

AN  
ORATION  
ON THE  
SUBLIME VIRTUES  
OF  
**Gen. George Washington.**

Pronounced at the OLD SOUTH MEETING-HOUSE in Boston,

BEFORE

His Honor the LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR, The COUNCIL, and the TWO BRANCHES of the LEGISLATURE of MASSACHUSETTS.

AT THEIR REQUEST,

ON SATURDAY, THE 8th OF FEBRUARY, 1800.

---

By FISHER AMES.

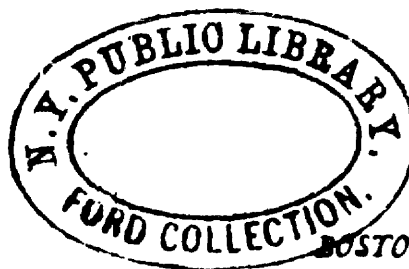
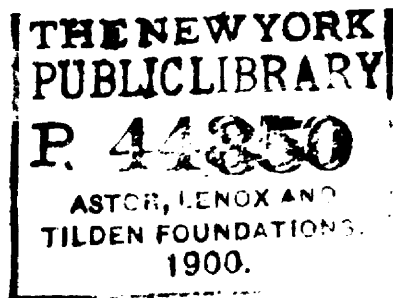
---



---

NEW-YORK;  
PRINTED FOR CHARLES SMITH AND S. STEPHENS.

1800



BOSTON, FEBRUARY 10, 1860.

SIR,

IN obedience to an Order of the legislature of this Commonwealth, we have the honor to express to you their thanks for the excellent ORATION you delivered on the 8th instant, commemorating the sublime virtues of General GEORGE WASHINGTON, and to desire a copy for the press.

We derive much satisfaction from the execution of an Order, which has for its object, a wide extension and permanent duration of that gratification and improvement which were enjoyed by the listening audience who attended that performance.

We have the honor to be,

With high personal respect and esteem, Sir,  
Your very humble servants.

SAMUEL PHILLIPS.  
EDWARD H. ROBBINS.

*The Honorable FISHER AMES.*

---

GENTLEMEN,

I RECEIVE the honor conferred on me by the Legislature of *Massachusetts*, with a sensibility which can be equalled only by my respect. In submitting the performance to publication, I know that I expose its imperfections. For these, numerous as they are, I have no excuse but my extreme want of leisure, during its preparation. Candor will, I hope, extend *that* as far as it will apply.

I have the honor to be,

Gentlemen, with perfect respect,

Your most obedient and very humble servant.

FISHER AMES.

*Honorable* SAMUEL PHILLIPS.

EDWARD H. ROBBINS, Esq.

AN  
ORATION  
ON THE  
SUBLIME VIRTUES  
OF  
GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON.

---

**I**T is natural that the gratitude of mankind should be drawn to their benefactors. A number of these have successively arisen, who were no less distinguished for the elevation of their virtues, than the lustre of their talents. Of those however who were born, and who acted through life, as if they were born, not for themselves, but for their country and the whole human race, how few alas! are recorded in the long annals of ages, and how wide the intervals of time and space that divide them. In all this dreary length of way; they appear like five or six light-houses on as many thousand miles of coast: they gleam upon the surrounding darkness, with an inextinguishable splendor, like stars seen through a mist; but they are seen like stars, to cheer, to guide and to save.—

WASHINGTON is now added to that small number. Already he attracts curiosity, like a newly discovered star, whose benignant light will travel on to the world's and time's farthest bounds. Already his name is hung up by history as conspicuously, as if it sparkled in one of the constellations of the sky.

By commemorating his death, we are called this day to yield the homage that is due to virtue : to confess the common debt of mankind as well as our own : and to pronounce for posterity, now dumb, that eulogium, which they will delight to echo ten ages hence, when we are dumb.

I CONSIDER myself not merely in the midst of the citizens of this town, or even of the state. In idea, I gather round me the nation. In the vast and venerable congregation of the patriots of all countries, and of all enlightened men. I would, if I could raise my voice, and speak to mankind in a strain worthy of my audience, and as elevated as my subject. But how shall I express emotions, that are condemned to be mute, because they are unutterable ? I felt, and I was witness, on the day when the news of his death reached us, to the throes of that grief, that saddened every countenance, and wrung drops of agony from the heart. Sorrow labored for utterance, but found none. Every man looked round for the consolation of other men's tears. Gracious heaven ! what consolation ! each face was convulsed with sorrow for the past : every heart shivered with despair for the future. The man who, and who alone, united all hearts, was dead : dead, at the moment when his power to do good was the greatest, and when the aspect of the imminent public dangers seemed more than ever to render his aid indispensable, and his loss irreparable : irreparable, for two WASHINGTONS come not in one age.

A GRIEF so thoughtful, so profound, so mingled

with tenderness and admiration, so interwoven with our national self-love, so often revived by being diffused, is not to be expressed. You have assigned me a task that is impossible.

O IF I could perform it, if I could illustrate his principles in my discourse as he displayed them in his life, if I could paint his virtues as he practised them, if I could convert the fervid enthusiasm of my heart into the talent to transmit his fame, as it ought to pass, to posterity : I should be the successful organ of your will, the minister of his virtues, and may I dare to say, the humble partaker of his immortal glory. These are ambitious, deceiving hopes, and I reject them. For it is perhaps almost as difficult, at once with judgment and feeling, to praise great actions, as to perform them. A lavish and undistinguishing eulogium is not praise : and to discriminate such excellent qualities as were characteristic and peculiar to him, would be to raise a name, as he raised it, above envy, above parallel, perhaps, for that very reason, above emulation.

SUCH a portraying of character, however, must be addressed to the understanding, and therefore, even if it were well executed, would seem to be rather an analysis of moral principles, than the recital of a hero's exploits. It would rather conciliate confidence and esteem, than kindle enthusiasm and admiration. It would be a picture of WASHINGTON, and like a picture, flat as the canvass ; like a statue, cold as the marble on which he is represented ; cold, alas,

as his corpse in the ground. Ah, how unlike the man late warm with living virtues, animated by the soul once glowing with patriotic fires ! He is gone ! the tomb hides all, that the world could scarce contain, and that once was WASHINGTON, except his glory ; *that* is the rich inheritance of his country ; and his example ; *that* let us endeavor by delineating to impart to mankind. Virtue will place it in her temple, Wisdom in her treasury.

PEACE then to your sorrows. I have done with them. Deep as your grief is, I aim not to be pathetic. I desire less to give utterance to the feelings of this age, than to the judgment of the next.— Let us faithfully represent the illustrious dead, as history will paint, as posterity will behold him.

WITH whatever fidelity I might execute this task, I know that some would prefer a picture drawn to the imagination. They would have our WASHINGTON represented of a giant's size, and in the character of a hero of romance. They who love to wonder better than to reason, would not be satisfied with the contemplation of a great example, unless, in the exhibition, it should be so distorted into prodigy, as to be both incredible and useless. Others, I hope, but few, who think meanly of human nature, will deem it incredible, that even WASHINGTON should think with as much dignity and elevation, as he acted ; and they would grovel in vain in the search for mean and selfish motives, that could incite and sustain him to devote his life to his country.

Do not these suggestions sound in your ears like

a profanation of virtue? and while I pronounce them, do you not feel a thrill of indignation at your hearts? Forbear. Time never fails to bring every exalted reputation to a strict scrutiny : the world, in passing a judgment that is never to be reversed, will deny all partiality, even to the name of WASHINGTON. Let it be denied : for its justice will confer glory.

SUCH a life as WASHINGTON's cannot derive honor from the circumstances of birth and education, though it throws back a lustre upon both.— With an inquisitive mind, that always profited by the lights of others, and was unclouded by passions of its own, he acquired a maturity of judgment, rare in age, unparalleled in youth. Perhaps no young man had so early laid up a life's stock of materials for solid reflection, or settled so soon the principles and habits of his conduct. Grey experience listened to his counsels with respect, and at a time when youth is almost privileged to be rash, Virginia committed the safety of her frontier, and ultimately the safety of America, not merely to his valor, for that would be scarcely praise ; but to his prudence.

It is not in Indian wars that heroes are celebrated ; but it is there they are formed. No enemy can be more formidable, by the craft of his ambushes, the suddenness of his onset, or the ferocity of his vengeance. The soul of WASHINGTON was thus exercised to danger ; and on the first trial, as on every other, it appeared firm in adversity, cool in ac-

tion, undaunted, self-possessed. His spirit, and still more his prudence, on the occasion of Braddock's defeat diffused his name throughout America, and across the Atlantic. Even then his country viewed him with complacency, as her most hopeful son.

AT the peace of 1763, Great-Britain, in consequence of her victories, stood in a position to prescribe her own terms. She chose, perhaps, better for us than for herself : for by expelling the French from Canada, we no longer feared hostile neighbors ; and we soon found just cause to be afraid of our protectors. We discerned even then a truth, which the conduct of France has since so strongly confirmed, that there is nothing which the gratitude of weak states can give, that will satisfy strong allies for their aid, but authority. Nations that want protectors, will have masters. Our settlements, no longer checked by enemies on the frontier, rapidly increased ; and it was discovered that America was growing to a size that could defend itself.

IN this, perhaps unforeseen, but at length obvious state of things, the British government conceived a jealousy of the colonies, of which, and of their intended measures of precaution, they made no secret.

Thus it happened, that their foresight of the evil aggravated its symptoms, and accelerated its progress. The colonies perceived that they could not be governed as before, by affection ; and resol-



ved that they would not be governed by force. Nobly resolved ! for had we submitted to the British claims of right, we should have had, if any, less than our ancient liberty ; and held what might have been left by a worse tenure.

OUR nation, like its great leader, had only to take counsel from its courage. When WASHINGTON heard the voice of his country in distress, his obedience was prompt ; and though his sacrifices were great, they cost him no effort. Neither the object nor the limits of my plan, permit me to dilate on the military events of the revolutionary war. Our history is but a transcript of his claims on our gratitude. Our hearts bear testimony, that they are claims not to be satisfied. When overmatched by numbers ; a fugitive, with a little band of faithful soldiers ; the States as much exhausted as dismayed ; he explored his own undaunted heart, and found there resources to retrieve our affairs. We have seen him display as much valor as gives fame to heroes, and as consummate prudence as ensures success to valor ; fearless of dangers that were personal to him ; hesitating and cautious, when they affected his country ; preferring fame before safety or repose ; and duty, before fame.

ROME did not owe more to Fabius, than America to WASHINGTON. Our nation shares with him the singular glory of having conducted a civil war with mildness, and a revolution, with order.

THE event of that war seemed to crown the felicity and glory both of America and its Chief. Un-

ul that contest, a great part of the civilized world had been surprisngly ignorant of the force and character, and almost of the existence, of the British Colonies. They had not retained what they knew, nor felt curiosity to know the state of thirteen wretched settlements, which vast woods inclosed, and still vaster woods divided from each other. They did not view the colonists so much a people, as a race of fugitives, whom want, and solitude, and intermixture with the savages, had made barbarians. Great-Britain, they saw, was elate with her victories : Europe stood in awe of her power : her arms made the thrones of the most powerful unsteady, and disturbed the tranquillity of their States, with an agitation more extensive than an earthquake. As the giant Enccladus is fabled to lie under Etna, and to shake the mountain when he turns his limbs, her hostility was felt to the extremities of the world. It reached to both the Indies ; in the wilds of Africa, it obstructed the commerce in slaves ; the whales, finding, in time of war, a respite from their pursuers, could venture to sport between the tropics, and did not flee, as in peace, to hide beneath the ice-fields of the polar circle.

At this time, while Great-Britain wielded a force not inferior to that of the Roman empire under Trajan, suddenly, astonished Europe beheld a feeble people, till then unknown, stand forth, and defy this giant to the combat. It was so unequal, all expected it would be short. The events of that war were so many miracles, that attracted; as much perhaps as

any war ever did, the wonder of mankind. Our final success exalted their admiration to its highest point: they allowed to WASHINGTON all that is due to transcendent virtue, and to the Americans more than is due to human nature. They considered us a race of WASHINGTONS, and admitted that nature in America was fruitful only in prodigies. Their books and their travellers, exaggerating and distorting all their representations, assiduously to establish the opinion, that this is a new world, with a new order of men and things adapted to it; that here we practise industry, amidst the abundance that requires none; that we have morals so refined, that we do not need laws; and though we have them, yet we ought to consider their execution as an insult and a wrong; that we have virtue without weaknesses, sentiment without passions, and liberty without factions. These illusions, in spite of their absurdity, and, perhaps, because they are absurd enough to have dominion over the imagination only, have been received by many of the malecontents against the governments of Europe, and induced them to emigrate. Such illusions are too soothing to vanity, to be entirely checked in their currency among Americans.

THEY have been pernicious, as they cherish false ideas of the rights of men and the duties of rulers. They have led the citizens to look for liberty, where it is not; and to consider the government, which is its castle, as its prison.

WASHINGTON retired to Mount Vernon,

and the eyes of the world followed him. He left his countrymen to their simplicity and their passions, and their glory soon departed. Europe began to be undeceived, and it seemed for a time, as if, by the acquisition of independence, our citizens were disappointed. The Confederation was then the only compact made "to form a perfect union of the States, to establish justice, to ensure the tranquillity, and provide for the security of the nation ;" and accordingly, union was a name that still commanded reverence, though not obedience. The system called justice was, in some of the States, iniquity reduced to elementary principles ; and the public tranquillity was such a portentous calm, as rings in deep caverns before the explosion of an earthquake. Most of the States then were in fact, though not in form, unbalanced democracies. Reason, it is true, spoke audibly in their constitutions ; passion and prejudice louder in their laws. It is to the honor of Massachusetts, that it is chargeable with little deviation from principles. Its adherence to them was one of the causes of a dangerous rebellion. It was scarcely possible that such governments should not be agitated by parties, and that prevailing parties should not be vindictive and unjust. Accordingly, in some of the States, creditors were treated as outlaws ; bankrupts were armed with legal authority to be persecutors ; and, by the shock of all confidence and faith, society was shaken to its foundations. Liberty we had ; but we dreaded its abuse almost as much as its loss ; and the wife, who deplored the one, clearly foresaw the other.

THE States were also becoming formidable to each other. Tribute, under the name of import, was for several years levied by some of the commercial States upon their neighbors. Measures of retaliation were resorted to, and mutual recriminations had begun to whet the resentments, whose never failing progress among States is more to justice, vengeance, and war.

THE peace of America hung by a thread, and factions were already sharpening their weapons to cut it. The project of three separate empires in America was beginning to be broached, and the progress of licentiousness would have soon rendered her citizens unfit for liberty in either of them. An age of blood and misery would have punished our disunion : But these were not the considerations to deter ambition from its purpose, while there were so many circumstances in our political situation to favour it.

AT this awful crisis, which all the wise so much dreaded at the time, yet which appears, on a retrospect, to much more dreadful than their fears ; some man was wanting, who possessed a commanding power over the popular passions, but over whom those passions had no power.—That man was WASHINGTON.

HIS name, at the head of such a list of worthies as would reflect honor on their country, had its proper weight with all the enlightened, and with almost all the well disposed among the less reformed citizens, and, blessed be God ! the Constitution was

adopted. Yes, to the eternal honor of America among the nations of the earth, it was adopted, in spite of the obstacles which, in any other country, and perhaps in any other age of *this*, would have been insurmountable; in spite of the doubts and fears, which well meaning prejudice creates for itself, and which party so artfully inflames into stubbornness; in spite of the vice, which it has subjected to restraint, and which is therefore its immortal and implacable foe; in spite of the oligarchies in some of the States, from whom it snatched dominion; it was adopted, and our country enjoys one more invaluable chance for its union and happiness: invaluable! if the retrospect of the dangers we have escaped shall sufficiently inculcate the principles we have so tardily established. Perhaps multitudes are not to be taught by their fears only, without suffering much to deepen the impression: for experience brandishes in her school a whip of scorpions, and teaches nations her summary lessons of wisdom by the scars and wounds of their adversary.

THE amendments which have been projected in some of the States shew, that in them at least, these lessons are not well remembered. In a confederacy of States, some powerful, others weak, the weakness of the federal union will, sooner or later, encourage, and will not restrain, the ambition and injustice of the members. The weak can no otherwise be strong or safe, but in the energy of the national government. It is this defect,—which the blind jealousy of the weak States not unfrequently contri-

butes to prolong,—that has proved fatal to all the confederations that ever existed.

ALTHOUGH it was impossible that such merit as WASHINGTON's should not produce envy, it was scarcely possible that, with such a transcendent reputation, he should have rivals. Accordingly, he was unanimously chosen President of the United States.

As a general and a patriot, the measure of his glory was already full : there was no fame left for him to excel but his own ; and even that task, the mightiest of all his labors, his civil magistracy has accomplished.

No sooner did the new government begin its auspicious course, than order seemed to arise out of confusion. The governments of Europe had seen the old Confederation sinking, squalid and pale, into the tomb, when they beheld the new American Republic rise suddenly from the ground, and, throwing off its grave cloaths, exhibiting the stature and proportions of a young giant, refreshed with sleep. Commerce and industry awoke, and were cheerful at their labors ; for credit and confidence awoke with them. Every where was the appearance of prosperity ; and the only fear was, that its progress was too rapid, to consist with the purity and simplicity of ancient manners. The cares and labors of the President were incessant : his exhortations, example, and authority, were employed to excite zeal and activity for the public service : able officers were selected, only for their merits ; and some of them re-

markably distinguished themselves by their successful management of the public business. Government was administered with such integrity, without mystery, and in so prosperous a course, that it seemed to be wholly employed in acts of beneficence. Though it has made many thousand malecontents, it has never, by its rigor or injustice made one man wretched.

SUCH was the state of public affairs : and did it not seem perfectly to ensure uninterrupted harmony to the citizens ? did they not, in respect to their government and its administration, possess their whole heart's desire ? They had seen and suffered long the want of an efficient constitution : they had freely ratified it : they saw WASHINGTON, their tried friend, the father of his country, invested with its powers. They knew that he could not exceed or betray them, without forfeiting his own reputation. Consider, for a moment, what a reputation it was : Such as no man ever before possessed by so clear a title, and in so high a degree. His fame seemed in its purity to exceed even its brightness : office took honor from his acceptance, but conferred none. Ambition stood awed and darkened by his shadow. For where, through the wide earth, was the man so vain as to dispute precedence with him ; or what were the honors that could make the possessor WASHINGTON's superior ? Refined and complex as the ideas of virtue are, even the gross could discern in his life the infinite superiority of her rewards. Mankind perceived some change in



Their ideas of greatness : the splendor of power, and even of the name of conqueror, had grown dim in their eyes. They did not know that WASHINGTON could augment his fame ; but they knew and felt, that the world's wealth, and its empire too, would be a bribe far beneath his acceptance.

THIS is not exaggeration : never was confidence in a man and a chief magistrate more widely diffused, or more solidly established.

IF it had been in the nature of man that we should enjoy liberty, without the agitations of party, the United States had a right, under these circumstances, to expect it : but it was impossible. Where there is no liberty they may be exempt from party. It will seem strange, but it scarcely admits a doubt, that there are fewer malecontents in Turkey, than in any free state in the world. Where the people have no power, they enter into no contests, and are not anxious to know how they shall use it. The spirit of discontent becomes torpid for want of employment, and sighs itself to rest. The people sleep soundly in their chains, and do not even dream of their weight. They lose their turbulence with their energy, and become as tractable as any other animals : a state of degradation, in which they extort our scorn, and engage our pity, for the misery they do not feel. Yet that heart is a base one, and fit only for a slave's bosom, that would not bleed freely, rather than submit to such a condition ; for liberty with all its parties and agitations is more desirable

than slavery. Who would not prefer the republics of ancient Greece, where liberty once subsisted in its excess, its delirium, terrible in its charms, and glistening to the last with the blaze of the very fire that consumed it ?

I do not know that I ought, but I am sure that I do, prefer those republics to the dozing slavery of modern Greece, where the degraded wretches have suffered scorn till they merit it, where they tread on classic ground, on the ashes of heroes and patriots, unconscious of their ancestry, ignorant of the nature and almost of the name of liberty, and insensible even to the passion for it. Who, on this contrast, can forbear to say, it is the modern Greece that lies buried, that sleeps forgotten in the caves of Turkish darkness ? It is the ancient Greece, that lives in remembrance, that is still bright with glory, still fresh in immortal youth. They are unworthy of liberty, who entertain a less exalted idea of its excellence. The misfortune is, that those who profess to be its most passionate admirers have, generally, the least comprehension of its hazards and impediments :—they expect that an enthusiastic admiration of its nature, will reconcile the multitude to the irksomeness of its restraints. Delusive expectation ! WASHINGTON was not thus deluded. We have his solemn warning against the often fatal propensities of liberty. He had reflected, that men are often false to their country and their honor, false to duty and even to their interest ; but multitudes of men are

never long false or deaf to their passions ; these will find obstacles in the laws, associates in party. The fellowships thus formed, are more intimate, and impose commands more imperious than those of society.

THUS party forms a state within the state, and is animated by a rivalry, fear, and hatred, of its superior. When this happens, the merits of the government will become fresh provocations and offences ; for they are the merits of an enemy. No wonder then, that as soon as party found the virtue and glory of WASHINGTON were obstacles, the attempt was made, by calumny, to surmount them both. For this, the greatest of all his trials, we know that he was prepared. He knew that the government must possess sufficient strength from within or without, or fall a victim to faction. This *interior* strength was plainly inadequate to its defence, unless it could be reinforced from *without* by the zeal and patriotism of the citizens ; and this latter resource was certainly as accessible to President WASHINGTON, as to any chief Magistrate that ever lived. The life of the federal government, he considered, was in the breath of the people's nostrils : whenever they shall happen to be so infatuated or inflamed as to abandon its defence, its end must be as speedy, and might be as tragical, as a constitution for France.

\* WHILE the President was thus administering

#### NOTE.

The Government of Massachusetts has manifested more than once, and so lately as the last year, a wise discernment of the pernicious tendency of certain usurping claims by states, and of changes proposed to abolish, under the name of amending the constitution,

the government, in so wise and just a manner, as to engage the great majority of the enlightened and virtuous citizens to co-operate with him for its support, and while he indulged the hope that time and habit were confirming their attachment, the French revolution had reached that point in its progress, when its terrible principles began to agitate all civilised nations. I will not, on this occasion, detain you to excess, though my thoughts teem with it, my deep abhorrence of that revolution ; its despotism, by the mob or the military, from the first, and its hypocrisy of morals to the last. Scenes have passed there which exceed description, and which, for other reasons, I will not attempt to describe ; for it would not be possible, even at this distance of time, and with the sea between us and France, to go thro' with the recital of them, without perceiving horror gather like a frost, about the heart, and almost stop its pulse. That revolution has been constant in nothing but its vicissitudes, and its promises ; always delusive but always renewed, to establish philosophy by crimes, and liberty by the sword. The people of France, if they are not like the modern Greeks, find their cap of liberty is a soldier's helmet : and, with all their imitation of dictators and consuls, their exactest similitude to the Roman ornaments, is in their chains. The nations of Europe perceive another resemblance in their all conquering ambition.

The example has had its proper weight, to produce, in other states, a like zealous and prompt support of the national government.

Long may such patriotic zeal continue, and ever may its efforts obtain a like success !

BUT it is not only the influence of that event on America, and on the measures of the President, that belongs to my subject. It would be ungratefully wrong to his character to be silent in respect to a part of it, which has the most signally illustrated his virtues.

THE genuine character of that revolution is not even yet so well understood as the dictates of self-preservation require it should be. The chief duty and care of all governments is to protect the rights of property, and the tranquility of society. The leaders of the French Revolution, from the beginning, excited the poor against the rich : This has made the rich poor, but it will never make the poor rich. On the contrary, they were used only as blind instruments to make those leaders masters, first of the adverse party and then of the state. Thus the powers of the state, were turned round into a direction exactly contrary to the proper one, not to preserve tranquility and restrain violence, but to excite violence by the lure of power, and plunder and vengeance. Thus all France has been, and still is, as much the prize of the ruling party, as a captured ship, and if any right or possession has escaped confiscation, there is none that has not been liable to it.

THUS it clearly appears, that, in its origin, its character, and its means, the government of that country is revolutionary ; that is, not only different from, but directly contrary to, every regular and

well ordered society. It is a danger, similar in its kind, and at least equal in degree to that, with which ancient Rome menaced her enemies. The allies of Rome were slaves ; and it cost some hundred years efforts of her policy and arms, to make her enemies her allies. Nations, at this day, can trust no better to treaties ; they cannot even trust to arms, unless they are used with a spirit and perseverance becoming the magnitude of their danger. For the French Revolution has been, from the first, hostile to all right and justice, to all peace and order in society ; and therefore its very existence, has been a state of warfare against the civilized world ; and most of all against free and orderly republics. For such are never without factions, ready to be the allies of France, and to aid her in the work of destruction. Accordingly, scarcely any but republics have they subverted. Such governments, by shewing in practice what republican liberty *is*, detect French imposture, and shew what their prettexts are *not*.

To subvert them, therefore, they had, besides the facility that faction affords, the double excitement of removing a reproach, and converting their greatest obstacles into their most efficient auxiliaries.

Who then, on careful reflection, will be surprised that the French and their partizans, instantly conceived the desire, and made the most powerful attempts, to revolutionize the American government? But it will hereafter seem strange, that their ex-

cesses should be excused, as the effects of a struggle for liberty, and that so many of our citizens should be flattered, while they were insulted, with the idea, that our example was copied, and our principles pursued. Nothing was ever more false, or more fascinating. Our liberty depends on our education, our laws, and habits, to which even prejudices yield; on the dispersion of our people on farms, and on the almost equal diffusion of property; it is founded on morals and religion, whose authority reigns in the heart, and on the influence all these produce on public opinion before *that* opinion governs rulers. *Here* liberty is restraint: *there* it is violence: *here* it is mild and cheering, like the morning sun of our summer, brightening the hills and making the vallies green; *there* it is like the sun, when his rays dart pestilence on the sands of Africa. American Liberty calms and restrains the licentious passions, like an angel that says to the winds and troubled seas, be still. But how has French licentiousness appeared to the wretched citizens of Switzerland and Venice. Do not their haunted imaginations, even when they wake, represent her as a monster, with eyes that flash wild-fire, hands that hurl thunderbolts, a voice that shakes the foundation of the hills? She stands, and her ambition measures the earth; she speaks, and an epidemic fury seizes the nations.

EXPERIENCE is lost upon us, if we deny that it had seized a large part of the American nation.

It is as sober, and intelligent, as free, and as worthy to be free as any in the world. Yet, like all other people, we have passions and prejudices, and they had received a violent impulse, which, for a time, misled us.

JACOBINISM had become here, as in France, rather a sect than a party; inspiring a fanaticism that was equally intolerant and contagious. The delusion was general enough to be thought the voice of the people—therefore claiming authority without proof; and jealous enough to exact acquiescence without a manner of contradiction. Some progress was made in training multitudes to be vindictive and ferocious. To them nothing seemed amiable but the revolutionary justice of Paris; nothing terrible but the government and justice of America. The very name of *patriots* was claimed and applied in proportion as the citizens had alienated their hearts from America, and transferred them to their foreign corrupter: Party discerned its intimate connection of interest with France, and consummated its profligacy by yielding to foreign influence.

THE views of these allies required that this country should engage in war with Great Britain. Nothing less would give to France all the means of annoying this dreaded rival. Nothing less would ensure the subjection of America, as a satellite to the ambition of France: Nothing else could make a revolution here perfectly inevitable.



FOR this end the minds of the citizens were artfully inflamed, and the moment was watched, and impatiently waited for, when their long heated passions should be infusion, to pour them forth, like the lava of a volcano, to blacken and consume the peace and government of our country.

THE systematic operations of a faction under foreign influence had began to appear, and were successfully pursued, in a manner too deeply alarming to be soon forgotten. Who of us does not remember this worst of evils in this worst of ways? Shame would forget, if it could, that in one of the states, amendments were proposed, to break down the Federal Senate, which, as in the state governments, is a great bulwark of the public order. To break down another, an extravagant judiciary power was claimed for the states. In another state, a rebellion was fomented by the agent of France: and who, without indignation, can remember, that the powers of government were openly usurped; troops levied, and ships fitted out to fight for her? Nor can any true friend to our government consider, without dread, that, soon afterwards, the treaty making power was boldly challenged for a breach of the government, from which the constitution has wisely withholden it.

I AM oppressed, and know not how to proceed with my subject—WASHINGTON, blessed be God! who endued him with wisdom, and clothed him with power—WASHINGTON issued his proclamation of neutrality, and, at an early period, unravelled the intrigues of France and the passions of

his countrymen, on the very edge of the precipice—of war and revolution.

THIS act of firmness, at the hazard of his reputation and peace, entitles him to the name of the first patriot. Time was gained for the citizens to recover their virtue and good sense, and they soon recovered them. The crisis was passed, and America was saved.

You and I, most respected citizens, should be sooner tired than satisfied in recounting the particulars of this illustrious man's life.

How great he appeared, while he administered the Government ; how much greater when he retired from it ; how he accepted the chief military command under his wife and upright successor ; how his life was unspotted like his fame, and how his death was worthy of his life—are so many distinct subjects of instruction, and each of them singly more than enough for an eulogium. I leave the talk, however, to history and to posterity ; they will be faithful to it.

It is not impossible, that some will affect to consider the honors paid to this great patriot by the nation, as excessive, idolatrous, and degrading to freemen who are all equal. • I answer, that refusing to virtue its legitimate honors would not prevent their being lavished, in future, on any worthless and ambitious favorite. If this day's example should have its natural effect, it will be salutary. Let such honors be so conferred only when, in future, they shall be so merited : then the public sen-

timent will not be mislaid, nor the principles of a just equality corrupted. The best evidence of reputation is a man's whole life. We have now, alas ! all WASHINGTON's before us. There has scarcely appeared a really great man, whose character has been more admired in his life time, or less correctly understood by his admirers. When it is comprehended, it is no easy task to delineate its excellencies in such a manner, as to give to the portrait both interest and resemblance. For it requires thought and study to understand the true ground of the superiority of his character over many others, whom he resembled in the principles of action, and even in the manner of acting. But perhaps he excels all the great men that ever lived, in the steadiness of his adherence to his maxims of life, and in the uniformity of all his conduct to the same maxims. Those maxims, though wise, were yet not so remarkable for their wisdom, as for their authority over his life : for if there were any errors in his judgment, (and he discovered as few as any man) we know of no blemishes in virtues. He was the patriot, without reproach : he loved his country well enough to hold his success in serving it an ample recompence. Thus far self-love and love of country coincided : but when his country needed sacrifices, that no other man could, or perhaps would be willing to make, he did not even hesitate. This was virtue in its most exalted character. More than once he put his fame at hazard, when he had reason to think it would be sacrificed : at least, in this

age, two instances cannot be denied : when the army was disbanded ; and again, when he stood like Leonidas at the van of the Thermophila, to defend our independence against France.

It is indeed almost as difficult to draw his character, as the portrait of virtue. The reasons are similar. Our ideas of moral excellence are obscure, because they are complex, and we are obliged to resort to illustrious WASHINGTON's example, as the happiest to shew what virtue is ; and to delineate his character, we naturally expatiate on the beauty of virtue. Much must be felt, and much imagined. His pre-eminence is not so much to be seen in the display of any one virtue, as in the possession of them all, and in the practice of the most difficult. Here often, therefore, his character must be studied before it will be striking : and then it will be admitted as a model, a precious one to a free republic.

It is no less difficult to speak of his talents : they were adapted to lead, without dazzling mankind : and to draw forth and employ the talents of others, without being misled by them. In this he was certainly superior, that he never mistook nor misapplied his own. His great modesty and reserve would have concealed them, if great occasions had not called them forth : and then, as he never spoke from the affectation to shine, nor added from any sinister motives, it is from their effects only that we can judge of their greatness and extent. In public trusts, where men, acting conspicuously or cautious,

and in those private concerns, where few to conceal or resist their weaknesses, WASHINGTON was uniformly great : pursuing right conduct from right maxims. His talents were such, as assist a sound judgment and ripen with it : his prudence was consummate and seemed to take the direction of all his powers and passions : for, as a foldier, he was more solicitous to avoid mistakes that might be fatal, than to perform exploits that are brilliant : and as a statesman, to adhere to the just principles, however old, than to pursue novelties : and therefore, in both characters, his qualities were singularly adapted to the interest, and were tried in the greatest perils of the country. His habits of inquiry were so far remarkable, that he was never satisfied with investigating, nor desisted from it, so long as he had less than all the light he could obtain upon a subject ; and then he made his decision without bias.

THIS command over the partialities that so generally stop men short, or turn them aside in their pursuit of truth, is one of the chief causes of his unvaried course of right conduct in so many difficult scenes, where every human actor must be presumed to err.

IF he had strong passions, he had learned to subdue them, and to be moderate and mild. If he had weak nerves, he concealed them, which is rare, and excluded them from the government of his temper and conduct, which is still more rare. If he loved fame, he never made improper compliances for

what is called popularity. The fame he enjoyed is of the kind that will last forever; yet it was rather the effect, than the motive of his conduct. Some future Plutarch will search for a parallel to his character. Epaminondas is perhaps the brightest name of all antiquity. Our WASHINGTON resembled him in the purity and ardor of his patriotism; and, like him, he first exalted the glory of his country. There is to be hoped, the parallel ends: for Thebes fell with Epaminondas. But such comparisons cannot be pursued far, without departing from the similitude. For we shall find it as difficult to compare great men as great rivers. Some we admire for the length and rapidity of their current, and the grandeur of their cataracts: others for the majestic silence and fullness of their streams: we cannot bring them together to measure the difference of their waters. The unambitious life of WASHINGTON, declining fame yet courted by it, seemed, like the Ohio, to choose its long way through solitudes, diffusing fertility, or, like his own Potowmac, widening and deepening his channel, as he approaches the sea, and displaying most the usefulness and serenity of his greatness towards the end of his course. Such a citizen would do honor to any country. The constant veneration and affection of his country will shew, that it was worthy of such a citizen.

However his military fame may excite the wonder of mankind, it is chiefly by his civil magistracy, that his example will instruct them. Great gene-

erals have arisen in all ages of the world, and perhaps most in those of despotism and darkness. In times of violence and convulsion, they rise, by the force of the whirlwind, high enough to ride in it, and direct the storm. Like meteors, they glare in the black clouds with a splendor, that, while it dazzles and terrifies, makes nothing visible but the darkness. The fame of heroes is indeed growing vulgar : they multiply on every long war : they stand in history, and thicken in their ranks, and almost as undistinguished as their own soldiers.

But such a Chief Magistrate as WASHINGTON, appears like the Pole Star in a clear sky, to direct the skilful Statesman. His presidency will form an epoch, and be distinguished as the age of WASHINGTON. Already it assumes its high place in the political region. Like the milky way, it whitens along its allotted portion of the hemisphere. The latest generations of men will survey, through the telescope of history, the space where so many virtues blend their rays, and delight to separate them into groups and distinct virtues. As the best illustrations of them, the living monument, to which the first of Patriots would have chosen to consign his fame, it is my earnest prayer to heaven, that our country may subsist, even to the late day, in the plenitude of its liberty and happiness, and mingle its mild glory with WASHINGTON.