

ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

WASHINGTON LIGHT INFANTRY,

AT THEIR REQUEST,

IN THE

R. C. CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. FINNBAR,

IN THE CITY OF CHARLESTON,

ON THE 22ND OF FEBRUARY, 1838.

BEING THE

THIRTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMPANY.

BY THE RIGHT REV. JOHN ENGLAND, D. D.
BISHOP OF CHARLESTON;
AN HONORARY MEMBER OF THE COMPANY.

CHARLESTON:
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CHARLESTON, MARCH 5, 1838.

Right Reverend Sir,—

We have been appointed a Committee of the Washington Light Infantry to return you the thanks of the Company for your very interesting and eloquent Oration, delivered before them on the 22nd February last, and to request of you a copy of the same for publication.

You will permit us, Right Reverend Sir, to express the hope, that you will consent to put in a more permanent and accessible shape, a Discourse, which independently of all its other excellencies, is particularly calculated to exercise a happy influence over the minds of our young men, by directing their attention to the principles and influences which tended to form the early character of Washington, and to train him up for the distinguished part he was afterwards to perform in the great drama of human affairs.

We have the honor to be,
Most respectfully,
Your obt. servants,

WM. D. PORTER,
JOHN C. WAKKER, Jr.
THOS. J. HORSEY.

Rt. Rev. Bishop ENGLAND.

CHARLESTON, MARCH 6, 1838.

Gentlemen,—

I have just received your note of yesterday's date, expressing the thanks of the Washington Light Infantry, for the Discourse which I had the honor of delivering before them on the occasion of their Anniversary; and requesting a copy for publication.

I feel highly gratified, that the topics have met the approbation of young gentlemen, for whom I have such high esteem.

It is now a good number of years since I have written and delivered a discourse. I almost always, for the last twenty years, have spoken without committing what I speak to writing. I have however, on the present occasion, substantially embodied what I intended to say, and what I have written expresses sufficiently what I have delivered.

Such as it is, gentlemen, that writing is at your disposition. Should you think it worth publication, I shall consent, but with the expression of my regret, that I could not make a nearer approach to exhibiting the excellence of the father of our country.

I am gentlemen, with great esteem and high respect,
Your obedient servant,
† JOHN, Bishop of Charleston.

Messrs. PORTER,
WALKER, } Committee.
HORSEY, }



ORATION.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS:—

THAT it is useful to lay aside particular days for the celebration of great events, is sustained not only by the usage of all nations, but by the advantages resulting from that usage. Each succeeding week is, by divine institution, marked by a day made holy; man is thus reminded of his duties to his Creator; he thereon withdraws from the bustle of worldly occupation, he devotes himself to the contemplation of his eternal destiny, he seeks to discover the means whereby he may secure his lasting happiness; for this purpose, he revises his conduct, endeavours to correct his faults, to make progress in virtue, to partake of the benefits of religious observance. He also by the observance of the day, gives encouragement to his companions, and trains up those who depend upon him, and who are to succeed him, in an acquaintance with the great principles which are to direct their practice, so as to perpetuate the service of God, and to secure the salvation of himself and of others.

That great Being from whom the precept for this observance emanated, was well acquainted with our nature; because he formed us, and was able to regulate and to direct the work of his own hands. The law was enacted to preserve in our memory a recollection of our duty, to enforce its obligation on the understanding, to excite the will to resolve upon its performance, and to interweave an attachment for it with our dearest affections. But though the religious homage of God, be our first duty, it is not our only obligation. Not only is man destined to be an inhabitant of Heaven, but he is also doomed to sojourn for a while upon the earth; during that period assigned for his pilgrimage here, he is surrounded by many cares, and subject to several wants, for which he not only is bound to provide, but in exerting himself for which purpose, he may lawfully seek, especially for those who depend upon him, or with whom he is connected, such a measure of enjoyment and happiness, as will gratify him and them, without endangering that more glorious inheritance, to which we all aspire.

In his relation to transitory things, man is liable to more immediate, more vivid and more lasting impressions from those things which affect him directly and personally, than from those which regard him but generally as a member of society, and indirectly through that circumstance; just as he is more wrought upon by sensible objects and present enjoyments, than by the invisible things of a future world, and by the remote prospects of happiness or of misery. Yet it frequently happens in society, as in religion, that our true welfare depends infinitely more upon what is least calculated to attract our immediate attention, or to excite our first or our warmest interest. And upon the same principle that the Lord instituted his holy day, to correct this evil as regards religion; so is it useful to have certain days set apart, to correct the mistakes of human selfishness, and to convince the individuals that their own respective advantages will be better secured by labouring together as members of society to promote the general welfare. Hence, civil and political festivals, judiciously regulated, are of great advantage to the state at large, and consequently to the individuals who compose the body politic.

That same character of our nation, to which I have alluded, also shews, that the bulk of mankind are necessarily more affected by those objects that strike their senses, than by any abstract meditations. Man is not a merely spiritual being; he sees through the eye, he hears through the ear, he tastes by the palate, and so of the other organs of sense. They are the usual channels through which his soul is informed, impressed or excited, and therefore, by a common usage of our race, on those festive occasions, there are exhibitions to the eye, information by addresses or excitement by music, for the ear, the indulgence of the feast, and other devices of enjoyment; and all are calculated by a proper and judicious distribution to produce the happiest effect upon the mind, though like every other good, they may be abused, and may thereby occasion the most deplorable results.

The mind also, is much more easily and securely instructed by the contemplation of striking events properly displayed before it, than by any abstruse reasoning or speculative disquisition. In this contemplation, objects are easily grasped by the senses or apprehended by the imagination, and retained by the memory. Hence, festivals are not, whether in religious or civil society, the mere contemplation of abstract principles, but the commemoration of events, in which principles are practically and beneficially exhibited.

Man is easily and powerfully wrought upon by the exam-

ple of his fellows. We would derive little, if any, benefit from attempting a philosophical enquiry into the cause; it is enough that we know the fact; and hence the public good is greatly promoted, by holding forth to the world the bright examples of the benefactors of mankind, not only are salutary emulation and a virtuous ambition thereby created, but the vain excuses of timidity or sloth, when they plead the existence of insuperable difficulties and the impossibility of success, are at once triumphantly answered, by shewing what men like ourselves have achieved; and the noblest human motives to exertion are furnished, by shewing the benefits which one man may procure for millions; and whilst the deeds of our honored brother are recounted, we feel an energy for whose origin we cannot indeed account, but whose effects are powerful and may be highly beneficial. Thus has the roll of Fame been inscribed in every age and in every nation, with the names of the wise, of the good, of the learned, of the brave, of the holy, of the devoted, of the laborious, of the benevolent, and of the just.—Temples have been erected, cities have been named, monuments have been raised, games have been instituted, festivals celebrated, and a variety of other modes devised, to hold forth their example, and to perpetuate their renown. But in the whole multitude, I find few, who in respect to the peculiar end for which he appears to have been fitted by Providence, stands so honorably conspicuous; not one whose example can be so beneficially held forth as a lesson and a model to the citizens of our republics, as OUR OWN WASHINGTON. And I undertake the task, which you have so kindly assigned me, with high gratification indeed, for the honor you have conferred upon one whom you have long since thought proper to enrol upon the respectable list of honorary members of your corps, but with a diffidence which is as unfeigned as it is unusual; because the undertaking in which I have engaged is quite new to me, and the theme is as difficult as the subject is elevated.

Though I cannot attempt to delineate the character of the father of our country, I shall endeavour to sketch an imperfect outline, and my deficiency will require all your indulgence.

The date of his birth is well known, 22nd of February, 1732; and that his family was one of repute for a considerable period previous to the departure of his ancestors from England, as his relatives and connexions were subsequently amongst the most respectable in Virginia.

I am far from attributing merit to birth, but I am by no means inclined to deny the general influence of station and

society upon the education, the sentiments and the conduct of individuals. Several of the greatest men that have conferred benefit upon the human family, have steadily risen from the humble position, into which they have been cast by the obscurity of their origin; and we have numberless instances of the degrading vices, the mischievous pranks, the criminal courses, and the base and unprincipled tyranny, of not only individual members, but of entire progenies of the aristocracy. Unfortunately also, it is but too true, that instances of the former description are far more rare than of the latter. This however, does not interfere with the position that I would lay down; which is; that the civilized habits, the polite manners, the more extended information, which are generally found in some classes; the necessity under which their station places them of giving to their children the best education, and the facilities which they have of procuring it; as well as the conviction of the child, that it is only by sustaining himself in his place, by having the manners, the conduct and the information, which are expected to be found therein, that he can escape degradation and contempt, form an union of powerful aids and incentives to improvement. We need not therefore, distribute mankind into classes of different blood and unlike nature, in order to arrive at the conclusion, that the circumstance of birth is in many instances favorable to the improvement of the individuals; and so far from being injurious to our republican principles of the equality of citizens, and tending to degrade a large portion of the community; I can consider it, only as giving more merit to the individuals, who with less favorable auspices have, by the power of intellect, the adherence to principle and the application of industry, outstripped those who had greater original advantages. I consider the mischievous concession to aristocracy, to consist in attaching peculiar privileges to those born in a particular family; but not in the admission, that from the peculiarity of their position they have greater opportunities of improvement.

George Washington was thus at his earliest moments placed in the most favorable position that the circumstances of the colony would allow, for the best education that could be obtained from an intercourse with those whose minds were cultivated, whose principles were established, and whose habits were formed by a good stock of knowledge, by industrious pursuits and honorable occupation. The schools then existing, afforded indeed, but little scope for great progress in science. At the period of his father's death in 1743, he could read, write, and solve a considerable number of arithmetical questions; and very few schools at that time in

the Southern country carried education to a higher grade. The character of the mother is generally supposed, and I believe not inconsiderately, to have from nature even more than from the force of teaching or of example, a powerful influence upon the character of the son. As far as we can learn, Washington was again fortunate in this respect. This widow had been a Miss Ball, and was the second wife of Mr. Augustine Washington, who, at the time of his death, placed in her a well deserved confidence of managing a large property, chiefly acquired by his own industry, and of superintending the education of her children, of whom George was the eldest. She continued to keep him at school, and to enable him to acquire such information as could there be afforded him.

At this early period he had obtained over the minds of his companions that moral ascendancy, which through life he was enabled by the very same principles, more fully developed and more extensively applied, to gain over his fellow citizens and to preserve to the termination of his life. His love of discipline caused him to be placed at the head of their little military organizations; his probity and judgment secured to his awards, as arbiter in their differences, a ready and a willing execution. His exercises were such as fitted him for activity and vigilance, and his love for mathematics, and attention to forms of business, shewed a fondness for order, a patience of toil, a desire of improvement and a steadiness of purpose not often found in a youth of only fourteen years of age.

His eldest brother, Lawrence, the first son of Mr. Washington's first wife, was at this period a respectable officer in the British forces; he had served under General Wentworth and Admiral Vernon, at the siege of Carthage, and he had acquired with them some influence by his correct and gentlemanly conduct. Lawrence was greatly attached to his brother George; and believing from what he had seen of his capacity and habits, that he would easily win his way to distinction in the British navy; procured for him, through these friends, a midshipman's warrant, in the year 1746. George, pleased with the appointment, was preparing to enter into a service that, if once taken up by him, would probably have materially interfered with the progress, if not the issue of a revolution, which amongst the many that have shaken the nations within the last century, stands alike distinguished for the justice of its grounds, the moderation of its proceedings, the wisdom of its process, and the success of its results. A mother's au-

thoritative request was the mode through which this difficulty was removed, by that God, who sweetly and powerfully brings about his own wise purposes, without exposing his counsels to the over-curious scrutiny of men.

We have already seen in the boy many traces of what became the character of the man. The eye of the artist discerns in the block of marble, the fair proportions of the concealed statue, the material is precious, but much of it must, by patience, by attention, and by exquisite skill, be cut off and pared away, before the majestic figure which he detects, can be exhibited to the eye of an admiring multitude. Washington may, under God, be considered as having been fashioned by a special Providence. At this early period, he had already either laid down or adopted a wise code for the regulation of his conduct. This consisted of one hundred and ten rules, of which, Mr. Sparks his biographer, justly observes, "that whoever has studied the character of Washington will be persuaded, that some of its prominent features took their shape from these rules thus early selected and adopted as his guide." In another place, he says of some of them, that they were "fitted to soften and polish the manners, to keep alive the best affections of the heart, to impress the obligation of the moral virtues, to teach what is due to others in social relations, and above all to inculcate the practice of a perfect self-control."

"In studying the character of Washington, it is obvious that this code of rules had an influence upon his whole life. His temperament was ardent, his passions strong, and, amidst the multiplied scenes of temptation and excitement through which he passed, it was his constant effort and ultimate triumph to check the one and to subdue the other. His intercourse with men, private and public, in every walk and station, was marked with a consistency and fitness to occasion, a dignity, decorum, condescension and mildness, a respect for the claims of others, and a delicate perception of the nicer shades of civility; which was not more the dictate of his native good sense and incomparable judgment, than the fruits of long and unwearied discipline."

It would be well, if the respect that is so justly due to the father of his country, engaged its children to adopt the maxims by whose influence he became worthy of their esteem! It would be well if, in place of encouraging a spirit of bad pride, of arrogant self-sufficiency, and permitting unchecked rudeness to become a habit, under the notion of preserving a spirit of independence; parents would instil into the minds of their children such maxims; and by the proper exercise of

their authority, keep them within the restraint of that politeness which so peculiarly characterised, perhaps, the least offensive and the most resolute man that the eighteenth century has produced!

At the age of sixteen he entered upon the laborious duties of a land surveyor, in a wilderness. The profession besides promising to be lucrative, afforded an excellent opportunity for the inspection of new lands, and for making valuable purchases. His first excursion was beyond the eastern Alleghany range, whither he went in March, 1749, whilst winter still held possession of the summits of this lofty barrier, rivers were swollen by falling rains and melting snows, and his path lay through tangled forests, abrupt precipices, uninvaded swamps, and in a region where it was a luxury to find a log hut, as a relief from the inconvenience of the surveyor's tent; yet was this, in the order of Providence, a suitable preparation for the man who was destined at a future day, to share in the privations and to direct the movements of ill provided armies, in similar circumstances; and this was the very spot in which he was destined to make his first military movements, in the service of the colony, several years previous to the revolution. During three years that he continued thus occupied, he had acquired a habit of business, and established a character for ability and integrity; nor was he estranged from his family, for he was sometimes a welcome inmate at the residence of his eldest brother, who now resided on the banks of the Potomac, at a farm to which he gave the name of Mount Vernon, from his affectionate regard to his friend the admiral: and he also visited his mother, whom he occasionally aided in the regulation of the family concerns.

When he had attained the age of nineteen, the frontiers of Virginia, which then comprised the present state of Kentucky, was threatened by Indian depredations and the encroachments of France; whose Canadian possessions stretched along on the west towards Louisiana, and were said to include Indiana, Illinois and even Ohio. The colony of Virginia was laid off into military districts, over each of which was appointed an adjutant general with the rank of major, who was to assemble and to exercise the militia, to inspect their arms and to enforce the disciplinary regulations to which they were subjected. Washington was appointed to this office in one of the districts, and felt that it was now his duty to acquire as perfect a knowledge as possible of the use of weapons, of tactics and of evolutions. In the society of

his brother and others who had served in the wars he had sufficient opportunities.

The death of his brother increased his cares; for the confidence and affection of the dying man, and the high esteem in which George was held by the surviving members of the family and their friends, placed him, though the youngest of the executors, in the administration of an estate which was ultimately, by the arrangement of the deceased, to vest in himself. The military organization of the province was changed, but Major Washington's appointment was renewed; so that he found himself, at a period when very few think of commencing the duties of life, already at the head of a large property, in the administration of an extensive estate, loved by his family, confided in by the public for his integrity, and entrusted by the government with a charge of nearly the first rank and of the highest importance. If we stop to enquire how this occurred, we shall have no difficulty in discovering; for unceasing industry, the well regulated ambition of improvement, a proper respect for the established rules of society, immovable integrity, patient endurance of toil, and the self-denial which arose from the determination to answer the confidence that was reposed in him, all united to a systematic course of conduct deliberately laid down and steadily followed, enabled him to perform with facility, order and success, duties that would have otherwise perplexed by their confusion, overwhelmed with their weight, and destroyed in their ruin, the individual who would rashly undertake them. Washington has scarcely attained to manhood, and yet his character is already formed, and is extensively and advantageously known! He had laboured greatly, he had endured much, he had overcome many a temptation before he could attain the eminence upon which he already stands; great efforts are however, still to be made, that he may preserve his position; but habituated to labour, to combat and to overcome; his passions are in his keeping; there is more need of vigilance than of effort; but there must be no relaxation on the part of him who guards so wily and so powerful a foe as strong natural propensities, subdued indeed and restrained, but yet vigorous, powerful and seductive. One day's negligence may render unavailing all the achievements of years.

What a lesson, my friends, is this for the youth of our country! What an admonition for parents! Why have we not amongst us more men bearing this true stamp of the nobility of virtue? Because the child is too fond of pleasure, too impatient of restraint.—Because the parent has false no-

tions of glorious independence, and fondly imagines that lost virtue may be easily restored. Because a weak and miscalculating fondness persuades itself that the bridle which restrains from licentiousness destroys that strength which it but directs to an useful and a pleasing course. How greatly preferable is the noble animal, that, trained to the hand, patiently submits to its directions, to the untamed beast that menaces ruin to every one that approaches? The one smells the battle at a distance, and proudly lifts his head, whilst he impatiently paws the ground; yet he rests in his place, prepared but steady. He hears the note of preparation in the trumpet's blast, and he now looks for the onset. At the signal, he bears his rider in the midst of his companions in safety and in victory over the ruins of the broken host. He holds back when he is checked; he returns, fatigued indeed, but not exhausted; he is nourished and cared for; he is grateful to his attendants, and before the rising sun, he neighs to prove his desire for the pursuit of the succeeding day.—Wo! to him who would enter into battle with the other! Should he not be shaken from his seat, or be carried wildly from the face of the array; he is separated from his troop, he is borne powerless into the thick of his enemies, where he soon falls the bewildered victim of his own rashness, and to the fury of those who surround him. His corpse is found under the carcass of his worst enemy! Even in death the cause of his ruin is manifest to that friend, who would seek under shade of twilight to render the last rites to the body of his associate! What a picture of the folly of a parent and of the ruin of a child! Call you this glorious independence?

In truth, we have now only to contemplate the character thus formed, developing itself as circumstances permit, and becoming more fixed and better matured by experience.

Washington's first public mission was not only of a highly confidential, but of an extremely perilous nature. The French had crossed the Northern Lakes, which had been assumed by Great Britain as the natural boundary between their respective colonies. It was suspected that they sought to establish themselves upon the Ohio. A messenger had been sent from Virginia, in the character of an Indian trader, to visit the friendly tribes in that quarter, and to procure accurate intelligence of their disposition and of the French advances. He had returned without having fully accomplished the object for which he was employed, but bringing sufficient information to prove, that the fears expressed by the British cabinet to the governor of Virginia were well founded; and that France was disposed to establish posts within the territory claimed

by England. The governor had been furnished with cannon and ammunition, to repel, if necessary by force, any effort of this description. Not only was it ascertained that troops had descended from Canada, but it was found that others had ascended from New-Orleans; and that it was contemplated to lock up the British within a line of posts, extending from the Lakes by the Ohio and Mississippi, so as to secure at least all the territory west of this line for the crown of France. The governor and council of Virginia resolved, that it would be proper, as both nations were at peace, to send an officer to the French commander, with a request to know by what authority he had advanced, and also to learn what was his object. Major Washington was selected.

“He was directed to proceed without delay to the Ohio River, convene some of the Indian chiefs at a place called Logstown, make known to them the objects of his visit, and, after ascertaining where the French were stationed, to request an escort of warriors to be his guides and safeguard the rest of the journey. When arrived at the principal French post, he was to present his credentials and a letter from the governor of Virginia to the commandant, and in the name of His Britannic Majesty to demand an answer. He was furthermore to inquire diligently, and by cautious means, into the number of the French troops that had crossed the Lakes, the reinforcements expected from Canada, how many forts they had erected and at what places, how they were garrisoned and appointed, and their distances from each other, and, in short, to procure all the intelligence possible respecting the condition and objects of the intruders.”

“Fortified with written instructions to this effect, with credentials and a passport to which the great seal of the colony was affixed, he departed from Williamsburg, the seat of government in Virginia, on the 31st November, 1753. The distance before him to the extreme point of his destination, by the route he would pursue, was about five hundred and sixty miles, in great part over lofty and rugged mountains, and more than half of the way through the heart of a wilderness, where no traces of civilization as yet appeared.”

With a party of seven companions he set forward, and by climbing, scrambling, fording and swimming, as well as by riding, he reached the Monongahela and Allegany, at the point where their junction forms the Ohio. His eye soon discerned the peculiar advantages consequent upon the erection of a fort at this spot. It was from the erection of this work the colonists were driven in the subsequent year; it was completed by the French, and called after the name of their Canadian

governor, Du Quesne; subsequently re-taken by Washington, when it was called Fort Pitt, and at this day has risen to the important rank of an industrious city, Pittsburg. About twenty miles below this fork he called together some Indian chiefs, with whom he entered into friendly relations, and formed the acquaintance of Tanacharison, or the half-king, who was subsequently his ally and companion. He thence proceeded to the French post, and was told by the commander, M. de St. Pierre, in a respectful but firm tone, that his troops could not retire, for he had received orders to occupy the place, that his duty was obedience, and that discussion could be had only with those who commanded him. He treated the British envoy with hospitality, and gave him supplies upon his departure. Yet by some means, Major Washington found many impediments to his return, a considerable part of which he had to make on foot with but one companion, carrying on his own back his knapsack containing his papers and his food, with a gun in hand, amidst falling snow and over thickening ice, and having only by great ingenuity and exertion escaped the treachery of some Indians.

Upon his return, he delivered the answer of the French commander, and placed his own journal in the hands of the governor; and it was clearly ascertained that the case had arisen in which force must be repelled by force. This journal was not only printed in Virginia, but also by the directions of the English government it was published in Europe, and was highly commended in each place. Major Washington was appointed to command a force of two hundred men, who were to proceed to the Ohio and erect a fort at the spot which he had indicated. Captain Trent was appointed to command one of the companies. He was directed to go forward, and raise his company by enlisting the traders accustomed to the Indians and the woods; to proceed to the fork of the Ohio, and commence the fort. Washington, at Alexandria, waited to assemble the remainder of the troops, to organise them, to collect supplies and to send them forward, together with the cannon to be mounted in the fort.

The Legislature of Virginia, upon its meeting, increased the force to six companies, under the command of Col. Fry, making Washington Lieutenant Colonel. The British government also authorized the governor of Virginia to call upon New-York for two companies of continental troops, and upon South-Carolina for one. The officers of such companies held their commissions, not from the colonial government, but from the crown, which caused them to claim an exemption from the authority of the colonial officers, and to be regarded

more in the light of an allied or auxiliary force, than as men to be commanded. On the 20th of April, 1754, Col. Washington arrived at Will's Creek, which was then the border of civilization, with three companies under his command. Here he learned that Captain Trent's men had been summoned by an immensely superior French force to capitulate and retire from the fort which they were erecting. The French, having possessed themselves of it, in compliment to their governor called it Fort Duquesne. Col. Fry had not arrived—Washington's own force was very small—a wilderness was before him, with an opposing army far more numerous, well organized, and already habituated to the country, ready to fall upon him, he knew not at what moment or in what place. He held a council of war, and determined to proceed to the erection of a fort upon another spot on the Monongahela. Thus at all events would his men be employed, the bane of idleness be removed, and by the constructions necessary for their advance, a road would be opened for those who would follow; whilst they themselves would be at least approaching to the attainment of their object. He sent expresses to the governors of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, advising them of his situation, and requesting reinforcements.

As this was his first campaign, I shall dwell upon it; for here we shall perceive his qualities, as a commander, as fully developed as will be necessary to exhibit his character in that position. His determination to advance shows none of the rashness or impetuosity of the unthinking brave: it was the result of deliberation and counsel, and for sufficient reasons. To retreat would have been a degrading abandonment of his duty, a betraying of the trust reposed in him; it would have stricken a panic into his men, from which they could not be recovered; it would have given to the enemy confidence, time, and undisturbed possession; and would have totally bewildered the colonial councils, whilst the Indians would have been gained over by the French. Did he remain where he was, nearly all these effects would have been equally the result; at all events, his troops would have been idle and discontented; they would have lost all confidence in him, and did they not desert him on the first failure of supplies, insubordination and plunder would have left him despised and powerless, the butt of a mob, not the commander of soldiers. As it was, from the neglect of the commissaries, provisions failed upon their march. Besides the perplexity of this misfortune, he had to overcome the difficulties of exploring his way and of constructing his road. He was on those occasions himself the pioneer, who, with a few attendants, penetrated the

recesses of the forest, to learn how a swamp may be avoided; or he encountered, in a canoe or on a raft, the perils of an unexplored river, to discover its obstructions or its falls, to ascertain where it was fordable, or where a bridge could be placed. What patience, ingenuity, judgment and perseverance was necessary for such an expedition! This was the school to which Providence led him, that he might be taught for a period of equal difficulties upon a more extended scale, and for a nobler purpose. Not to secure for one monarch rather than for another, the nominal and useless sovereignty over the wild hunting grounds, which, as Tanacharison, speaking of the French and English, told both parties, "the Great Being above allowed to be the residence for him and his people," but to redeem the people of a continent from the dictation of a distant island, and casting off the bands with which it was sought to confine them, leave them to exercise those faculties and those powers with which God had endowed them, with that freedom which is the right of every nation, and by whose proper use she can better secure her happiness, than she can by any foreign direction.

As he advanced towards the Monongahela, he received notice from Tanacharison that the French had sent a party out from their fort, who had determined "to strike the English" should they be met with. Soon afterwards he received another message, that the French party was advanced to within fifteen miles of him. Knowing his situation, he thought it better to choose his field, and accordingly drew his little force to a place called the Great Meadows; and having cleared it as well as circumstances would allow, he threw up an entrenchment, nearly protected on three sides by a stream, and sufficiently distant from the wood, to require that an assailant should shew his men upon the open ground. He sent out scouts mounted on his wagon horses, to reconnoitre; but they returned without having made any discovery. His camp was however alarmed during the night, his sentinels fired, and his men were kept under arms till morning. A respectable settler then came in with information, that a French detachment of fifty men had been at his place on the previous day, and that he had discovered their tracks within five miles of the camp. In the early part of the next night, another express arrived from the Indian, who was within about six miles of the Great Meadows with his people, stating that the French were in his vicinity, and that he had seen two tracks. Within an hour after this arrival, Washington, at the head of forty men, left the camp in the midst of torrents of rain, on one of the darkest nights that could be imagined. The sol-

diers, strayed from the path, frequently lost their way, climbed over fallen trees and opposing rocks, and stumbled over each other; and it took them as many hours to reach the Indian station, as they had miles to pass over. It was nearly sunrise when they arrived.

The occurrence of this day was in many ways remarkable. It was a battle between the troops of two nations actually at peace. The force engaged was small, but it was the commencement of a contest which deprived France of one of her most important colonies, after the vicissitudes of nearly seven years of war. It was the military essay of a young man who was destined to lead the armies of half a continent, struggling for that freedom which it was to achieve, against the efforts of that nation on whose behalf he was now himself engaged; but that freedom was not to be obtained without the aid of that country against which he was then armed. Such are the vicissitudes of human affairs! But this was also, for the character of Washington, an event, the proper understanding of whose circumstances is of peculiar importance. It is the only battle in which he was engaged, which even an enemy ventured to point out as unjustifiable carnage.

It was stated in Europe, that M. de Jumonville, who commanded, was not an officer sent for a hostile purpose, but an ambassador sent on an errand of a peaceful character. That a rash, impetuous and inexperienced youth wantonly assailed and cruelly murdered the envoy and his attendants.

Let us examine the case. This statement was made in Europe, by the diplomatists of France, at a moment when they were engaged with those of England, apparently seeking to adjust their differences, but really, it is believed, seeking a colorable pretext for war. The French had made their preparations already in America, to surround the British colonies, and to confine them as nearly as they could from extending to the west. It was, according to the rules of what is called diplomacy, the business of the French agents to create the impression that England had given occasion for their hostile movements, and this occurrence furnished the pretext they sought.

Let us now see Washington's position! Fully aware of the objects of the French, from his previous interview, when he had gone, unaccompanied by a retinue of soldiers, to deliver a letter and to hold a discussion with the principal officer of the force that was making descents and settlements within what the English regarded as their lands; he not only found his remonstrances useless, but he saw the aggressions extend-

ed. Commissioned and sent out by his own government, with an armed force, to repel this invasion and to protect his limits, he finds a portion of his command dispossessed of a fort which they had been erecting, his troops threatened with violence if they did not yield. He finds by the report of his scouts that an armed band was advancing still farther into his country;—that they were hovering about his camp. He is informed by his Indian allies that their avowed object is to attack the English. His camp is alarmed. By whom? It is true that a few of his men had deserted, but surely deserters are not found lurking round the spot where capture and punishment would be the probable result. He consults Tanacharison. He discovers that this armed band has withdrawn from the common road, which peaceful envoys travel, and lay in a concealed and well protected retreat, like invaders, and had sent scouts to observe the British position. This fact was ascertained by the discovery of their tracks. Messengers had also been sent back by them to the main body of their force, clearly to carry information, probably to call for an advance of larger numbers. Was he to await the arrival of an army superior in force, and permit the object which he had been selected to accomplish to be lost? Is he to permit himself to be trifled with, and overreached? His ally, who had the means of information, assures him that their intention is hostile. There is but one course open for him. He plans the mode of attack, should it be necessary; yet he leaves an opportunity to the others to see and to explain. He advances against the position of the armed invaders. They are discovered; he is himself at the head of his little detachment; he is seen. The ambassador, of course, will now show his symbol of friendship,—will demand protection, and seek to attain the end of his mission. Washington advances, and he is received, not with the etiquette of an envoy, but with the warning of loaded muskets. He is prepared, and the return is quickly made. The whole effort of the assailants, for such are they to whom he is opposed, is directed against the Virginians; the Indian is left unassailed. If the commander and ten of his soldiers have lost their lives before the surviving twenty-two have called for quarter, they have fallen victims either to their duty, if they were enemies, or to their folly if they were friends. It is true that in the pocket of the commander there was found a dictatorial summons to the English commander, leaving him the only option of retiring peaceably east of the Alleghanies, or of being compelled by force to do so. Some of the ambassador's officers asserted when they were prisoners that they had never seen the document, and they censured its

style. However, they said many other things which Washington declared not to be facts. The captured men were sent prisoners to Governor Dinwiddie, who approved of Washington's conduct.

He wrote to the governor that he was certain of being attacked by a superior force, as soon as the French should learn what had occurred; that in his present situation he would be unable to hold his ground against them. He could only assure him, that he would not be taken by surprise; and would not retreat or surrender whilst the slightest prospect existed of being able to make an useful or an honorable resistance. The succors he received were small; the want of supplies, especially of provisions, was very trying. The distinctions in pay and in rank between the officers of the colony and those of the crown, were unfortunate and paralyzing, and would have produced worse consequences but for the good sense, the moderation and kindly feeling that existed between Colonel Washington and Captain Mackay, who commanded under a royal commission the only contingent from another State that took the field. South-Carolina, always ready to take her place in the day of peril and at the post of honor, sent her hundred men to share the sufferings and the dangers of this campaign;—which terminated by the capitulation of the colonial troops to a superior force of the French, who during nine hours had endeavored, on the 3d of July, to get possession of Fort Necessity;—for so was this hastily erected fortification on the Great Meadows called,—and on the next day, its defenders marched out with the honors of war, to return home. The commander and his soldiers, besides the consciousness of having done their duty, had also the thanks of the council, the burgesses, and the public. The prudence, the address, the courage, the patience, firmness and love of discipline of Washington, were universally acknowledged with well merited eulogy.

The blunders and the difficulties arising from the arrangements of rank to which I have before alluded, caused Washington to decline accepting a commission which was offered him by Governor Sharpe, of Maryland, who had been lately appointed by the king of England, to be commander-in-chief of the forces against the French. In declining the offer he added, "I shall have the consolation of knowing, that I have opened the way, when the smallness of our numbers exposed us to the attacks of a superior enemy; and that I have had the thanks of my country for the services I have rendered."

The agency of this man as he advanced in life, upon a more extended field, in more elevated stations, and amongst per-

sons of more importance, necessarily attracts more attention, and surrounds him with a brighter halo of glory; but the individual is himself unchanged. From the first moment to the last, it is George Washington! Hence it is not my intention to trespass upon your patience by a recital of facts, with which you are well acquainted, nor by leading you through those revolutionary fields whose names are as familiar to your mouths and to your ears as household words.

You know that he accepted the invitation of the brave but unfortunate Braddock, to be one of his military family. I need not inform you of its results. How Washington escaped on that day which witnessed the almost total ruin of a fine army, I think is attributable only to a special Providence. When the two aids of the general were disabled, he alone was engaged in the duty of distributing the orders. He was seen every where on horseback in the hour of carnage, an object easily marked, and by no means unimportant. He wrote to his brother: "By the all-powerful dispensation of Providence, I have been protected beyond all human probability or expectation; for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me. Yet I escaped unhurt, although death was levelling my companions on every side of me."

It is true, that in this action, though unexpectedly attacked, and his veteran European soldiers thrown into inextricable confusion, Gen. Braddock and his officers behaved with the utmost courage, "and used every effort to rally the men, and bring them to order; but all in vain. In this state they continued nearly three hours, huddling together in confused bodies, firing irregularly, shooting down their own officers and men, and doing no perceptible harm to the enemy. The Virginia provincials were the only troops who seemed to retain their senses, and they behaved with a bravery and resolution worthy of a better fate. They adopted the Indian mode, and fought each man for himself behind a tree. This was prohibited by the General, who endeavoured to form his men into platoons and columns, as if they had been manœuvring on the plains of Flanders. Meantime the French and Indians, concealed in the ravines and behind trees, kept up a deadly and unceasing discharge of musketry, singling out their objects, taking deliberate aim, and producing a carnage almost unparalleled in the annals of modern warfare. More than half of the whole army, which had crossed the river in so proud an array only three hours before, were killed or wounded. The General himself received a mortal wound, and many of his best officers fell by his side."

"A report has been long current in Pennsylvania, that Brad-

dock was shot by one of his own men, founded on the declaration of a provincial soldier, who was in the action. There is another tradition, also, worthy of notice, which rests on the authority of Dr. Craik, the intimate friend of Washington from his boyhood to his death, and who was with him at the battle of the Monongahela. Fifteen years after that event, they travelled together on an expedition to the western country, with a party of woodsmen, for the purpose of exploring wild lands. While near the junction of the Great Kanhawa and Ohio Rivers, a company of Indians came to them with an interpreter, at the head of whom was an aged and venerable chief. This personage made known to them by the interpreter, that hearing Colonel Washington was in that region, he had come a long way to visit him, adding, that, during the battle of the Monongahela, he had singled him out as a conspicuous object, fired his rifle at him many times, and directed his young warriors to do the same, but to his utter astonishment none of their balls took effect. He was then persuaded, that the youthful hero was under the special guardianship of the Great Spirit, and ceased to fire at him any longer. He was now come to pay homage to the man who was the particular favourite of Heaven, and who could never die in battle."

It is thought that if Braddock had been attentive to the counsel of his Virginian aid, the result would have been different. Washington's sufferings, his services and his success when subsequently called from his retirement by his country to assume the command of the Virginia forces, and to aid General Forbes, served still further during three years to manifest his good qualities and to prepare him better for the great work which he was destined at a future day to achieve. In January, 1759, after having resigned his commission when he had made his troops efficient, and been crowned with success in his enterprize; he prepared to spend the remainder of his days in private life. Upon his marriage he received a great accession to his property, besides being united to a companion, whose affection for him and whose domestic virtues exceeded even the meed of reputation which she had obtained for more brilliant though less valuable qualities. Forty years of vicissitudes always shewed their mutual regards, not perhaps, altogether unchanged, but if altered, they were increasing in respect and affection. Whenever his keen sense of public duty allowed him a short respite from his laborious employments, he sought with renovated eagerness the cheerful society of his home and the pleasing occupation of superintending his domestic concerns. This proved

his unambitious disposition and the excellence of his family circle. Firm and sufficiently forward, when the good of his country required it, he was as ready to face her foes in the field, as he was to expostulate with her governors when he had to point out their oversight or neglect, as it was frequently necessary, in vindicating what was due to his officers and soldiers, and in requiring what was demanded by his circumstances to insure the attainment of the public safety. He was always ready to sacrifice his own private claims, to forego what were his just recompences, and to shun public honors.

Whilst he was engaged in the field at the close of his service, he was elected by the county of Frederic to a seat in the house of burgesses of Virginia. Upon his return, whilst attending the session in his place, in the house; Mr. Robinson the speaker, by directions of the assembly, returned thanks to the young hero; but unused to such a position, and confounded at the sound of his eulogy, he stood unable to reply, until the speaker relieved him by a still higher compliment, ingeniously added from the inspiration of truth: "Sit down, Mr. Washington, your modesty equals your valor; and that surpasses the power of any language that I possess."

He was now twenty-seven years of age, and with the exception of his attendance as a legislator at the sessions of the Assembly, he kept, as far as possible, secluded from public life; occupied at Mount Vernon in the improvement of agriculture, the exercise of a generous hospitality, and finding relaxation in the intercourse with his neighbors, with his loved relatives, with respectable and polished strangers whom his early fame had attracted to visit at his mansion. His chief enjoyment was in the domestic circle, and an occasional indulgence in the sports of the field; the excitement, the labor, and the exposure of which had been rendered in a great measure necessary by his previous occupations and habits from his very boyish days. Nor could he refuse the benefit of his judgment and the weight of his integrity to the solicitations of many, who preferred in their difficulties being guided by his advice and decisions, to litigating their claims before public tribunals.

I believe we may safely say, that few members of society are more useful than an independent and upright country gentleman, who is thus the protector of his family, the cultivator of the soil, the model of his neighbors for good conduct, the harbinger of peace in contentions, the patriarch, whose feelings of kindly interest are engaged for the welfare of his servants, and who, from a sense of duty, disinterested-

ly and without any selfish projects or party schemes, devotes a due share of his time and of his attention, in his proper place, to the public business of the State. Such was the manner in which twelve or fourteen years of his life now passed away. Such is the way in which he desired it should continue to its termination.

It was, however, not so decreed in the order of Providence. Great Britain undertook to impose taxes without their own consent upon the colonies. The amount was immaterial—the principle was every thing. Admit that it may be done to the amount of one cent in the year, what is to restrain the imposition? From the first moment, Washington saw what must be the result if the effort was continued, and he declared it as plainly as he saw it; when that declaration was necessary or might be useful. He could scarcely persuade himself that Great Britain would persist. He expressed his hopes that she would not; and cherished, as far as he could, that expectation in the bosom of his friends. He knew well that resistance must end in revolution; revolution in civil war. He abhorred the desolation of his country, the havoc of the people, the thousand evils which accompany and succeed the bloody strife. He had seen the glorious pomp and circumstance of war. Never did he behold a more glorious and splendid pageant than when Braddock's men deployed in well set order, and moved forward in brilliant uniform, with shining arms glittering in a radiant sun, on the banks of the Monongahela. But before that sun was set, their gory limbs, their shattered arms, their mutilated bodies, lay in terrible confusion on that fatal plain: the moans of the dying, and the wailings of the wounded, were mingled with the blasphemy of the raving, and the lamentations and the oaths of the despairing. It is the vain braggart who shuns the field where the contest for his country's rights is to try man's prowess, who too frequently make a vaporing semblance of a virtue which he has not; it is often the coward who wantonly provokes brave men to those lists, of which he continues to be only a spectator. But that man whose soul is ennobled by true heroism, possesses a heart as tender as it is firm; he is equally ready to soothe and to protect a child, as he is to oppose and to smite a giant: he avoids exciting to the bloody fray, whilst honor and justice will permit its being declined; but when the battle has become his duty, his arm is indeed nerved and elastic, his eye is keen and discerning, he assails the haughty, but he lifts the suppliant, and he consoles the vanquished. A man who is truly brave is also truly generous; he shudders

at the ruin of battle, he endeavors to avoid its necessity; but that necessity once established, he unflinchingly performs his duty.

It is not, however, in the bloody field that the work of desolation is most extensive or most afflicting. It is there, indeed, that the first blow is struck; it is there the ruin commences. But though he who lies mangled and festering amidst the heap of victims, that have been immolated to the Moloch of war, is now insensible to mortal grief or pain; not so the survivors! Separated as the iron soldier appears to be from every thing that belongs to the affections of life and the ties of relationship, still he is a man, and bound to others with the most tender ligaments that twine around the heart. There, lies one upon the field—his blood still flows: his wound indeed is mortal, but as yet all his soul is in him. Half elevated, he reclines upon the corpse of a comrade who shared in his toils, who partook of his confidence, who was charged, should he survive him, to bear the token of his affection to one far distant from that scene of carnage. With an effort, he has succeeded in drawing that pledge from the bosom of his friend; and, whilst his arm rests upon his broken musket, what he meant to be a memorial for the wife of his youth, the partner of his affections, the mother of his children; is now for himself, inseparably united with her image: it is grasped with a hold which even death will not relax, whilst his swollen and distended eye rests upon it.—He heeds not the joyous shout, though it proclaims victory for his companions; the wild tumult of flight is around him, but of this and of every other object on the field save that one token, he is now regardless. His mind is far away. His recollection is of other years. His wife, his mother, his children, his cottage,—these are all present to his excited fancy. He seems for the moment to have some new, though melancholy existence amongst them. The ebb becomes slow from his side:—that gasp is convulsive:—he awakes to a consciousness of his state; a petition to his God; an expression of contrition, of resignation, and of hope. His lips quiver as he prays for a blessing on those whom he leaves to the cold charity of a selfish world, as he dies, upon what is called the field of glory. A grateful country decks the spot, indeed, with barren laurels, and the cold—cold shaft of affliction penetrates the hearts of those who lived in the expectation of his return. Who will protect his orphans? Who will soothe the mother? Who will sustain his widow?

Washington had witnessed with aching heart many a scene of this description. Generously did he minister to

many a family thus stripped in desolation; and therefore he was not a man to rush thoughtlessly upon a course that he knew must entail such miseries upon his country. He felt deeply the wrongs which the British government was perpetrating; he was one of the first to determine that they must not be endured: but he sought, by petition, by remonstrance, by expostulation, by non-importation, to try whether it was possible to avoid recourse to arms; yet whilst he sought to restrain the violence of his friends, he had calmly and deliberately resolved to act and to suffer, and, if necessary, to die in organized resistance, upon clearly ascertained principle, rather than submit to a tyranny whose oppressions would far exceed even the disasters of battle and of death. It is a melancholy choice when one is obliged to take one or the other, in this exhibition of alternatives! It is a great relief when any other mode leaves a probability or even a faint hope, that by patience, by exertion, by time, by moral influence, an amelioration may be obtained, and the horrors of war may be averted! This hope was cherished—this principle was the guiding star of the patriots of the Revolution; and it was not until every ray of Parliamentary sympathy was extinguished, and that the royal eye no longer beamed upon the petitions that were laid even at the footstool of the throne, that Washington found himself in the gloom of hopelessness, and that he yielded to the dire necessity of inflicting upon his country the evils of military contest. Still his soul recoiled from it; and fully six years before the declaration of independence, his sentiments were expressed to a friend with whom he consulted, in the following terms:

“At a time when our lordly masters in Great Britain will be satisfied with nothing less than the deprivation of American freedom, it seems highly necessary that something should be done to avert the stroke, and maintain the liberty, which we have derived from our ancestors. But the manner of doing it, to answer the purpose effectually, is the point in question.”

“That no man should scruple, or hesitate a moment, to use arms in defence of so valuable a blessing, is clearly my opinion. Yet arms, I would beg leave to add, should be the last resource, the *dernier resort*. We have already, it is said, proved the inefficacy of addresses to the throne, and remonstrances to parliament. How far, then, their attention to our rights and privileges may be awakened or alarmed, by starving their trade and manufactures, remains to be tried.”

Two other extracts from his correspondence, nearly five years later, will shew the convictions of a mind that had long

and maturely deliberated upon the subject. Writing to a friend who hesitated upon acceding to resolutions of a meeting in Fairfax county, at which Washington presided, he says:

“That I differ very widely from you in respect to the mode of obtaining a repeal of the acts so much and so justly complained of, I shall not hesitate to acknowledge; and that this difference in opinion probably proceeds from the different constructions we put upon the conduct and intention of the ministry, may also be true; but, as I see nothing, on the one hand, to induce a belief that the Parliament would embrace a favorable opportunity of repealing acts, which they go on with great rapidity to pass, in order to enforce their tyrannical system; and, on the other, I observe, or think I observe, that government is pursuing a regular plan at the expense of law and justice to overthrow our constitutional rights and liberties, how can I expect any redress from a measure, which has been ineffectually tried already? For, sir, what is it we are contending against? Is it against paying the duty of three pence per pound on tea because burthensome? No, it is the right only, we have all along disputed; and to this end we have already petitioned his majesty in as humble and dutiful a manner as subjects could do. Nay, more, we applied to the House of Lords and House of Commons in their different legislative capacities, setting forth, that, as Englishmen, we could not be deprived of this essential and valuable part of our constitution. If, then, as the fact really is, it is against the right of taxation that we now do, and, as I said before, all along have contended, why should they suppose an exertion of this power would be less obnoxious now than formerly? And what reason have we to believe, that they would make a second attempt, whilst the same sentiments fill the breast of every American, if they did not intend to enforce it if possible.”

“In short, what further proofs are wanting to satisfy any one of the designs of the ministry, than their own acts, which are uniform and plainly tending to the same point, nay, if I mistake not, avowedly to fix the right of taxation? What hope have we, then, from petitioning, when they tell us, that now or never is the time to fix the matter? Shall we, after this, whine and cry for relief, when we have already tried it in vain? Or shall we supinely sit and see one province after another fall a sacrifice to despotism?”

“If I were in any doubt as to the right which the Parliament of Great Britain had to tax us without our consent, I should most heartily coincide with you in opinion, that to pe-

tion, and to petition only, is the proper method to apply for relief; because we should then be asking a favor, and not claiming a right, which, by the law of nature and our constitution, we are, in my opinion, indubitably entitled to. I should even think it criminal to go further than this, under such an idea; but I have none such. I think the Parliament of Great Britain have no more right to put their hands into my pocket, without my consent, than I have to put my hands into yours; and this being already urged to them in a firm, but decent manner, by all the colonies, what reason is there to expect any thing from their justice?"

* * * * *

"Satisfied, then, that the acts of the British Parliament are no longer governed by the principles of justice, that they are trampling upon the valuable rights of Americans, confirmed to them by charter and by the constitution they themselves boast of, and convinced beyond the smallest doubt, that these measures are the result of deliberation, and attempted to be carried into execution by the hand of power, is it a time to trifle, or to risk our cause upon petitions, which with difficulty obtain access, and afterwards are thrown by with the utmost contempt? Or should we, because heretofore unsuspecting of design, and then unwilling to enter into disputes with the mother country, go on to bear more, and forbear to enumerate our just causes of complaint? For my own part, I shall not undertake to say where the line between Great Britain and the colonies should be drawn; but I am clearly of opinion that one ought to be drawn, and our rights clearly ascertained. I could wish, I own, that the dispute had been left to posterity to determine; but the crisis is arrived when we must assert our rights, or submit to every imposition that can be heaped upon us, till custom and use shall make us tame and abject slaves."

This, in fact, embodies the whole principle of the Revolution.

Whilst attending a meeting of the first Congress, of which he was a member, he received a letter from a former companion in arms, who held a commission in an English regiment then stationed at Boston. The following is an extract from the answer which he sent.

"These, sir, being certain consequences, which must naturally result from the late acts of Parliament relative to America in general, and the government of Massachusetts Bay in particular, is it to be wondered at, I repeat, that men, who wish to avert the impending blow, should attempt to oppose it in its progress, or prepare for their defence if it cannot be

averted? Surely I may be allowed to answer in the negative; and again give me leave to add as my opinion, that more blood will be spilled on this occasion, if the ministers are determined to push matters to extremity, than history has ever yet furnished instances of in the annals of North America, and such a vital wound will be given to the peace of this great country, as time itself cannot cure, or eradicate the remembrance of."

He was also a member of the second Congress, which assembled on the 10th of May, 1775. Blood had been then shed at Lexington and at Concord; the Rubicon was passed, and though no formal declaration had yet been made, yet the sword which smote the freeman of New-England had severed the tie which bound that colony to the older land of freemen. An expression of John Adams indicated in a way too plain to be misunderstood, that, though her own sons were in the field and had confidence in their commander, still she would sacrifice sectional pride to general advantage, and that in selecting the commander-in-chief of the continental forces, the name of a Southron, in whose prowess and prudence universal confidence was reposed, would be presented to the Congress. Washington, who had foreseen what he desired to avoid, rose from his place and retired from the house, to leave their proceedings unembarrassed by his presence. A day was fixed for entering into the selection; and on opening the ballot-box, into which that band of devoted patriots had cast their suffrages, not another name was found but that of George Washington! Next day he was found in his place in Congress, as a member from Virginia. When the president officially informed him of his appointment, he rose in his place, and signified his acceptance. His words were few and appropriate, but the following expressions shew the unchanged features of his character:

"Lest some unlucky event should happen, unfavorable to my reputation, I beg it may be remembered by every gentleman in the room, that I this day declare, with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the command I am honored with."

Nor were these mere words of course. His confidential and affectionate letter to his wife shews that he only yielded to a sense of duty, and looked upon the trust as too great for his capacity. How providential that it was to him it was confided!

You know the history of that war which followed. You have appreciated, as you ought, his prudence, his valor, his courage, his privations and his endurance. You know what

materials he had to mould into an army—men who, in general, bore devoted hearts; but who were unused to discipline, and not always patient of restraint;—men whose unshod feet often marked their track with their blood upon their frozen road, and whose tattered garments in the cold of winter shewed that they needed all the fervor of their zeal for freedom to keep them warm in its defence. And amongst the ranks of those born in the country, many a brave foreigner shared in the toil of the battle and endured the privations of the camp. Washington could see no difference between them in the field, and he made no distinction between them in his heart. Lafayette, Montgomery, Hamilton, Steuben, De Kalb, Pulaski, Manning, and even Jasper, are no inglorious names upon the roll of heroes of the revolutionary war. Brightly do they shine amidst that galaxy of sons of the soil from every State of the old thirteen, that clustered in so mighty a multitude around that calm, steady and glowing light that outshone them all, and yet seemed to add to their effulgence. Well did they redeem that noble pledge that was made by men of every religious denomination! It was released indeed with the loss of many a life, and with the ruin of many a noble fortune; but by the preservation of their sacred honor. With that honor they also preserved and improved their liberties, and unshackled industry from the bonds of colonial restriction. To the lovers of enterprise and of improvement, and to those hardy children of labor who prize liberty, and are ready as they are able to defend it, they opened inviting passages to those western lands that have already received millions, and are capable of receiving millions more, to make them teem with wealth, and be alive with population. But it is not my theme to enlarge upon what was endured in securing to us those advantages.

The character of strategy pursued by Washington, as far as one, so little skilled as I am, can form an opinion on such a subject, appears to have been one of the most difficult to execute, yet the best adapted to his circumstances, and, as it proved to be, most successful in the result. At the head of what may be called an unorganized mass rather than an army, and the parts of which this collection was composed in a perpetual state of change, by reason of the short periods of enlistment,—without any well regulated department of subsistence or of supply,—under a general administration which had over thirteen confederated and scarcely formed republics only that moral control that arises from common principles and common danger;—with many concealed enemies and hostile partizans, in open and avowed connexion with

the enemy, scattered through the land,—the country itself but thinly settled; its settled portions open and badly provided for defence, intersected by large navigable bays and rivers, without any naval means of protection. But on the other hand, his enemy, though in possession of the sea, was at a distance from his resources, and though highly disciplined and well provided, yet was unpractised in partizan warfare, and dreading an intricate country. Washington found it to be his duty to turn his whole attention towards the establishment and the maintainance of discipline; but for this purpose he had not only to exert his authority with great discretion, and forbearance with those under his command, but to use all his influence with the several governments to induce them to correct their system, to supply their deficiencies, to make pecuniary sacrifices, and to sustain his efforts. This was the more difficult, as, even at such a moment, they indulged to a mischievous extent a jealousy, whose theory was just, but whose application at such a moment was unreasonable. They wished to give to the commander as little power as possible, because they dreaded a military despotism; and thus they sent him, as Sheridan expressed himself upon another occasion, with half a shield and a broken sword to protect them from their well armed enemies, lest if the buckler were entire and the sword perfect, he may be tempted in the hey-day of victory to smite his employers.

It was not only in establishing discipline that his exertions were required. No man loved his soldiers better than he did, and his letters shew the manner in which his soul was wounded at the sufferings they had to undergo for the want of the most ordinary necessaries. Yet, with this bitter feeling, was he obliged, as he calls it himself, to play the hypocrite with them; to impress on their minds the obligation of cheerfully enduring every thing for the great cause in which they were engaged. But whilst he thus encouraged them to unite with himself in suffering, he earnestly, though not always successfully, appealed to those who ought to provide for those men who were the only bulwark between them and vassalage.

His was not an ambition of glory. He sacrificed no masses of human beings in brilliant charges, that he may gather laurels from the spot enriched by their gore; or that he may indite despatches filled with periods rounded by the swollen phrases of destruction. He weighed the value of every life entrusted to his discretion, and would shudder at the useless exposure of even one. This course was dictated by prudence as well as by humanity and justice. By a Fabian policy

his enemy would be harrassed and worn out, and his supplies would be more rapidly consumed than they could be increased; whilst the American forces would be improving in discipline, accustomed to action, confident in themselves, and preserved for those occasions when they could be usefully brought into action.

But when an opportunity presented itself, he made no calculation of what it was necessary to sacrifice, whether of repose or of life, to achieve what it would be ruinous or impolitic to forego; though even on such occasions, every precaution was taken, not only to insure success, but to obtain it with as little sacrifice of life as possible. Stoney Point, Trenton and Yorktown are striking instances of this policy.

His affection for his men caused him to feel keenly for those whom the enemy held as prisoners. At first the British officers undertook to treat them as rebels; indignity, harshness and severe confinement were inflicted, and it was said that these endurances would be followed by an ignominious death. In one instance, the British prisoners were marked out by him as victims for retaliation; they were on their march under an escort to the place of confinement, when they were overtaken by an express, who announced, that General Washington could not permit himself to do what even the usages of war had sanctioned; that he could not punish the innocent for the guilty, and that he had revoked his order. He appealed to the nobler principles of the British commander, and frequently succeeded; but his anxiety and his exertions on this score were unceasing and laborious. Never was his kindly feeling better manifested than when, in order to procure a mitigation of the suffering of General Lee, who had fallen into the hands of the British, and whom they chose to regard and to treat as a deserter, the Congress decreed that Col. Camphell, who was a prisoner in Massachusetts, and five Hessian field officers at Trenton, should be subjected to precisely the same treatment as General Lee; he wrote to the president of Congress:

“In point of policy, under the present situation of our affairs, this doctrine cannot be supported. The balance of prisoners is greatly against us, and a general regard to the happiness of the whole should mark our conduct. Can we imagine that our enemies will not mete the same punishments, the same indignities, the same cruelties, to those belonging to us, in their possession, that we impose on theirs in our power? Why should we suppose them to possess more humanity than we have ourselves? Or why should an ineffectual attempt to relieve the distresses of one brave, unfor-

fortunate man, involve many more in the same calamities? However disagreeable the fact may be, the enemy at this time have in their power, and subject to their call, near three hundred officers belonging to the army of the United States. In this number there are some of high rank, and most of them are men of bravery and merit. The quota of theirs in our hands bears no proportion, being not more than fifty at most. Under these circumstances, we should certainly do no act to draw upon the gentlemen belonging to us, and who have already suffered a long captivity, greater punishments than they have experienced and now experience. If we should, what will their feelings be, and those of their numerous and extensive connexions? Suppose the treatment prescribed for the Hessians should be pursued, will it not establish what the enemy have been aiming to effect by every artifice and the grossest misrepresentations?—I mean, an opinion of our enmity towards them, and of the cruel conduct they experience when they fall into our hands, a prejudice which we on our parts have heretofore thought it politic to suppress and to root out by every act of lenity and kindness? It certainly will. The Hessians would hear of the punishment with all the circumstances of heightened exaggeration, would feel the injury, without investigating the cause, or reasoning upon the justice or necessity of it. The mischiefs which may and must inevitably flow from the execution of the resolves, appear to be endless and innumerable.”

What, then, must have been his feelings when a stern sense of duty compelled him to permit the full execution of the sentence of an ignominious death, upon the unfortunate Andre? This is one of those melancholy instances where a man deserving of a better fate, is, by the inscrutable laws of Providence, so involved in the meshes of difficulty, that it becomes impossible to extricate him; and it is not only the eye of pity which weeps, but every noble and manly heart bleeds, whilst the blow is struck, which it is acknowledged the sternness of justice cannot here be prevented from inflicting. Still, after the lapse of more than half a century, the feeling exists, which will perhaps always continue strong:—regret that it was not Arnold who met a well deserved fate from the hand of the executioner.

Deeply as Washington felt for the privations and wants of his soldiers, he was however careful to repress insubordination. Witness the disbanding a large portion of the Philadelphia line in the spring of 1781, who, though having cause of complaint, yet took an irregular and most pernicious mode of seek-

ing for redress. Still these men, in the midst of their misery, could not be made traitors by the allurements of the British general. They gave up to trial and to execution the emissaries who had the hardihood to enter upon their seduction; and though worn down by toil and privation, they declared that they scorned to be Arnolds. The contagion of insubordination, however, had spread from them to the troops of New-Jersey; but Washington was prepared. The mutineers were taken by surprize, compelled to parade without arms, two of their ring-leaders were tried by a field court-martial, condemned and shot; and the spirit of sedition having been thus laid, the remainder made an unconditional submission and promise of obedience.

The exquisite tact which he possessed, was exhibited together with his spirit of moderation and respect for the feelings of his brothers in arms, at the surrender of Yorktown. He had with him General Lincoln, who, in delivering up this our city to the British after a brave resistance, had the mortification of being denied the full honors of war at its evacuation. In place, then, of appearing at the head of the united forces of America and France, with the air of a conqueror, to wear the trophies well won by his valor, Washington sacrificed this feeling to one more noble and more exquisite, but to attain whose gratification is the privilege of few indeed. Lincoln had faithfully discharged his duty, and well merited the recompense which he on this occasion received. The British general, Lord Cornwallis, desired to stipulate for his garrison, that it should march out with all the honors of war, and the customary privileges for its officers. Washington would grant only the same that had been allowed by the British general to the garrison of Charleston; and stationed Lincoln in an open space, between the respective staffs of the French and the American armies, to receive, in their view, the surrender of the British leader with exactly the same formalities that had been observed when he made his own capitulation.

Need I undertake to shew that his ambition was his country's happiness, and not his own personal elevation? Advert to the proposal which was made to him at Newburg, where an army appeared but to wait his beck, to protect him in assuming a sceptre and a crown. His reproof contained none of that language of affectation which shews that a refusal is made, only because the object appears to be unattainable, or for the purpose of having additional entreaty used to overcome the seeming reluctance of ardent desire.

He dearly loved and greatly esteemed the valuable men

who shared in his toils and dangers. His big heart distended with unusual emotions, when, on the 4th of December, 1783, he entered the room in New-York to bid a final adieu to the principal officers, his companions in arms. The tear flowed on each manly cheek; he grasped firmly, in succession, those hands that had sustained, together with him, their country's cause. The embrace was that of generous soldiers and firm friends;—not a word was spoken. They followed him in mute procession to his barge. Being seated in it for an instant, he rose; and lifting his hat, he waved it: every head on shore was uncovered;—the splashing of the oar and its measured stroke, alone, now broke the silence of the tender, the respectful, the memorable separation of those men, who, in the face of death, had united to secure the independence of our country.

It was on the 23d of that month, he presented himself before the Congress of Annapolis; and at the close of an appropriate address, said: “Having now finished the work assigned me, I retire from the great theatre of action; and bidding an affectionate farewell to this august body, under whose orders I have so long acted, I here offer my commission, and take my leave of all the employments of public life.” He placed that document in the hands of the president and withdrew, as he fondly hoped, to repair the ravages which his property must have suffered, and to repose in the bosom of his family after the toils of such a tempestuous absence. It is unnecessary to inform you that he would receive no pecuniary recompence; and here is a copy of the settlement of his public accounts. How he enjoyed and sought for the solace of private life, is expressed in his own language to Lafayette.

“I am become a private citizen on the banks of the Potomac; and, under the shadow of my own vine and fig-tree, free from the bustle of a camp, and the busy scenes of public life, I am solacing myself with those tranquil enjoyments, of which the soldier, who is ever in pursuit of fame—the statesman, whose watchful days and sleepless nights are spent in devising schemes to promote the welfare of his own, perhaps the ruin of other countries, as if this globe was insufficient for us all—and the courtier, who is always watching the countenance of his prince, in hopes of catching a gracious smile, can have very little conception. I have not only retired from all public employments, but I am retiring within myself, and shall be able to view the solitary walk, and tread the paths of private life, with a heartfelt satisfaction. En-

vious of none, I am determined to be pleased with all; and this, my dear friend, being the order of my march, I will move gently down the stream of life, until I sleep with my fathers."

To General Knox he wrote: "I am just beginning to experience that ease and freedom from public cares, which, however desirable, takes some time to realize; for, strange as it may seem, it is nevertheless true, that it was not till lately I could get the better of my usual custom of ruminating, as soon as I waked in the morning, on the business of the ensuing day; and of my surprise at finding, after revolving many things in my mind, that I was no longer a public man, nor had any thing to do with public transactions. I feel now, however, as I conceive a wearied traveller must do, who, after treading many a painful step with a heavy burden on his shoulders, is eased of the latter, having reached the haven to which all the former were directed; and from his house-top is looking back and tracing with an eager eye the meanders by which he escaped the quicksands and mires which lay in his way, and into which none but the all-powerful Guide and Dispenser of human events could have prevented his falling."

A few years were sufficient to exhibit the imperfection of the bond which held the confederation together in the period of their struggle. It became inevitable that one of two alternatives should be embraced. Either the Union should be dissolved, or a new bond must be devised by which the States would be in truth and in fact united.

The convention was named; against his wishes, George Washington was at the head of the Virginia list. Yet was he by no means unprepared; because foreseeing the possibility of being obliged to sacrifice his inclinations to his duty; he had seriously studied and analyzed the principles of the Lycian, the Amphyctionic, the Achæan, the Helvetic, the Belgic and the Germanic confederacies; he had also deeply imbued his mind with sound political information, and closely observed the forms of governmental administration. It is not matter of surprise that, by an unanimous vote, he was called upon to fill the chair in that assembly;—for surely none was more worthy to occupy it. Neither could there be any hesitation, when the States ratified the constitution, and it became the expressed will of the people that it should be their form of government, as to who should undertake the task and have the glory of reducing its principles to practice. They had in the whole Union but one man who was, by universal acknowledgment, "first in war, first in peace, first in

the hearts of his fellow-citizens." And much as we complain of the injustice of the world, and rationally as we look for the recompense of virtue in a better state, still sometimes a mighty instance is exhibited of the good feelings and the sense of equity of a nation, where we may well use the words of the Trojan exile—

"En Priamus! sunt hic etiam sua præmia laudi!"

He who would not stoop to be a king upon the suggestion of soldiers, is raised by the acclamation of the people to be the first President of a free confederation, whose destinies are interwoven with the ruin or the resurrection of a hemisphere!

Assiduous in the discharge of duty, he encourages industry, he extends commerce, he regulates the finance, he establishes credit, he organizes the departments, he selects and appoints the officers and superintends their conduct, he establishes the judiciary, he allays jealousies, he commences fortifications, he arranges the army, he perfects treaties, he vindicates the national honor, he gives the example of a high morality; and thus occupied during eight years, he sees his country eminent among the nations, and putting forth the germs of a rich prosperity. His work is now indeed accomplished; but ere he retires from that station which raised him far above the thrones of emperors, he admonishes his children, for he is indeed the father of his country, of the difficulties by which they are surrounded; and with the light of wisdom, the sagacity of experience, and the affection of patriotism, he teaches how these may be overcome or avoided. And now covered with the benedictions of his country and the admiration of the world, he retired again to private life; and there, after a comparatively brief respite from the toils of office, he bowed down his head in resignation to the summons which called him from this transitory state; and passed to another world, leaving after him, not the empty sound of what is called an immortal name, but the mighty monument of that freedom which we enjoy, and the glorious bulwark of that constitution by which it is protected.

Fellow-citizens! I can speak no eulogy of Washington. Though separated from this world, he lives in the centre of our hearts; his name is a talisman of power, the watchword of freedom, the emblem of patriotism, the shout of victory. It casts around us a halo of glory, for it continues to receive the homage of mankind! There have been many sages, there have been many heroes, there have been many legislators, **THERE IS BUT ONE WASHINGTON!**

Gentlemen of the Washington Light Infantry! you may be justly proud of the name under which you are enrolled. But let it be to you also a solemn admonition to fulfil your obligations. Our volunteer companies are not formed for the mere purposes of idle show, of vain parade, nor for empty pageantry. The natural and safest bulwark of our country's freedom is a well organized militia; the chivalry of that militia should be found in the volunteer companies. Your's bears the most glorious name for an American citizen soldier. You should emulate the bravest, the best disciplined, the most patriotic of those marshalled in your country's service. You should endeavor, with the noble rivalry of a soldier's honor, but with a soldier's affection, to permit no other company to outstrip you in the accomplishments of the armed citizen. For your country and its freedom; for your country and its institutions; for your own sunny South, and for the whole Union; for its peace and for its rights; for your morals, for your discipline; and, in that discipline the first and the last point, obedience to your officers! Never has your company exhibited any deficiency in this respect, and therefore it has always been efficient and respectable. You glory in the name of American, but you receive as Americans every one whom the laws of your country recognize as such. You have not deserted your posts, because the fellow-countrymen of him who led your armies to the walls of Quebec placed themselves by your side, to make common cause with you for that land which their acceptance of your conditions, made your common country. France, Germany, Ireland and Scotland muster by your side, and with them you form a band of brothers; uniting, as your Washington has done, your whole force for an irresistible protection. Do not those flags wave over men who love to gather round your stars, to be guided by your eagle? When you volunteered to protect our brethren in Florida, were not the Germans your companions? Did not the Irish penetrate into its swamps? But why do I thus address you! Our generous South has fully imbibed the spirit of our hero; and we know not these mischievous distinctions. A man loves not less the home of his choice, because he recollects the spot where he first breathed. The soldier's contest of emulation is then noble, for it is equally free from the meanness of jealousy as it is from the folly of miserable and mischievous distinctions. Nor did I need the proof which you have given, by affording me this day's opportunity of addressing you, to be convinced that the Washington Light Infantry possess largely that liberal sentiment which pervades all our companies, and most of our citizens.

Thank God, no prospect of war now dims our horizon; but the best security for peace is the power of protection. Upon this principle you should not relax. The best regulated state is liable to unforeseen derangements, and no one can say when an emergency may arise. It is not when action is necessary, that training should commence. The knowledge that you are ready will be the security for your repose. It was upon those principles that upwards of thirty years ago this company was formed by one of whom Carolina had cause to be proud; one whose talents were made useful by his wisdom; one to whom senates looked for counsel, and in whose integrity a continent confided. William Lowndes, your first captain, your founder, perhaps partook of the moral qualities of Washington in a larger degree than many who have appeared in the councils of the republic since the establishment of our constitution; and how efficiently the officers who have since its formation been selected have fulfilled the trust which has been reposed in them, is sufficiently proclaimed by the comparative smallness of their number. Your memory will easily pass them in review before you.

To you has been confided, by the honored widow of a brave officer, one of the most precious relics of the revolutionary war. There is the banner that was borne in the gallant charge at Cowpens, on the 17th of January, 1781, when the surge of confusion was arrested, and the tide of war was turned, by William Washington at the head of his dragoons. It then seemed a fiery meteor to the astonished Tarleton, when for the first time the spell of his success was broken, and he saw his veterans lay down their arms at the summons of the intrepid Howard. The glory with which it that day was radiant began to dissipate the gloom under which Carolina sat dejected; animated with hope, she roused herself to new exertion, and her Sumters and her Marions were again more active, more bold, and more successful. Again, upon the field of Eutaw, it floated in triumph to the joyous notes of the trumpet which proclaimed the retreat of the enemy from the last struggle by which they sought to keep Carolina in thralldom. "Never has it been disgraced in my husband's possession," was the short speech of Mrs. Washington, when she gave it to your company. The commander of the host that bore it through peril and in victory, preserved it as a loved memorial at the termination of the war. General William Washington, at his death, left it in the possession of his widow; and in the decline of her days, that venerable matron knew of no more valiant and honorable hands to which she could confide its preservation, than those of the Washington Light In-

fantry. Ten years have elapsed since it was presented to you through the hands of that Lieutenant Cross who held one of the first commissions in your company with Captain Lowndes at the period of its formation, but who had command of the brigade on the day that he attended with Mrs. Washington to present it to your guardianship. When you are marshalled under that banner, with the love of your country in your hearts, and her arms in your hands, you will be faithful to the confidence reposed in you:—your cry will be “Cowpens,” “Eutaw,” and “Washington;” your path will be the track of honor and of glory; your history will be found upon the record of fame.

THE FOLLOWING PIECE, ACCOMPANIED BY THE ORGAN, WAS SUNG BY THE LADIES OF THE URSULINE COMMUNITY, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE ORATION.

EXULT now, Columbia! first land of the earth!
 Thrice hallow'd thy shores, that gave Washington birth.
 Arise, and rejoice, let thy sweet harps be strung,
 Let the praise of our hero resound from each tongue.

Chorus.

Exult now, Columbia! first land of the earth!
 Thrice hallow'd thy shores, that gave Washington birth!

Let nought but true heart-beaming smiles now appear,
 To welcome the day that assembles us here;
 'Tis the pride of Columbia, 'tis virtue's great boast,
 Whose birth-day is sung by his own valiant host.

Chorus.

Exult now, Columbia! &c.

May the Spirits of Heaven descend on our land!
 Come, angel of freedom, bless Washington's band!
 Columbia's own heroes! come, join in our lay,
 Let all hearts and voices hail Washington's day!

Chorus.

Exult now, Columbia! &c.

