depicted on the faces of the more timid patriots, whilst many of the bolder spirits were much alarmed at the approach of these merciless foes. But the energy and vigilance of the governor were found equal to every emergency. He rallied the bone and sinew of old Virginia, who “with hearts of oak and nerves of steel,” checked the enemy in their bold career of indiscriminate slaughter. He imparted confidence and vigour to the desponding, and roused them to bold and noble action. He dispersed the dark and gloomy clouds that hung over his bleeding state, and inspired the friends of liberty with fresh and cheering hopes of ultimate success. So highly were his services appreciated during the eventful period of his administration, that the members of the legislature entered upon their records an unanimous vote of thanks to him, for the able and efficient manner he had performed his public duties, expressing their high opinion of his superior talents, strict rectitude, and stern integrity.

In 1783, Thomas Jefferson again took his seat in congress, and became one of its brightest ornaments. The chaste and moving address from that body to Washington, when he surrendered his commission, was from the soul-stirring pen of Jefferson. He was chairman of the committee appointed to form a plan of territorial government for the extensive regions of the then "far west." True to his favourite principle of finally emancipating the sable African, he introduced a clause prohibiting slavery after the year 1800, in any of the territories, or states that should be formed from them.

In May, 1784, Mr. Jefferson was appointed a minister plenipotentiary, to aid Messrs. Adams and Franklin, in the important duties of negotiating treaties of commerce with several European nations. He embarked in July following for France, and arrived there on the 6th of August. During his stay he visited several of the foreign courts, but spent the largest portion of his time in Paris. He commanded the highest respect and esteem wherever he went. He was made a welcome guest in the halls of literature, legislation, and jurisprudence. He was received with marked distinction by courtiers and kings, and effected much towards the promotion of the commercial interests of the infant Republic he so ably represented.

He was at Paris when the French revolution commenced, and was often consulted by the leading members of the national convention, relative to the best course to be pursued, in order to establish their government upon the firm basis of republicanism. So far as was consistent with his situation, he gave his opinion freely in favour of rational liberty.

On the 23d of November, 1789, he returned to his native land, and was received with great enthusiasm and affection by his fellow citizens. Soon after his arrival, he was induced to resign his commission as minister to France, and accept the responsible situation of Secretary of State under President Washington. The appointment showed the sagacity of the chief magistrate, and proved a lasting blessing to our country. Familiar with every principle of government; comprehending, at one bold view, the requisites necessary to perfect and perpetuate the new confederation, he was enabled to propose amendments to the constitution that were subsequently adopted, with some suggested by others; and to do much to beautify and reduce to harmonious system, the new order of things. Well versed in the usages of diplomacy, international law, and the policy of European courts, he was prepared to plant the permanent landmarks of foreign intercourse that have guided our nation to the present time in safety, and raised her to a degree of greatness before unknown, in so short a period. A reciprocity of commerce and honourable peace with foreigners, and a rigid neutrality with belligerents, carefully avoiding ambiguous or entangling alliances, were some of his leading principles. To submit to nothing that was clearly wrong, and to ask for nothing but what was unquestionably right, was a doctrine of Jefferson, forcibly inculcated in his able correspondence with the French ministers, during the brief period of their republic. The motto is still nailed to the flag staff of the star spangled banner, and is handed down from sire to son in its native purity.

To the domestic concerns of his country he devoted a laborious and laudable attention. He insisted upon the adoption of a uniform system of currency and of weights and measures, and suggested many other improvements, predicated upon plain and enlightened premises, and all designed to advance the best interests of the American system. He pointed to the importance of securing and protecting fisheries, and of encouraging enterprise in all the branches of industry. He demonstrated the advantages of every species of commerce, and the necessity of preventing others from monopolizing such sources as legitimately belonged to the United States. He showed, in a masterly exposition of existing facts, the increasing policy of European courts, in restricting the intercourse of America, and their evident designs of engrossing trade. He submitted to congress an able and elaborate report, showing great foresight, close observation, and deep investigation, relative to the privileges and restrictions of the commercial intercourse of this with other countries. It received great attention, was a subject of long and animated discussion in congress, and became the foundation of a series of resolutions introduced

by Mr. Madison, embracing the doctrines it contained, and forming the great line of demarcation between the old school federal and republican parties.

Having served his country long and faithfully, and having contributed largely in placing her on the high road of prosperity and freedom, Mr. Jefferson retired from public life on the 31st of December, 1793, and, for a season, enjoyed the more substantial comforts of the domestic circle at Monticello. He took especial care to impart comfort to all around him, and treated his slaves in the kindest manner, thus reducing to practice the mode of treatment towards them he had so often alluded to in theory. The education of his children, the cultivation and improvement of his estate, and the resumption of scientific research, gave to him an exhilarating consolation he had long desired, and which is never found in the arena of public business and political bustle.

His manner of life at the period alluded to, is happily described by the Duke de Liancourt, a distinguished French gentleman who visited him at Monticello, and who wrote a narrative of his tour in the United States.

“His conversation is of the most agreeable kind, and he possesses a stock of information, not inferior to any other man. In Europe, he would hold a distinguished rank among men of letters, and as such he has already appeared there. At present he is employed with activity and perseverance in the management of his farms and buildings, and he orders, directs, and pursues, in the minutest detail, every branch of business relating to them. I found him in the midst of harvest, from which the scorching heat of the sun does not prevent his attendance. His negroes are nourished, clothed, and treated as well as white servants could be. Every article is made on his farm; his negroes being cabinet makers, carpenters, and masons. The children he employs in a nail manufactory, and the young and old negresses spin for the clothing of the rest. He animates them all by rewards and distinctions. In fine, his superior mind directs the management of his domestic concerns, with the same ability, activity, and regularity, which he evinced in the conduct of public affairs, and which he is calculated to display in every situation of life.”

During his recess from the toils of public life, Mr. Jefferson was unanimously elected president of the American Philosophical Society, a circumstance that was highly gratifying to him. It afforded him much pleasure to occupy the chair that had been long and ably filled by his revered friends, the illustrious Franklin and the philosophic Rittenhouse. He proved himself, in every way, worthy of the honour conferred. After a repose of three years, Mr. Jefferson was again called upon by his fellow citizens to mount the theatre of public action. President Washington had proclaimed his determination to retire to the peaceful shades of Mount Vernon, and leave the presidential chair to a new incumbent. The people had become divided politically, and each party determined to nominate a candidate for the high and responsible station about to become vacant. Mr. Jefferson was selected by the democrats, and Mr. Adams by the federalists. The election resulted in the choice of Mr. Adams for President, and of Mr. Jefferson for Vice President. As the presiding officer of the Senate, he discharged his duty with dignity and impartiality. Familiar with parliamentary rules, he was uniformly prepared to decide such questions as came before him, promptly, and generally to the satisfaction of the members.

At the next presidential election, he was again a candidate in opposition to Mr. Adams. The mountain waves of party spirit rolled over the United States like a mighty torrent. Each party presented a bold front regardless of danger, pressed on by a rear rushing to conflict. The political campaign terminated in favour of the democrats, who returned an equal number of votes for Mr. Jefferson as President, and Aaron Burr as Vice President. This singular circumstance imposed the election of the chief magistrate upon the House of Representatives. To defeat the election of the great leader of the popular party, some of his opponents voted for Mr. Burr. A most spirited contest ensued, and thirty-five ineffectual ballotings were made. The ambition of the latter gentleman for promotion, at last so much subsided, as to induce him to withdraw from a farther contest with the man of the people's choice; and, on the thirty-sixth ballot, Mr. Jefferson was duly elected President, and Mr. Burr Vice President; the former by

a majority of eight votes.

The following extract from his inaugural address will show with what sentiments he entered upon the performance of his arduous duties.

“Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations; entangling alliances with none; the support of the state governments in all their rights, as the most competent administrations for our domestic concerns, and the surest bulwarks against anti-republican tendencies; the preservation of the general government in its whole constitutional vigour, as the sheet anchor of our peace at home and safety abroad; a zealous care of the right of election by the people, a mild and safe corrective of abuses which are lopped by the sword of revolution where peaceable remedies are unprovided; absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority, the vital principles of republics, from which there is no appeal but to force, the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism; a well disciplined militia our best reliance in peace, and for the first moments of war till regulars may relieve them; the supremacy of the civil over the military authority; economy in the public expense, that labour may be lightly burthened; the honest payment of our debts and sacred preservation of the public faith; encouragement of agriculture and of commerce as its handmaid; the diffusion of information and arraignment of all abuses at the bar of public reason; freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and freedom of the person under the protection of the habeas corpus; and trial by juries impartially selected. These principles form the bright constellation which has gone before us, and guided our steps through an age of revolution and reformation. The wisdom of our sages and blood of our heroes have been devoted to their attainment. They should be the creed of our political faith, the text of civic instruction, the touchstone by which to try the service of those we trust, and should we wander from them in moments of error or of alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty, and safety.”

Here is a statesman’s chart, drawn by one of the ablest navigators that ever stood at the helm of government. His soundings were frequent; his observations were made with mathematical exactness; he combined experience with science, and traced his lines with boldness and precision. To follow its directions is to ensure safety.

Based upon these principles, practically carried out, the administration of Jefferson became popular, peaceful, and prosperous. He knew the reasonable desires of the people, and exerted his noblest energies to provide for them. He knew that the art of governing harmoniously, consisted in an enlightened honesty, and acted accordingly. He anticipated the future wants of the rising and expanding republic over which he presided, and proposed, in his annual and special messages to congress, wise and politic measures to meet them. So satisfactory was his course to his fellow citizens, that he was re-elected to a second term, by a majority of one hundred and forty-eight.

His inaugural address, on that occasion, enforced the same principles contained in his first, and manifested a deep and growing interest in the welfare and prosperity of his country. As his belief in a Supreme Power has been questioned by some, the following extract, containing the same sentiment found in all his writings where this subject is alluded to, may correct those who are labouring under an error on this important point. Hear him, after invoking the aid of congress in the affairs of the nation: “I shall need, too, the favour of that Being in whose hands we are, who led our forefathers, as Israel of old, from their native land, and planted them in a country flowing with all the necessaries of life; who has covered our infancy with his providence, and our riper years with his wisdom and power.”

If all who profess the religion of the cross, discarded sectarianism and honoured unsophisticated practical piety as much as did Thomas Jefferson, the prospect of christianizing the world would soon burst upon us with refulgent brightness. The partition walls of various creeds, drawn from the same pure fountain, and coloured by fancy and construction, would be dissolved by heaven-

born charity, and the superstructure of the Redeemer's kingdom would rise from their mouldering ruins in majesty sublime.

Soon after Mr. Jefferson entered upon the duties of his second term, a portentous storm darkened the horizon of his country, charged with the forked lightning of discord. In consequence of being disappointed in obtaining the presidential chair amidst the confusion he created when Mr. Jefferson was first elected, and superseded by Mr. Clinton as vice president at the expiration of four years, Aaron Burr mounted upon the whirlwind of his wild ambition, and attempted the formation of a new republic in the Spanish provinces on the Mississippi; apparently aiming at an ultimate division, if not dissolution of the United States. Although he was acquitted, after being tried for high treason, owing to his deep cunning in not committing the overt acts necessary to convict, yet the dark stigma of a traitor is marked upon the splendour of his brilliant talents, in traces so deep, that time, nor angels' tears, can never remove it. Like a comet, propelled by its own centrifugal force from its constitutional orbit, he fell to rise no more, and our country was preserved from his Catiline grasp.

About the same time, France and Great Britain were at war, both of which, and more especially the latter, had repeatedly insulted the American flag under various but unwarranted pretences. Redress was promptly demanded, and measures pursued to obtain it. Anxious to preserve the peace of his country, but determined to vindicate her rights and maintain her dignity, Mr. Jefferson, whilst he prosecuted a vigorous negotiation for the arrangement of a friendly intercourse and the adjustment of existing differences, prepared for the final alternative of war. He knew well the importance to England of the importing and exporting trade, and as a means of bringing her to honourable terms, recommended to congress the embargo law, which was passed on the 22nd of December, 1807. This measure was violently assailed by the opponents of the administration. It, however, had a salutary effect upon the British government, and caused a relinquishment of the most odious features of the assumptions of power that had been set up, followed by more conciliatory propositions on the part of England, for a final settlement of all difficulties and wrongs. Thus situated were the foreign relations of the United States when the second term of Mr. Jefferson expired, at which time he bid a final farewell to public life, and left the destinies of his beloved country in other hands. He had been an efficient and faithful labourer in the vineyard of American liberty for nearly forty years; he left it richly covered with foliage and fruit; in the full bloom of its vigour and health; enclosed by the palisades of honesty and truth; and adorned with the crowning glory of patriotism and philanthropy.

On the 3d of March, 1809, Thomas Jefferson surrendered the responsibilities of chief magistrate, ceased to be the active statesman, withdrew from the political arena, and again became a private citizen, surrounded by the halo of his country's gratitude, consoled by the approbation of a pure conscience, and cheered by the plaudits of admiring millions.

From that time forward, he declined all public honours, and remained in peaceful retirement till the day of his death, seldom leaving his favourite Monticello. But he did not enter upon a life of inglorious ease. The same innate activity that had marked his brilliant career from his youth, the same nobleness of mind and energy of character that had raised him to the loftiest pinnacle fame could rear, still prompted him to action. He immediately reduced his time to a harmonious arrangement, and his whole business to the most perfect system. He uniformly rose before the sun, and held a supervision over all the concerns of his plantation. The various publications from his pen, during the period of his retirement, show that he laboured arduously in the fields of science and philosophy. For the promotion of literature and general intelligence he opened an extensive correspondence with men of letters, in this country and in Europe. He considered the diffusion of knowledge, among the great mass of the human family, the greatest safeguard against tyranny and oppression, the purest source of earthly bliss, and the surest passport to freedom and happiness.

Acting from this impulse, he submitted the plan of a University to the legislature of Virginia, to be

erected at Charlottesville, a town situated at the foot of the mountain that reared its romantic scenery in front of his mansion. It was to be built with funds raised by donations from individuals and from the state, himself to be a liberal contributor. The plan of the buildings, the course of instruction, the mode of discipline, the duties and accountabilities of the officers and instructors, were all devised and drawn by Mr. Jefferson, and were so much admired and approved by the members of that legislative body, that they passed an act authorizing its adoption, and appointed its author Rector, to carry the design into effect. Upon the completion of that object he then devoted all necessary time, and more money than strict prudence called for. It became the doating object of his old age, and his strongest efforts were exerted in its accomplishment. These were crowned with success, and he had the happiness to live and see the University completed and filled with students. The course of instruction was designed to prepare the scholars for the general routine of business, both public and private, without being strictly classical. The library was selected by him with great judgment and care, and was confined to what may be termed useful books, treating upon subjects necessary to be understood by every citizen, to prepare him to discharge properly the duties he owes to himself, his family, his country, and his God. A catalogue, written by the hand of Jefferson, is still there, and carefully preserved. He exercised a parental care over this institution as long as his physical powers would permit; and was often seen viewing it with an exquisite pleasure and an honest pride. Much of his time was devoted to visitors, to whom his hospitality was liberally and kindly extended. Thousands of his own countrymen paid their grateful respects to him, and Europeans of distinction thought their tour in the United States incomplete, until they took by the hand the PATRIOT, the SAGE, the PHILOSOPHER, and the PHILANTHROPIST of Monticello. To delight, to instruct, and to please, he was peculiarly calculated. He was familiar with every subject; his mind united the vigour of youth with the experience of age; the strength of a giant with the innocence of a babe. The broad expanse of the universe, the stupendous works of nature, the Pierian fields of science, the deep recesses of philosophy, and the labyrinthian avenues of the intellect of man, seemed spread before him like a map of the world. He was an encyclopedia of the age he adorned, a lexicon of the times he enlightened, and one of the brightest diadems in the crown of his country's glory.

With calm dignity and peaceful quietude, Mr. Jefferson glided down the stream of time towards the ocean of eternity, until he reached the eighty-fourth year of his age. Forty-four years had rolled over his head, since his amiable companion, the daughter of Mr. Wayles, an eminent lawyer of Virginia, had slumbered beneath the clods of the valley. One of two interesting daughters, the only children he ever had, was also resting in the silent grave. The charms of earth began to fade before him, and he felt sensibly that he was fast approaching the confines of another and a better world. The physical powers and mechanical structure of his frame were fast decaying; the canker worm of disease was doing its final work; and the angel of death stood over him with a keen blade, awaiting Jehovah's signal to cut the thread of life, and set the prisoner free. Early in the spring of 1826, his bodily infirmities increased, and from the 26th of June to the time of his decease, he was confined to his bed. He then remarked to his physician, "my machine is worn out and can go no longer." His friends who attended him, flattered themselves that he would again recover, but he was convinced that his voyage of life was about to close, and that he would soon cast his anchor in the haven of rest. To those around him he said, "do not imagine that I feel the smallest solicitude as to the result. I do not indeed wish to die, but I do not fear to die." To his last moments, he manifested a peculiar anxiety for the future prosperity of the university which he had founded, regarding it as the youngest child of his old age. Assured that it would receive the fostering care of the state, he could say, now Lord, dismiss me. On the 2nd day of July, his body became extremely weak, but his mental powers remained as clear as a crystal fountain. He called his family and friends around him, and, with a cheerful countenance and calm dignity gave directions for his funeral obsequies. He requested that he might be interred at Monticello, without pomp or show, and that the inscription upon his tomb should only refer to him as "The author of the

Declaration of Independence, of the Statutes of Virginia securing religious freedom, and as the father of the University.” He then conversed separately with each of his family: to his surviving daughter, Mrs. Randolph, he presented a small morocco case, which he requested her not to open until after his death, and when opened, was found to contain a beautiful and affectionate poetic tribute to her virtues.

The next day, being told it was the 3d of July, he expressed a desire that he might be permitted to inhale the atmosphere of the 50th anniversary of our national freedom. His prayer was granted, the glorious 4th of July, 1826, dawned upon him, he took an affectionate leave of those around him, and then raising his eyes upward, articulated distinctly, “I resign myself to God, and my child to my country,” and expired as calmly as an infant sleeps in its mother’s arms, without a murmur or a sigh. Thus lived and thus died THOMAS JEFFERSON, universally esteemed in life, and deeply mourned in death by a nation of freemen; deeply lamented by every patriot in the civilized world.

In person, he was slender and erect, six feet two inches in height; light and intelligent eyes; noble and open countenance; fair complexion; yellowish-red hair, and commanding in his whole appearance. In all the relations of public and private life, he was a model of human talent and rigid integrity, rarely equalled and never surpassed. His whole career was calm and dignified. Under all circumstances his coolness, deliberation, and equanimity of mind, placed him on a lofty eminence, and enabled him to preserve a perfect equilibrium, amidst all the changing vicissitudes and multiform ills that flesh is heir to. He kept his passions under complete control, and cultivated richly the refined qualities of his nature. His philanthropy was as broad as the human family; his sympathies were co-extensive with the afflictions of Adam’s race. He was born to be useful; he nobly fulfilled the design of his creation.

Source:

Judson, L. Carroll. “Thomas Jefferson”. *A Biography of the Singers of the Declaration of Independence, and of Washington and Patrick Henry*. Philadelphia: J. Dobson, and Thomas, Cowperthwait & Co. 1893. 13 – 24. Electronic.