

A
DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT
NEW-HAVEN,

FEB. 22, 1800 ;

ON THE CHARACTER

OF

GEORGE WASHINGTON, Esq.

AT THE

REQUEST OF THE CITIZENS;

By TIMOTHY DWIGHT, D. D.
PRESIDENT OF YALE-COLLEGE.

PRINTED BY THOMAS GREEN AND SON,
NEW-HAVEN;

1800.

A PROCLAMATION,

BY THE PRESIDENT *of the United States of America.*

WHEREAS the Congress of the United States have this day resolved, “ That it be recommended to the People of the United States to assemble on the 22d day of February next, in such numbers and manners as may be convenient, publicly to testify their grief for the death of general George Washington, by suitable eulogies, orations and discourses, or by public prayers:” and “ That the President of the United States be requested to issue a Proclamation for the purpose of carrying the foregoing resolution into effect.” NOW THEREFORE I John Adams, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the same accordingly.

Given under my hand and the seal of the United States, at Philadelphia, the sixth day of January, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred, and of the Independence of the United States the twenty-fourth.

JOHN ADAMS.

By the President,

TIMOTHY PICKERING, *Secretary of State.*

IN pursuance of the foregoing proclamation, the citizens of New-Haven convened and appointed a committee, with full powers, to make suitable arrangements for a public testimony of the respect of the citizens for the memory of General George Washington. Pursuant to this appointment the committee agreed on the following exercises and marks of grief, which were exhibited on the 22d instant.

AT six o'clock in the morning, the solemnities of the day were introduced by the tolling of all the bells for half an hour. The tolling was repeated at nine and twelve o'clock. The flag of the United States was displayed, on the public square, at half staff, and the shipping in the harbour displayed colours, through the day, at half mast.

AT two o'clock P.M. the citizens assembled, in unusual concourse, at the brick Meeting-house, where were performed the following exercises :

1. A Funeral Anthem.
2. An appropriate Prayer, by the Rev. James Dana, D.D.
3. Music.
4. A Sermon, by the Rev. President Dwight.
5. The reading of Gen. Washington's farewell Address, to the Citizens of the United States, on declining public Life, by the Rev. Bela Hubbard.
6. A pertinent Prayer, by the Rev. John Gemmil.
7. A Funeral Dirge.

THE citizens of both sexes wore, on the left arm, black crape, or ribbons, as badges of mourning ; the pulpit was dressed in black ; secular business was suspended ; the exercises were solemn and impressive ; and the attention and conduct of the citizens evidenced their gratitude for the eminent services, and their veneration for the distinguished virtues, of the illustrious man, whose death they deplored.

AT a Meeting of the Committee of Arrangements, February 24, 1800, RESOLVED, That the thanks of the citizens of New-Haven be presented to the Rev. Timothy Dwight, D.D. for his pertinent and eloquent Discourse, delivered on the 22d instant, and that a copy be requested for publication.

RESOLVED, That the proceedings of the town, the discourse, and General Washington's farewell address, be published for the benefit of the citizens of New-Haven, and to perpetuate the remembrance of the melancholy occasion.

By order of the Committee,

HENRY DAGGETT, *Chairman.*

DEUTERONOMY, XXXIV. 10, 11, 12.

*And there arose not a prophet, since in Israel, like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face ;
In all the signs and wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land ;
And in all that mighty hand, and in all that great terror, which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.*

TO praise such as have lately died, is the instinctive conduct of sorrow. From those who surround the bed of a departed friend, the first accents, which succeed the involuntary burst of anguish, are enumerations of his real or supposed virtues. Even in the mouths of the intelligent, and in the chambers of the refined and delicate, the praise is warm and unqualified, and nature overleaps every bound, raised by artificial decorum. Among nations less enlightened, open and strong commendations of the dead are inwoven in the established manners, and demanded by common decency ; while, among savages, funeral songs, replete with passionate sentiments, glowing imagery, and excessive panegyric, are prominent features of national character, and splendid parts of public celebration.

To this general voice of nature Revelation has added its supreme sanction. The text, which I have just now read, is an eulogy of the highest kind.

When we remember the numbers, and the character, of the prophets who followed Moses ; when we consider that of this number were Samuel, David, Isaiah, and Daniel ; we cannot but feel, that it would have been difficult to ascribe to him a more honorable character.

WHAT then has been the cause, that no efforts of the mind have been less approved, than funeral eulogies ; and that an insipid panegyric is become proverbial phraseology ? Has it not been, on the one hand, that grief, and not reason, has given birth to the praise, and that grief alone can admit its truth, or feel its propriety ? Has it not been, on the other hand, that the Eulogist has come, in form, to make the most of his theme ; to create a character which has not existed, and to supply worth which he does not find ; to display his ingenuity, rather than the features of the deceased ; and to gain applause for his own talents, rather than respect for the subject of his panegyric. For these, or some other reasons, few attempts of this nature have succeeded ; and the effort to gain esteem for the dead has terminated in producing contempt for the living.

BESIDE the difficulties, always attendant on attempts of this nature, the present occasion involves some, which are peculiar. The subject of eulogy at this time is so splendid, as to induce, and authorize, every man to demand all that can be said by the human genius, and to stipulate for its noblest efforts only ; so near to the heart of an American, as to warrant an unqualified rejection of whatsoever falls beneath its expectations, and its wishes ; so often and so illustriously panegyrized, both at home and abroad, as to leave little chance for novelty, or success. The very name of Washington has become an equivalent to the highest human dignity and worth, and all additions to it.

have long passed rather for the mere unburdening of an American heart, than for the means of honouring his character. Where so much is demanded, and so little will be accepted, temerity only can furnish confidence to the speaker, and persuade him, that he shall satisfy the wishes of his fellow citizens.

To some person, however, the task, assigned to me, must have fallen ; and to none could it have fallen without anxiety. I have ventured upon it, with an intention to perform a duty, not with a hope to fulfil expectation. Funeral panegyric I have always shunned ; and would more willingly have avoided it on this occasion, than on any other.

THIS apology, which may probably seem long, and useless, will, it is hoped, nevertheless prove of some use to the speaker. It is hoped, that it will, in some degree, justify the undertaking, and explain and vindicate the manner in which it will be executed ; that it will lead my audience to expect, and shew the reasons why I shall exhibit, a plain and chastized account of my subject ; and that it will induce them to consider what I shall assert, however it may differ from their opinions and feelings, as believed and felt by me.

HUMAN greatness is of many kinds, and appears under many forms ; but the diversities of personal greatness have their foundation in the intellect, and in the heart. How far this is, in either case, the result of the original structure of the mind, and how far of effort and acquisition, it is probably impossible for man to determine. We see some actually great ; but the cause, and the means, have in a degree been, hitherto, in a state of uncertainty.

IN all cases, in which this distinction has been achieved, whether intellectual, or moral, there must

to superior endowments and attainments, be super-added, by Providence, a happy field, in which they may be advantageously displayed. Some object seen, and felt, by the mind, to be of sufficient importance to justify high and ardent efforts, and to repay the labours, and the sufferings, which attend them, must be presented to the understanding, and lay hold on the heart. In this situation, if ever, the man rises above himself, feels his powers in a new manner, exerts talents of which he was before unconscious, and virtues which had hitherto been dormant. Himself, as well as the world, is astonished at what he is, and at what he does; the fisherman is changed into an Apostle; the* trader of Mecca becomes the founder of a religion, and an empire, embracing a fourth of mankind; and the †leader of a gang of thieves ascends the throne of Persia, and places beneath his feet the scepter of Hindostan.

Among those occasions, which have lifted man above his ordinary sphere, none have displayed with more splendor, either talents, or virtues, than the revolutions of religion and empire. The conquest of nations, and the subversion of governments, formed, as well as exhibited, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsar, Ghengis, Timur-bec, Kouli Khan, Frederic, 2d. Hyder Ali, and various others of a similar character. To all these the pride of victory, the extension of conquest, and the increase of dominion, rose in full view; and, with a fascination wholly irresistible, prompted them to contrive, to dare, and to attempt, beyond the limits of ordinary belief. When we contemplate these men, however, our admiration is always mingled with disgust; and the few things in their characters, which claim esteem, are lost in the multitude of those,

* Mahommed.

† Nadir Kouli Khan.

which force abhorrence. The lustre shed around them is gloomy and dismal ; a glare of Avernus ; a “ darkness visible ;” at which the eye gazes with a mixture of astonishment and horror. We sicken, while we read their exploits ; and blush, that such scourges of the world should have claimed a common nature with ourselves.

BUT there have been happier occasions for calling into action, and into light, the superiour faculties of man. Empire and religion have, at times, changed for the better. Men have arisen, whom the world has not only admired, but revered, and loved ; to whom applause was not the mere outcry of astonishment, but the silent and steady testimony of the understanding, the cheerful and instinctive tribute of the heart. When oppression was to be resisted, government to be reformed, or the moral state of mankind to be renewed, the Ruler of the Universe has always supplied the means, and the agents. Where to the human eye the whole face of things has worn an uniform level ; where every family was lost in insignificance, and every citizen was a peasant, and a slave ; energy, asleep under the pressure of weary circumstances, and talents, veiled by humble and hopeless obscurity, have been roused into action, and pushed forward to distinction and glory.

AMONG the men, who, at such periods, have risen to eminence, the Prophet, who is the subject of my text, is unquestionably the first. In all the talents which enlarge the human mind and all the virtues which ennoble the human heart, in the amiableness of private life and the dignity of a ruler, in dangers hazarded and difficulties overcome, in splendor of destination and the enjoyment, and proofs, of divine complacency, he is clearly without a rival. Companions, perhaps superiors, he

may find in some single walk of greatness ; but in the whole progress he is hitherto alone.

FOR this preeminence he was plainly fitted by nature, and education, by the manner of his life, and the field of his employment. Born with a soul superior to his kind, educated in the first school of wisdom, trained to arms, and to policy, in the most improved and powerful court in the world, and nurtured in wisdom still more sublime in the quiet retreats of Midian, he came forth to his great scene of public action, with the most happy preparation both for success and glory. God was about to accomplish a more important revolution than had ever taken place, and had formed and finished the instrument, which so illustrious a design required.

IN whatever course of life, in whatever branch of character, we trace this great man, we find almost every thing to approve, and love, and scarcely any thing to lament, or censure. When we see him at the burning bush, sacrificing his diffidence to his duty, and resolving finally to attempt the first great liberation of mankind ; when we accompany him to the presence of Pharaoh, and hear him demand the release of the miserable victims of his tyranny ; when we behold him laying Egypt waste, and summoning all the great engines of terror and destruction to overcome the obstinacy and wickedness of her monarch ; when we follow him to the Red Sea, and behold the waters divide at his command, to open a passage for the millions of Israel ; and at the same command return, to deluge the Egyptian host ; when we trace him through the wonders of Sinai, and of the wilderness ; when we mark his steady faith in God, his undoubting obedience to every divine command, his unexampled patriotism, immovable by ingratitude, rebellion, and insult, his cheerful communication of every office of power and

profit to others, and his equally cheerful exclusion of his own descendants from all places of distinction; when we consider his glorious integrity in adhering always to the duties of his office, unseduced by power and splendour, unmoved by national and singular homage, unawed by faction and opposition, undaunted by danger and difficulty, and unaltered by provocation, obloquy, and distress; when we see him meek beyond example, and patient and persevering, through forty years of declining life, in toil, hazard, and trial; when we read in his writings the frank records of his own failings, and those of his family, friends, and nation, and the first efforts of the historian, the poet, the orator, and the law-giver; when we see all the duties of self government, benevolence, and piety, which he taught, exactly displayed in a life approximating to angelic virtue; when we behold him the deliverer of his nation, the restorer of truth, the pillar of righteousness, and the reformer of mankind; his whole character shines with a radiance, like the splendour, which his face derived from the Sun of Righteousness, and on which the human eye could not endure to look. He is every where the same glorious person; the Man of God; selected from the race of Adam; called up into the mountain, that burned with fire; ascending to meet his Creator; embosoming himself in the clouds of Sinai; walking calmly onward through the thunders and lightnings; and serenely advancing to the immediate presence, and converse, of Jehovah. He is the greatest of all prophets; the first type of the Saviour; conducted to Pisgah, unclothed of mortal flesh, and entombed in the dust, by the immediate hand of the Most High.

In a sphere, in some respects less splendid, but in the eye of wisdom and virtue scarcely less honourable, Paul, also, rose to finished glory and greatness, as the enlightener, and reformer of mankind.

He was not, like Moses, the emancipator of a nation, the head of a new church, or the founder of an empire ; but he was the most illustrious follower of the Son of God, in establishing Christianity, and in accomplishing the salvation of men. No labours of man claim a higher moral distinction, than his ; no mind was ever so expanded, or elevated, with the noblest knowledge ; no heart was probably ever warmed with more various, or more exalted virtue. No man ever struggled more firmly with dangers ; or rose more gloriously above difficulties ; regarded friends with more affection, or enemies with more compassion ; felt for himself less, or his fellow men more ; or attained a more sublime and unmingled piety, than Paul. To his labours mankind are, directly, more indebted, than to those of any other man, for the moral wisdom, the virtue, the peace, and the happiness, which they now enjoy.

SUCH excellence we are not to look for among those, who have received no supernatural assistance ; yet, in similar revolutions of empire, similar emancipations of mankind, and similar renovations of the human character, both talents and virtues have appeared with high lustre and dignity. As proofs of this assertion, many names of no small celebrity might be recited here, were it necessary ; but it will be sufficient for the present occasion, to mention three only, as distinguished, in my view at least, above others. These are the first, and second Gustavus, of Sweden, and Alfred the Great, of England. Were not his character clouded by some serious defects, I should add to this list Henry the fourth, of France.

THE first Gustavus accomplished for Sweden what the great man, whose character and death we are assembled to commemorate, accomplished for us ; a deliverance from political thralldom, and the

establishment of political freedom and safety. Illustriously descended, distinguished in early youth for a series of honourable actions, and already the object of governmental confidence and public hope, he was trepanned by the treachery of Christiern the third, of Denmark, one of the most faithless, proud, and bloody tyrants, that ever disgraced the name of man ; was thrown into prison, and secretly ordered to be put to death ; solely because his claims of power in Sweden were great, and his worth gave the fairest promise of seeing them substantiated. Released from his dungeon by the good offices of a generous Danish Nobleman, he escaped through many dangers to his native country. There friendless, forsaken, seen only to be shunned, and known only to excite the dread of death for not betraying him to Christiern, he at length betook himself to the mountains of Dalecarlia ; a province yet but half subdued, and inhabited by a generous band of peasants, glowing with the unconquerable love of liberty. Here unknown but by distant rumour, without authority, without a friend, without a shilling, and hunted by the Usurper and his creatures through every solitude and celi, he wrought in the mines, to procure his daily bread. But such a man cannot be long obscured. The peasants of Dalecarlia he found still brave and sincere, and boldly invited them to victory and freedom. Charmed by his dignity and gracefulness of person and demeanour, fascinated by his eloquence, and secure under his conduct and bravery, these plain men followed him eagerly into the field of conflict ; to any other a field of despair ; to him, of hope and triumph. At their head, he met the veterans of Denmark, only to defeat them ; and sat down before their castles, only to take them. Within a short period, he overran, and redeemed the whole of his native country ; every where present ; the animating, informing, directing

principle of the army, and of the nation ; and by the unanimous voice of the Estates was advanced to the throne. In this high station, enjoying every testimony of public respect short of adoration, for his distinguished wisdom, gallantry, patriotism, and piety, he revived the agriculture, renewed the wasted cities and villages, restored the commerce, re-established and improved the justice, secured the liberty, reformed the religion, and engrossed the hearts, of his grateful nation. “ In all other respects,” says the Catholic* writer of his life, “ except the introduction of Lutheranism into his kingdom, he deserves the praise and admiration of posterity.”

THE second Gustavus, having, from the age of 18, reigned in Sweden, with singular wisdom, equity, and glory, for twenty years, appeared in Germany, 1631, in the illustrious character of Defender of the Protestant religion, against the last great efforts of the Catholics, in that country, for its destruction ; and gloriously lost his life in establishing the cause, for which he died. He is thus described by a respectable modern historian. §

“ No prince, ancient or modern, seems to have possessed in so eminent a degree, as Gustavus Adolphus, the qualities of the hero, the statesman, and the commander ; that intuitive genius which conceives, that wisdom which plans, and that happy combination of courage and conduct which gives success to an enterprise. Nor was the military progress of any leader equally rapid, under circumstances equally difficult ; with an inferior force, against warlike nations, and disciplined troops, commanded by able and experienced generals.”

“ BUT Gustavus had other qualities beside those

* Vertot.

§ Russell.

of a military and political kind. He was a pious Christian, a warm friend, a tender husband, a dutiful son, an affectionate father. The sentiments suited to all these softer characters are admirably displayed in a letter from him to *Oxenstiern, written a few days before the battle of Lutzen, in which he lost his life." In this letter is the following memorable passage.

"Consider me as a man, the guardian of a kingdom, who has struggled with difficulties, and passed thro' them with reputation, by the protection and mercy of heaven; as a man, who loved and honoured his relations, and who neglected life, riches, and happy days, for the preservation and glory of his country, and faithful subjects; expecting no other recompense, than to be declared the prince, who fulfilled the duties of that station, which Providence had assigned him in the world."

"THE merit of Alfred (says Hume) both in public and private life, may with advantage be set in opposition to that of any monarch or citizen, which the annals of any age or nation can present to us. He seems indeed to be the model of that perfect character, which, under the denomination of a sage or wise man, philosophers have been fond of delineating, rather as a fiction of their imagination, than in hopes of ever seeing it really existing: so happily were all his virtues tempered together; so justly were they blended; and so powerfully did each prevent the other from exceeding its proper boundaries! He knew how to reconcile the most enterprising spirit with the coolest moderation; the most obstinate perseverance with the easiest flexibility; the most severe justice with the gentlest lenity; the greatest vigour in command with the most perfect

* His Minister.

affability of deportment ; the highest capacity and inclination for science with the most shining talents for action ;” * and, let me add, the warmest devotion and piety with the utmost candour and liberality. “ His civil and military virtues are almost equally the objects of our admiration ; excepting only, that the former, being more rare among princes, as well as more useful, seem chiefly to challenge our applause.”

As a fourth in this dignified groupe, may, with the fullest confidence, be placed the hero, statesman, and father, of our own country. I have introduced a summary account of these great men into this discourse, that by comparing his character with theirs, and seeing them stand side by side, my audience may be enabled to form a more accurate estimate of his worth. Greatness is a term wholly comparative ; its true import is, therefore, to be seen by comparison only. On the one hand, superiority to the common mass, and on the other approximation, equality, or eminence, with respect to such as have been thus superior, is all that is intended by the word. As Moses and Paul were the greatest human characters among such as have been supernaturally assisted ; and the three princes, whom I have here characterized, were, if I mistake not, the first among those, who have become great by means merely natural ; to sustain a fair resemblance to these men must be highly honourable ; to be near them, an enviable distinction ; to equal them, the crown of the most exalted ambition.

As the sphere of Paul's exertions was peculiar, he must of course be passed by in such a design. As Moses was inspired, and sustained by a peculiar agency of the Most High, the comparison with him

* See Note A.

must in many respects be unfairly instituted. Yet a strong resemblance between him and the hero of our own country is so evident, that the recital of it is become almost proverbial. The occasions, the talents, the virtues, the divine interpositions, and the issue, were so similar, as to strike the most undiscriminating eye, and to find an easy acknowledgment from every tongue. Particularly, the preeminence of Moses to all the great men in Israel, marked so strongly in the text, and the like distinction justly claimed by the American leader, not only over his countrymen, but over all men of the present age, form a most honourable ground of comparison.

THAT General Washington is, with propriety, introduced as a proper companion to the three illustrious princes, whom I have mentioned above, as a companion, whom, on equal terms, they may be fairly supposed cheerfully to welcome to their number and rank, will, I trust, appear from a just account of his character.

THERE are two methods, in which such an account may be advantageously given; a recital of what he has done, and an exhibition of the attributes which he manifested.

IN very early life, he began to be, in a sense prophetically, distinguished for wisdom and conduct superior to his years; and executed so ably several important commissions, which he received from the legislature of Virginia, as to secure their confidence, and command the applause of the whole country. Such trusts have been rarely committed to so young a man, and have probably been never better lodged in the hands of any man. That in the existing circumstances success was, in one of the cases, completely achieved; that, in a second, so little disaster ensu-

ed ; and that, in a third, total ruin was prevented ; is plainly and chiefly to be attributed to the skill and firmness of a youth between nineteen and twenty-three, acting in the last case only in a voluntary capacity.

AFTER acquiring, both in public and private life, the universal esteem, through the following season of peace, he was chosen, in the year 1774, one of the Representatives in the first Congress. Here his former reputation, and the proofs which he daily gave of superiour wisdom and worth, induced that body to choose him, in 1775, commander in chief of the American armies, employed to resist the hostilities of Great-Britain. This hazardous office he accepted with a *modesty, which always accompanies and announces merit, and with a firmness of decision, which no future embarrassment could move. Under a government just formed, and marked with infantine weakness ; in a country composed of separate and deranged sovereignties ; amidst a people now first seriously connected ; at the head of armies formed of mere militia, a band of scouts and yet to be made soldiers, and of officers ignorant of the discipline which they were to teach, and of the movements which they were to guide ; strangers, rivals, and sometimes enemies ; without ammunition, arms, clothes, or money ; enlisted for a summer ; and plunged by inexperience into all the exposures, discouragements, diseases, and miseries, of unprovided military life ; he became the body of union to the people, and to the soldiery, guided the one to wisdom, and led the other to victory. In his own letters, ‡ not less illustrious commentaries than those of Cæsar, and on a more glorious war, he is seen, through the veil of his modesty, to have been the pillar, on which the country suspended itself ; the

* See Note B.

‡ See Note C.

soul, by which the army was formed, quickened, and actuated. In the midst of the immense and momentous concerns, lying alway on his mind, no want, nor its supply ; no suffering, nor its relief ; no evil, nor its remedy ; no improvement in the affairs of the army, or the country, nor the means by which it might be best accomplished ; eluded his attention. He is there proved, and without intending it, to have been the source of almost every important measure, the origin of the great mass of meliorations, in our system.

In this war, for which we were so unfurnished, as to render it, in the eye of sober judgment, more like Quixotism than justifiable enterprise, his cautious wisdom, more necessary, more varied, and more extraordinary, than that of the celebrated Roman, justly gained him, abroad, as well as at home, the title of the American Fabius. To the minds of unskilful, ardent, and partial judges, however, this wisdom, without which we now clearly see our country must have been lost, appeared to result from imbecility and fear. So far did this opinion, together with some concurring circumstances, operate, as to engender a serious attempt to raise a foreigner, in every respect his inferiour, to the supreme command. Had not this childish and wretched attempt been ably and strenuously opposed, had not the great body of officers of distinction solemnly pledged themselves to each other never to serve, while he lived, under any other commander, there is reason to fear, that it would have succeeded. Of this glaring attempt against him his mind, superior alike to favour and to frowns, took no other notice, than what has been buried in silence. Satisfied with himself, and strong in the attachment of those whom he commanded, he rose above every attack, danger, and enemy.

A country, an army, situated as were ours, carried misfortune in their face. The country was unskilled and unfurnished; and its councils, composed indeed of great and good men, were yet in no degree versed in the business, which they were now called to direct. The army was formed of brave and hardy soldiers, and of gallant and sensible officers; but it was gathered, and dispersed, in a day; and, when most necessary, and presented with the fairest opportunities of successful enterprise, had disappeared. Never did he appear greater, than in these seasons of trial and depression. No enterprises of his shine with more lustre, than his decampment from *Long-Island, his retreat from General Howe through New-Jersey, his descent upon Trenton, † his elusion of Lord Cornwallis at Trenton, his consequent march through New-Jersey, in which he defeated the British corps at Princeton, and the address, with which he preserved the appearance of a considerable force at Morristown, where, through the winter, he had only eleven or twelve hundred men, and these under a successive inoculation, to resist the whole British army.

BUT his military life had also its seasons of prosperity. His successes were, however, almost always obtained at the head of a force, inferior to that of his enemy, and of consequence were, in an eminent degree, the result of his own efforts. Like the illustrious men, to whom I have compared him, he had the happiness of ending the great controversy, in which he had engaged, and in which his country was the stake, with a final and complete triumph. All that, for which he fought, and that the greatest prize, which excites human contention, he gained; and lived long enough to reap a glorious reward of

* See Note D.

† See Note E.

his labours in the peace and safety, the veneration and blessings, of his countrymen.

His political, was not less honorable than his military, career. When, under the weakness and inefficiency of the Confederation, these States were falling asunder, and tumbling into anarchy and ruin, he contributed, at the head of the General Convention, more, by his wisdom, virtue and influence, than any other man, to the final adoption of the Federal Constitution ; and thus saved his country a second time. Twice summoned by the unanimous voice of the nation to the Presidency of the General Government, he there, in a series of wise, firm, and generous measures, stepped often between the State and destruction. His Proclamation of Neutrality, particularly, was the hinge, on which, at that time, the whole well being of our country turned. No public measure was ever more necessary, more happily timed, or more prudently conducted. To that measure is it probably owing, that we are allowed thus peaceably to assemble, this day, in honour to his memory.

THE lustre of all his military and political actions, and the glory of his whole character, apparently incapable of addition, he has nevertheless enhanced by two singular traits of distinction ; his refusal to accept of a compensation for his services ; and his repeated, voluntary resignation of his high offices, whilst in the entire possession of universal veneration, and perfectly assured of the unanimous public suffrage. I do not here intend, that great men ought of course to decline pecuniary rewards ; or to retire, in all circumstances, from public to private life. It could not have been the duty of either of the princes, whose character I have given. But no duty forbade him to do both ; and in doing both he has

secured a glory, which is singular. Nothing could have so discovered his selfpossession, evinced his superiority to ambition, or proved his mind to be the residence of patriotism and principle.

IN private life he was the same dignified character. All his affairs were superintended by himself, and were of course always in exact order and prosperous thrift. To his neighbours, to the public, to all men, he was just, generous, and humane; to the * poor a steady, and conspicuous benefactor; and to his family whatever is found in the fullest and most amiable discharge of the domestic duties.

THROUGH the plantation, on which he resided, ran a stream, stored with fish. This fishery two days in the week he made, together with his own boats and nets, the property of the surrounding poor; and frequently directed his servants to aid them in taking and curing their booty.

IN the course of the war, he wrote, as I have been well informed, to his friends in Virginia, a proposal to free his servants, should the Legislature think it consistent with the general welfare. This plan he has realized in his will; and the public are already informed, that it will be speedily executed by his most respectable Executrix.

AFTER the surrender of Yorktown, he returned, at the end of eight years absence, to visit his family. His servants had voluntarily arranged themselves in two lines, from his mansion house to the creek which runs before the door. When he came in sight, these humble and affectionate domestics sent up a shout of joy, and uttered an extravagance of transport; the women by shrieking, beating their breasts, and rending their hair; and the men by cries and tears, and all the gesticulations, with which nature,

in uninformed and unpolished society, gives vent to excessive passion. When he had crossed the creek, he delayed his progress to his beloved abode, to shake all the adults by the hand, and to speak tenderly and affectionately to the children. "Never," said the gentleman, from whom I received this information, "was I so delightfully affected, except at the surrender of Yorktown; and then, only because I considered the independence of my country as secured."

On the attributes, manifested by this great man in his conduct, I beg leave to make the following observations.

GENERAL WASHINGTON was great, not by means of that brilliancy of mind, often appropriately termed genius, and usually coveted for ourselves, and our children; and almost as usually attended with qualities, which preclude wisdom, and depreciate or forbid worth; but by a constitutional character more happily formed. His mind was indeed inventive, and full of resources; but its energy appears to have been originally directed to that which is practical and useful, and not to that which is showy and specious. His judgment was clear and intuitive beyond that of most who have lived, and seemed instinctively to discern the proper answer to the celebrated Roman question; * Cui bono erit? To this his incessant attention, and unwearied observation, which nothing, whether great or minute, escaped, doubtless contributed in a high degree. What he observed he treasured up, and thus added daily to his stock of useful knowledge. Hence, although his early education was in a degree confined, his mind became possessed of extensive, various, and exact information. Perhaps there never was a mind,

* What good purpose will it answer?

on which theoretical speculations had less influence, and the decisions of common sense more.

AT the same time, no man ever more earnestly or uniformly sought advice, or regarded it, when given, with more critical attention. The opinions of friends and enemies, of those who abetted, and of those who opposed, his own system, he explored and secured alike. His own opinions, also, he submitted to his proper counsellors, and often to others ; with a demand, that they should be sifted, and exposed, without any tenderneſs to them because they were his ; insisting, that they should be considered as opinions merely, and, as ſuch, ſhould be ſubjected to the freest and moſt ſevere investigation.

WHEN any measure of importance was to be acted on, he delayed the formation of his judgment until the laſt moment ; that he might ſecure to himſelf, alway, the benefit of every hint, opinion, and circumſtance, which might contribute either to confirm, or change, his deciſion. Hence, probably, it in a great meaſure aroſe, that he was ſo rarely committed ; and that his deciſions have ſo rarely produced regret, and have been ſo clearly juſtified both by their conſequences and the judgment of mankind.

WITH this preparation, he formed a judgment finally and wholly his own ; and although no man was ever more anxious before a meaſure was adopted, probably no man was ever leſs anxious afterward. He had done his duty, and left the iſſue to Providence.

To all this conduct his high independence of mind greatly contributed. By this I intend a ſpirit, which dares to do its duty, againſt friends and

enemies, and in prosperous and adverse circumstances, alike ; and which, when it has done its duty, is regardless of opinions and consequences.

NOR was he less indebted to his peculiar * firmness. He not only dared to act in this manner, but uniformly sustained the same tone of thought and feeling, such, as he was at the decision, he ever after continued to be ; and all men despaired of operating on him unless through the medium of conviction. The same unchanging spirit supported him through every part of his astonishing trials, during the war ; and exhibited him as exactly the same man after a defeat, as after a victory ; neither elated nor depressed, but always grave, serene, and prepared for the event.

FROM other great men he was distinguished by an exemption from favouritism. No man ever so engrossed his attachment, as to be safe, for a moment, from deserved reproof, or censure ; nor was any man ever so disrelished by him, as, on that account, to fail of receiving from him whatever applause, or services, his merit could claim. Hence his friends feared, and his enemies respected him.

HIS moderation and self government were such that he was always in his own power, and never in the power of any other person. Whatever passions he felt, they rarely appeared. His conduct, opinions, and life, wore unusually the character of mere intellect. Hence he was never found unguarded, or embarrassed ; but was always at full liberty to do that, and that only, which expediency and duty demanded. A striking instance of this trait in his character is seen in the well known fact ; that he ne-

D

* See Note G.

ver exculpated himself from any charge, nor replied to any calumny. His accusers, for such he had, had opportunity to make the most of their accusations; his calumniators, if their consciences permitted, to sleep in peace.

His justice was exact, but tempered with the utmost humanity; * which the occasion would suffer. His truth no sober man, who knew him, probably ever doubted. Watchful against his own exposures to error, he was rarely found erring; jealous of doing injustice, if he has done injustice, it is yet, I believe, unrecorded.

His reservedness has been at times censured. To me it appears to have been an important and necessary characteristic of a person situated as he was. In familiar life a communicative disposition is generally pleasing, and often useful; in his high stations it would have been dangerous. One unguarded or ambiguous expression might have produced evils, the remedy of which would have been beyond even his own power. No such expression is recorded of him.

His punctuality was extreme. He rose always with the dawn; he dined at a given minute; he attended every appointment at the moment. Hence his business public and private was always done at the proper time, and always beforehand.

No person appears to have had a higher sense of decorum, and universal propriety. The eye, following his public and private life, traces an unexceptionable propriety, an exact decorum, in every action; in every word; in his demeanour to men of every class; in his public communications; in his convivial entertainments; in his letters; and in his

* See Note H.

familiar conversation ; from which bluntness, flattery, witticism, indelicacy, negligence, passion, and overaction, were alike excluded.

FROM these things happily combined, always seen, and seen always in their native light, without art, or affectation, it arose, that, wherever he appeared, an instinctive awe and veneration attended him on the part of all men. Every man, however great in his own opinion, or in reality, shrunk in his presence, and became conscious of an inferiority, which he never felt before. Whilst he encouraged every man, particularly every stranger, and peculiarly every diffident man, and raised him to self-possession, no sober person, however secure he might think himself of his esteem, ever presumed to draw too near him.

WITH respect to his religious character there have been different opinions. No one will be surprised at this, who reflects, that this is a subject, about which, in all circumstances not involving inspired testimony, doubts may and will exist. The evidence concerning it must of course arise from an induction of particulars. Some will induce more of these particulars, and others fewer ; some will rest on one class, or collection, others on another ; and some will give more, and others less, weight to those which are induced ; according to their several modes, and standards, of judging. The question in this, and all other cases, must be finally determined before another tribunal, than that of human judgment ; and to that tribunal it must ultimately be left. For my own part, I have considered his numerous and uniform public and most solemn declarations of his high veneration for religion, his exemplary and edifying attention to public worship, and his constancy in secret devotion, as proofs, sufficient to satisfy every

person, willing to be satisfied. I shall only add, that if he was not a Christian, he was more like one, than any man of the same description, whose life has been hitherto recorded.

As a warrior, his merit has, I believe, been fully and readily acknowledged ; yet I have doubted whether it has always been justly estimated. His military greatness lay not principally in desperate sallies of courage ; in the daring and brilliant exploits of a partisan : These would have ill suited his station, and most probably have ruined his cause and country. It consisted in the formation of extensive and masterly * plans ; effectual preparations, the cautious prevention of great evils, and the watchful seizure of every advantage ; in combining heterogeneous materials into one military body, producing a system of military and political measures, centering universal confidence, and diffusing an ‖ influence next to magical ; in comprehending a great scheme of war, pursuing a regular system of acquiring strength for his country, and wearing out the strength of his enemies. To his conduct, both military and political, may, with exact propriety, be applied the observation, which has been often made concerning his courage ; that in the most hazardous situations no man ever saw his countenance change.

PERHAPS, I shall be thought to have dwelt too long, and too minutely, on his character. I hope I shall be justified, partially at least, when it is remembered, that I have been seizing the best opportunity, which I shall ever enjoy, of teaching, in the most affecting manner in my power, the youths committed to my instruction, and forming a part of

* See Note I.

‖ See Note J.

this audience, the way to become great, respectable, and useful.

SUCH, my friends and fellow citizens, was the man, whose death we are assembled to lament, and whose worth we commemorate. Like the illustrious subject of my text he stands alone in his nation. Like him he was great in the splendor of designation, in wisdom, in effort, in success, in the importance of his talents, virtues and labours, to the nation over whom he presided in war and peace ; in the estimation, the love, and the tears, of his country. On this resemblance I have dwelt less, because I suppose others have dwelt more ; yet I cannot forbear to add, that in the death of these distinguished men there is a similarity not a little striking. Both died in advanced years, but without any previous decay of faculties, or glory ; both left their respective nations, not indeed established, but so far advanced, as not absolutely to demand a continuance of their superintendency ; and both were honored by a national and spontaneous mourning, as the last tribute of public veneration. Miraculous support our nation could not hope for under any leader ; but the signal interpositions of Heaven in our behalf, while under his guidance, ought never to be forgotten.

To Americans his name will be ever dear ; a favour of sweet incense, descending to every succeeding generation. The things, which he has done, are too great, too interesting, ever to be forgotten. Every object which we see, every employment in which we are engaged, every comfort which we enjoy, reminds us daily of his character. The general peace, liberty, religion, safety, and prosperity, strongly impress, in every place, what he has done, suffered, and achieved. When a Legislature assembles

to enact laws ; when Courts meet to distribute justice ; when Congregations gather to worship God ; they naturally, and almost necessarily, say “ To Washington it is owing, under God, that we are here.” The farmer pursuing his plough in peace, the mechanic following the business of his shop in safety, ascribes the privilege to Washington. The house which, uninvaded, shelters us from the storm, the cheerful fireside surrounded by our little ones, the table spread in quiet with the bounties of Providence, the bed on which we repose in undisturbed security, utters, in silent but expressive language, the memory, and the praise, of Washington. Every ship bears the fruits of his labours on its wings, and exultingly spreads its streamers to his honour. The student meets him in the still and peaceful walk ; the traveller sees him in all the prosperous and smiling scenes of his journey ; and our whole country in her thrift, order, safety, and morals, bears, inscribed in sunbeams, throughout her hills and her plains, the name and the glory of Washington.

From a subject so singular, and so edifying, it is not easy to fail of gaining useful practical instruction. Particularly, the inestimable benefits which we have derived from the efforts of this great man, cannot but prompt every ingenuous mind to remember, with unceasing gratitude, the goodness of God in bestowing upon us such a blessing ; God, who formed and furnished him for labours so useful, and for a life so glorious. In what a manner must the late war have closed, had the supreme command of our armies fallen to a weak or unprincipled man ? What would have been its issue, had the powerful attempt to displace him, and to substitute a foreigner, succeeded ? Think, I beseech you, of the uniform condition of a conquered nation ; a nation too, considered as rebels by their conquerors. Think what

it would have been to have had your armies betrayed, your lands ravaged, your houses burnt, your best citizens brought to the halter, your wives and daughters dishonoured, and your children houseless, naked, and famished. Think of the long and hopeless period, through which the broken spirit, the ruined morals, the wide-spread ignorance, and the lost energy, of your country would have perpetuated your miseries, and prevented your posterity from emerging again to the character of men, and the blessings of freemen.

To these wretched scenes contrast your present freedom, peace, safety, glory, and felicity. To whom are they owing? The heart spontaneously answer, "First to God, and next to Washington." I mean not to detract from the wisdom, bravery, or worth, of his generous companions in the council, and in the field. Cheerfully do I render to them the illustrious honours, which they have merited, and won; and heartily do I rejoice to see those, who still live, sustaining and increasing, in so many instances, the high estimation, which they had so amply deserved of their country. But in all that I have said of their illustrious Chief they will be the first to unite, because they have known him more intimately than others. With them will all their countrymen instinctively accord; for his labours have been so great, so good, so endearing, that they cannot but be seated in every American heart. May our gratitude to the Author always accompany, and totally transcend, our admiration of the instrument; let it inspire every reflection, and mingle with every joy.

By him, also, are our rulers, at the present and at every future period, taught how to rule. The same conduct will ever produce substantially the same effects; the same public well being, the same

glory, the same veneration. To be wise and good ; to forget, or restrain, the dictates of passion, and obey those of duty ; to seek singly the public welfare, and lose in it personal gratification ; to resist calmly and firmly the passions, and pursue only the interests, of a nation, is the great secret of ruling well. When these things are exhibited in the strong light of example, and crowned with success and honor, they are taught in a manner beyond measure more impressive, than can be found in rules and arguments. Here they are already tried, and proved. Here they are seen surrounded by all their delightful attendants, and followed by all their happy consequences. The conviction produced is complete, the impression supreme. From this great example all rulers may learn wisdom, and our rulers more than any other. They are rulers of the very people, who loved and revered him, and who will, of course, love and reverence them, so far as they tread in his footsteps. They, also, know and feel his character, and success, more than is possible for others. Wisdom, therefore, and duty demand of them, and in a peculiar degree, studiously to copy so glorious a pattern.

THE youths, also, of our country, who wish to become great, useful and honourable, will here find the best directions, and the most powerful incitements. To be great, useful, and honourable, they must resemble him. The very actions, which he performed, they may indeed not be called to perform ; the sufferings, which he underwent, they may not be obliged to undergo ; but the attributes, which he possessed and displayed, must, in a good degree, be possessed and displayed by them also.

LET them particularly remember, that greatness is not the result of mere chance, or genius ; that it

is not the flash of brilliancy, nor the desperate fall of ambition ; that it is, on the contrary, the combined result of strong mental endowments, vigorous cultivation, honourable design, and wise direction. It is not the glare of a meteor ; glittering, dazzling, consuming, and vanishing ; but the steady and exalted splendour of the sun ; a splendour which, while it shines with preeminent brightness, warms also, enlivens, adorns, improves, and perfects, the objects, on which it shines : glorious indeed by its lustre ; but still more glorious in the useful effects produced by its power. Of this great truth the transcendent example before us is a most dignified exhibition. Let them imitate, therefore, the incessant attention, the exact observation, the unwearied industry, the scrupulous regard to advice, the slowness of decision, the cautious prudence, the nice punctuality, the strict propriety, the independence of thought and feeling, the unwavering firmness, the unbiassed impartiality, the steady moderation. the exact justice, the unveering truth, the universal humanity, and the high veneration for religion, and for God, always manifested by this great man. Thus will future Washingtons arise to bless our happy country.

As a nation we may derive from him many kinds of instruction and profit. This occasion will, however, allow me to insist on one only : The steady pursuit of that policy, which he so uniformly and successfully pursued, and has so forcibly recommended. In his farewell to the country which he so loved and defended, we have his last, and to us his dying words ; a most impressive recommendation of the best means of our national welfare ; the sum of all the political wisdom, which he had imbibed from his vast experience ; the substance of that policy, by which alone our safety and happiness can be ensured. In it we are most affectingly taught to preserve

our union ; to despise trifling discriminations ; to reverence our constitution ; to reject watchfully all associations and factions, formed to oppose it ; to preserve a well balanced administration ; to encourage literary institutions ; to promote, as of primary importance, morality and religion ; to cherish public credit ; to observe justice and good faith towards all nations ; to cultivate harmony and peace with all ; to indulge antipathies and favouritism towards none ; to resist, as dangerous and deadly, all foreign influence ; to connect ourselves, politically, as little as possible ; and to hold, as much as maybe, a strict and perpetual neutrality towards powers at war. Here all the national interests of America are consulted ; here all its political wisdom is summed up in a single sheet. Nothing can be added, nothing without injury taken away. How greatly are these precepts recommended by the character of their author, and by the success with which they have been followed in practice. How strongly are they enforced by his labours for our country, by the glory which he attained while steadily pursuing them, and by the manner, and the time, in which they were delivered. Happy, beyond measure, is it for these States, that he pursued them so long ; that they have been so closely followed by his able and virtuous successor ; that they are now the only policy of our government, and the efficient policy of our country. Happy, beyond measure, will it be, if our nation should henceforth make them its great political creed, and the only rule of its political measures, at home, and abroad. Faction, party, dissention, will then cease ; murmurs be lost in peace and prosperity ; intrigues be rendered infamous and hopeless ; foreign influence no more lift up its snaky head ; the danger of invasion vanish ; the government our country totter no more ; the great political problem, Whether a free and happy Republic can be durable, be finally and propitiously solved ;

and Americans find less reason to lament, that Washington is dead ; because they will still see him live in the policy and glory, the safety and peace, the virtue and felicity, of his beloved country.

N O T E S.

A.

It is a curious fact, that Hume, although he is obliged to recite the extraordinary piety of Alfred, yet totally omits the mention of it in his panegyric on his character.

B.

For specimens of the peculiar modesty of General Washington see his written acceptance of the chief command of the army, and his acceptance of the Presidency. Observe, also, the fact ; that he never made his great actions any part of the subject of his conversation.

C.

There have been many doubts concerning the character of General Washington, as a writer. Various persons have denied, that he was at all, or in any respectable degree, the author of the several compositions, which are presented to the public, as his. It may be a satisfaction to my readers to be informed, that the address to the officers of the army in reply to the letters of Major Armstrong, was penned by his own hand, and never seen by any person, until after it was publicly delivered. The originals of his answers, also, to the addresses presented to him, in his last tour through the Eastern States, are now on file (as I am informed from high authority) in his own hand.

When he began to read the abovementioned address to the officers, he found himself in some degree embarrassed by the imperfection of his sight. Taking out his spectacles, he said, “ these eyes,” my friends, “ have grown dim, and these locks white, in the service of my country, yet I have never doubted her justice.”

The style of General Washington, it is observed by the authors of the British critic, is strongly marked with that dignified simplicity, which is the proof of a great mind.

D.

Upwards of 9000 men, together with the great body of artillery, ammunition, horses, carriages, cattle, provisions, &c. were conveyed from Long-Island to New-York, while the British army was so near, that their men were distinctly heard at work with their pick-axes and shovels. The river is near a mile wide, and the decampment lasted thirteen hours; yet the enemy were perfectly ignorant of the measure, until it was completed. It ought here to be observed, that, about 2 o'clock in the morning, a thick fog providentially favoured the retreating army.

E.

The first knowledge, which Lord Cornwallis had of the retreat of General Washington, was in the morning; a few minutes before the noise of the cannon at Princeton was heard at Trenton. Sir William Erskine, it is asserted, urged Lord Cornwallis to place a strong body of troops at the bridge over Sanpink Creek; apprehending, that General Washington would retreat into the heart of New-Jersey rather than attempt to cross the Delaware. This, however, was refused. Very early in the morning, Lord Cornwallis, while in bed, was informed, that General Washington had decamped. Sir William at that moment came in. His Lordship asked him, whither he believed the American General to be gone. At that instant, the artillery was heard from the neighbourhood of Princeton. "My Lord," said Sir William, "General Washington tells you where he is. Do you not hear him calling to you to come after him?"

So silently was this retreat conducted, that the American centinels at the bridge knew nothing of it, until themselves were ordered to quit their post.

F.

To the superintendant of his estate he wrote from the army in the following terms.

"Let the hospitality of the house be kept up with respect to the poor. Let no one go hungry away. If any of this sort of people should be in want of corn, supply their necessities, provided it does not encourage them in idleness. I have no objection to your giving my money in charity when you think it will be well bestowed; I mean that it is my desire, that it should be done. You are to consider,

that neither myself nor my wife are in the way to do these good offices." See Doctor Trumbull's Sermon. Note.

G.

In a letter from a gentleman in Alexandria to his friend in Hartford, published in the Connecticut Courant, it is declared, that General Washington closed his own eyes. Thus, it appears, his firmness forsook him not even in the article of death.

H.

[The humanity of General Washington has been impeached, and his character virulently attacked, with respect to the execution of Major Andre ; but he was most unjustly impeached. I am warranted to declare, that he felt and exhibited the tenderest compassion for that unfortunate young man, and that Major Andre often expressed to an American officer, of high respectability, the very polite and humane treatment, which he received from General Washington.]

I.

Among the plans devised by General Washington for military operations, and expressive of his greatness of mind, I beg leave to mention the plan for attacking the British on the Delaware, in three points at once, of which only the attack on Col. Rahl at Trenton succeeded, the others being prevented by the ice ; the plan of attacking the troops at Princeton ; the plan of crossing the Brandywine to attack Lord Cornwallis ; the plan of attack at Germantown ; the plan of the bold and successful attack on Stony Point ; and the great plan of capturing the British force at Yorktown, involving the complete illusion of Sir Henry Clinton.

To these ought to be added a bold and masterly design of attacking the whole British force on New-York Island, near the close of the campaign in 1782. In this design Col. Talmadge was to have attacked the enemy on Long-Island, the preceeding night, with a body of 750 choice troops, and thence to have marched on horseback to Hell-Gate, where boats, ready to receive him, were to have transported the corps to the opposite shore. Another body under the command of a General Officer was to have marched to Kingsbridge, to attack the enemy in front, and to keep them in full expectation of being assaulted there only : while the main body of the army was to have gone

in boats down Hudson's River, and, landing below the enemy in the night, was to have made the principal attack on their rear. The American army was at this time in great force, and perfectly disciplined and supplied. Had this design been attempted, there is every reason to believe, that, attacked at one moment, in front, flank and rear, at day-break, and with total surprise, the triumph over them must in all probability have been complete. It was prevented by a circumstance wholly providential. Two British frigates moved up the North River the preceeding day, anchored directly opposite to the American army, and thus prevented the intended embarkation. There is not a reason to imagine, that the British commander had a suspicion of the design formed against him. It is however happy, that it miscarried ; for the provisional articles of peace had been already signed in Europe. Of the above design I have the best information.

J.

[In no period of General Washington's military life did his talents and commanding influence appear more conspicuous than at the battle of Monmouth. The flower of the army under General Lee were retreating before the enemy, and almost without having made any resistance. When they were thus thrown back upon General Washington, at the head of his fatigued and illsupplied army, it is surprising, that the panic did not become general. General Washington brought his own troops forward, checked the British, and soon convinced Lee's flying troops, not only, that there was no occasion for their retreat, but that they could defeat the enemy. General Washington never had full credit for this heroic exploit ; and it has been thought, that if full justice had been done by the Courtmartial, General Lee would have been cashiered.]

[His astonishing power of commanding the minds of men was often exemplified in quieting mutinies, of which he had too many during his military course. But no writer has done him justice for his Fabian conduct when the army was on the borders of disbanding. Some well written inflammatory pieces were addressed to the army, after the preliminary articles of peace had been signed, inviting them not to lay down their arms, until the country should do them justice. Their toils and sufferings had ripened them for any

desperate undertaking. In the glorious office of Mediator between his country and the army he appeared with a dignity supreme. He convened and addressed the officers ; the hurricane of passion subsided ; and reason, duty, and peace resumed their dominion. The address, and the public orders which followed it, are perpetual monuments of his greatness and patriotism.

N. B. For the Notes included in brackets I am indebted to Col. Talmadge.

THE
PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.



TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,

THE period for a new election of a Citizen, to administer the executive government of the United States, being not far distant, and the time actually arrived, when your thoughts must be employed in designating the person, who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those, out of whom a choice is to be made.

I beg you, at the same time, to do me the justice to be assured, that this resolution has not been taken, without a strict regard to all the considerations appertaining to the relation, which binds a dutiful citizen to his country ; and that, in withdrawing the tender of service which silence in my situation might imply, I am influenced by no diminution of zeal for your future interest ; no deficiency of grateful respect for your past kindness : But am supported by a full conviction that the step is compatible with both.

The acceptance of, and continuance hitherto in the office to which your suffrages have twice called me, have been a uniform sacrifice of inclination to the opinion of duty, and to a deference for what appeared to be your desire. I constantly hoped, that it would have been much earlier in my power consistently with motives, which I was not at liberty to disregard, to return to that retirement, from which I had been reluctantly drawn. The strength of my inclination to do this, previous to the last election, had even led to the preparation of an address to declare it to you ; but mature reflection on the then perplexed and critical posture of affairs with foreign nations, and the unanimous advice of

persons entitled to my confidence, impelled me to abandon the idea.

I rejoice, that the state of your concerns external as well as internal, no longer renders the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty, or propriety : And am persuaded whatever partiality may be retained for my service, that in the present circumstances of our country, you will not disapprove my determination to retire.

The impressions with which I first undertook the arduous trust, were explained on the proper occasion. In the discharge of this trust, I will only say, that I have with good intentions, contributed towards the organization and administration of the government, the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was capable. Not unconscious, in the out-set, of the inferiority of my qualifications, experience in my own eyes, perhaps still more in the eyes of others, has strengthened the motives to diffidence of myself : And every day the increasing weight of years admonishes me more and more, that the shade of retirement is as necessary to me as it will be welcome. Satisfied that if any circumstances have given peculiar value to my services, they were temporary, I have the consolation to believe, that while choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, patriotism does not forbid it.

In looking forward to the moment, which is intended to terminate the career of my public life, my feelings do not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgment of that debt of gratitude which I owe to my beloved country, for the many honors it has conferred upon me ; still more for the steadfast confidence with which it has supported me ; and for the opportunities I have thence enjoyed of manifesting my inviolable attachment, by services faithful and persevering, though in usefulness unequal to my zeal.—If benefits have resulted to our country from these services, let it always be remembered to our praise, and as an instructive example in our annals, that under circumstances in which the passions, agitated in every direction, were liable to mislead, amidst appearances sometimes dubious—vicissitudes of fortune, often discouraging in situations, in which not unfrequently want of success has countenanced the spirit of criticism—the constancy of your support was the essential prop of the efforts, and a guarantee of the plans by which they were ef-

fects. Profoundly penetrated with this idea, I shall carry it with me to my grave, as a strong incitement to unceasing vows, that Heaven may continue to you the choicest tokens of its beneficence—that your union and brotherly affection may be perpetual—that the free Constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained—that its administration in every department may be stamped with wisdom and virtue—that, in fine, the happiness of the people of these States, under the auspices of liberty, may be made complete, by so careful a preservation and so prudent a use of this blessing, as will acquire to them the glory of recommending it to the applause, the affection, and adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it.

Here perhaps, I ought to stop. But solicitude for your welfare, which cannot end but with my life, and the apprehension, of danger natural to that solicitude, urge me on an occasion like the present, to offer to your solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments ; which are the result of much reflection of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all-important to the permanency of your felicity as a people. These will be offered to you with the more freedom, as you can only feel in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias his counsel. Nor can I forget, as an encouragement to it, your indulgent reception of my sentiments on a former and not dissimilar occasion.

Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment.

The unity of Government which constitutes you one people, is also now dear to you. It is justly so ; for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real Independence, the support of your tranquility at home, your peace abroad ; of your safety ; of your prosperity ; of that very liberty which you so highly prize. But, as it is easy to foresee, that from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed, to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth ; as this is the point in your political fortress, against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively, (though often covertly and insidiously) directed, it is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the

immense value of your National Union, to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the palladium of your political safety and prosperity, watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned; and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

For this you have every inducement of sympathy and interest. Citizens, by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of AMERICAN, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits and political principles. You have in a common cause, fought and triumphed together; the Independence and Liberty you possess are the work of joint councils, and joint efforts, of common dangers, sufferings and successes.

But these considerations however powerfully they address themselves to your sensibility, are greatly outweighed by those which apply more immediately to your interest. Here every portion of our country finds the most commanding motives for carefully guarding and preserving the union of the whole.

The *North*, in an unrestrained intercourse with the *South*, protected by the equal laws of a common government, finds in the productions of the latter, great additional resources of maritime and commercial enterprise, and precious materials of manufacturing industry. The *South* in the same intercourse, benefiting by the agency of the *North*, sees its agriculture grow, and its commerce expand. Turning partly into its own channels the seamen of the *North*, it finds its particular navigation invigorated—and while it contributes, in different ways, to nourish and increase the general mass of the national navigation, it looks forward to the protection of a maritime strength, to which itself is unequally adapted. The *East* in a like intercourse with the *West*, already finds,

and in the progressive improvement of interior communications, by land and water,—will more and more find a valuable vent for the commodities which it brings from abroad, or manufactures at home. The *West* derives from the *East* supplies requisite to its growth and comfort—and what is perhaps of still greater consequence, it must of necessity owe the *secure* enjoyment of indispensable *outlets* for its own productions to the weight, influence, and the future maritime strength of the Atlantic side of the Union, directed by an indissoluble community of interest as *one nation*. Any other tenure by which the *West* can hold this essential advantage, whether derived from its own separate strength, or from an apostate and unnatural connection with any foreign power, must be intrinsically precarious.

While then every part of our country thus feels an immediate and particular interest in Union, all the parts combined cannot fail to find in the united mass of means and efforts, greater strength, greater resource, proportionably greater security, from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their peace by foreign nations; and what is of inestimable value! they must derive from Union an exemption from those broils and wars between themselves, which so frequently afflict neighbouring countries, not tied together by the same government; which their own rivalships alone would be sufficient to produce, but which opposite foreign alliances, attachments and intrigues would stimulate and embitter. Hence likewise they will avoid the necessity of those overgrown military establishments, which under any form of government are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to Republican Liberty: In this sense it is, that your Union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other.

These considerations speak a persuasive language to every reflecting and virtuous mind, and exhibit the continuance of the Union as a primary object of a patriotic desire. Is there a doubt, whether a common government can embrace, so large a sphere?—Let experience solve it. To listen to mere speculation in such a case were criminal. We are authorised to hope that a proper organization, of the whole, with the auxiliary agency, of governments for the respective subdivisions, will afford a happy issue to the

experiment. 'Tis well worth a fair and full experiment. With such powerful and obvious motives to Union, affecting all parts of our country, while experiment shall not have demonstrated its impracticability, there will always be reason to distrust the patriotism of those, who in any quarter may endeavour to weaken its bands.

In contemplating the causes which may disturb our Union, it occurs as matter of serious concern, that any ground should be furnished for characterising parties, by *Geographical* discriminations—*Nothern* and *Southern*—*Atlantic* and *Western*; whence designing men may endeavour to excite a belief, that there is a real difference of local interests and views. One of the expedients of party to acquire influence, within particular districts, is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts. You cannot shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heart burnings which spring from these misrepresentations: they tend to render alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection.—The inhabitants of our western country have lately had a useful lesson on this head: They have seen, in the negociation by the Executive, and in the unanimous ratification by the Senate, of the Treaty with Spain, and in the universal satisfaction at that event, throughout the United States, a decisive proof how unfounded were the suspicions propagated among them, of a policy in the general government and in the Atlantic states unfriendly to their interests in regard to the Mississippi; they have been witnesses to the formation of two treaties, that with Great-Britain and that with Spain, which secure to them every thing they could desire, in respect to our foreign relations, towards confirming their prosperity. Will it not be their wisdom to rely for the preservation of these advantages on the UNION by which they were procured? Will they not henceforth be deaf to those advisers, if such they are, who would sever them from their brethren, and connect them with aliens?

To the efficacy and permanency of your Union, a government for the whole is indispensable. No alliances, however strict, between the parts can be an adequate substitute; they will inevitably experience the infractions and interruptions which all alliances in all times have experienced—Sensible of this momentous truth, you have improved upon your first essay, by the adoption of a constitution of

a government better calculated than your former for an intimate Union, and for the efficacious management of your common concerns. This government, the offspring of your own choice, uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in the distribution of its powers, uniting security with energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty. The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government. But, the constitution which at any time exists, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government, pre-supposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.

All obstructions to the execution of the laws, all combinations and associations, under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, controul, counteract or awe the regular deliberation and action of the constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle, and of fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction, to give it an artificial and extraordinary force—to put in the place of the delegated will of the nation, the will of a party, often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community; and, according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the mirror of the ill concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common councils and modified by mutual interests.

However combinations or associations of the above description, may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious and unprincipled men, will be enabled to subvert the power of the people, and to usurp for themselves the reins of government; destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.

Towards the preservation of your government, and the

permanency of your present happy state, it is requisite, not only that you steadily discountenance irregular opposition to its acknowledged authority, but also that you resist with care, the spirit of innovation upon its principles, however specious the pretexts. One method of assault may be to effect in the forms of the constitution, alterations which will impair the energy of the system, and thus to undermine what cannot be directly overthrown. In all the changes to which you may be invited, remember that time and habit are at least as necessary to fix the true character of government, as of other human institutions that experience is the surest standard, by which to test the real tendency of the existing constitution of a country—that facility in changes upon the credit of mere hypothesis and opinion, exposes to perpetual change, from the endless variety of hypothesis and opinion ; and remember, especially, that for the efficient management of your common interest, in a country so extensive as ours, a government of as much vigor as is consistent with the perfect security of liberty, is indispensable. Liberty itself will find in such a government, with powers properly distributed and adjusted, its surest guardian. It is, indeed, little else than a name, where the government is too feeble to withstand the enterprises of faction, to confine each member of the society within the limits prescribed by the laws, and to maintain all in the secure and tranquil enjoyment of the rights of person and property.

I have already intimated to you, the danger of parties in the state, with particular reference to the founding of them on geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party, generally.

This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. It exists under different shapes in all governments—more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed ; but in those of the popular form, it is seen in its greatest rankness and is truly their worst enemy.

The alternate dominion of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissention, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism—But

this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism.—The disorders and miseries, which result, gradually incline the minds of men to seek security, and repose in the absolute power of an individual ; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of Public Liberty.

Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely out of sight) the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it.

It serves always to distract the Public Councils and enfeeble the Public Administration. It agitates the community with ill founded jealousies and false alarms ; kindles the animosity of one part against another, foment occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which find a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and will of one country are subjected to the policy and will of another.

There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government, and serve to keep alive the spirit of Liberty. This within certain limits is probably true, and in governments of a monarchical cast, patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favour upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose. And there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be by force of Public opinion, to mitigate and alluage it. A fire not to be quenched ; it demands uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, least instead of warming, it should consume.

It is important likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free country, should inspire caution, in those entrusted with its administration, to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever

the form of Government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power, and proneness to abuse it, which predominates in the human heart is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of the political power ; by dividing and distributing it into different depositories, and constituting each the guardian of the public weal against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern ; some of them in our country and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If, in the opinion of the people, the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way, which the constitution designates—But let there be no change by usurpation ; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed—The precedent must always greatly overbalance in permanent evil any partial or transient benefit which the use can at any time yield.

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that Man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who would labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and Citizens. The mere Politician, equally with the pious man ought to respect and to cherish them.—A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of Justice?—And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without Religion. Whatever may be conceded of the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure ; reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

Tis substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule indeed extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere Friend to it can look

with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the Fabric?

Promote, then as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.

As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is to use it as sparingly as possible; avoiding occasions of expence by cultivating peace, but remembering also that timely disbursements to prepare for dangers, frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it: Avoiding likewise the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expence, but by vigorous exertions in time of peace to discharge the debts which unavoidable wars may have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burthen which we ourselves ought to bear. The execution of these maxims belongs to your representatives, but it is necessary that public opinion should co-operate. To facilitate to them the performance of their duty, it is essential that you should practically bear in mind that towards the payment of debts there must be revenue;—that to have revenue there must be taxes—and none can be devised which are not more or less inconvenient and unpleasant—that the intrinsic embarrassment inseparable from the selection of the proper objects (which is always a choice of difficulties)—ought to be a decisive motive for a candid construction of the conduct of the government in making it, and for a spirit of acquiescence in the measures for obtaining revenue which the public exigencies may at any time dictate.

Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all—Religion and Morality enjoin this conduct; and can it be, that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and (at no distant period) a great nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that in the course of time and things, the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it? Can it be, that Providence has not connected the perma-

ment felicity of a Nation with Virtue ? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature.—Alas ! is it rendered impossible by its vices ?

In the execution of such a plan, nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular Nations, and passionate attachments for others should be excluded ; and that in the place of them, just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated. The Nation which indulges towards another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave.—It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest. Antipathy in one nation against another disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intractable, when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur.

Hence frequent collisions, obstinate, envenomed and bloody contests. The Nation, prompted by ill will and resentment, sometimes impels to war the government, contrary to the best calculations of policy. The government sometimes participates in the national propensity, and adopts through passion what reason would reject ; at other times, it makes the animosity of the nation subservient to projects of hostility instigated by pride, ambition, and other sinister and pernicious motives. The peace often, sometimes perhaps the liberty of Nations has been the victim.

So likewise, a passionate attachment of one Nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite Nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest, in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter, without adequate inducement or justification. It leads also to concessions to the favorite nation of privileges denied to others, which is apt doubly to injure the Nation making the concessions ; by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained ; and by exciting jealousy, ill will, and a disposition to retaliate, in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld : —And it gives to ambitious, corrupted or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favorite Nation) facility to betray, or sacrifice the interests of their own country, with-

out odium, sometimes even with popularity ; gilding with the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation a commendable deference for public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition, corruption, or infatuation.

As avenues to foreign influence in innumerable ways, such attachments are particularly alarming to the truly enlightened and independent patriot. How many opportunities do they afford to tamper with domestic factions, to practice the arts of seduction to mislead public opinion, to influence or awe the public councils ; such an attachment of a small or weak, towards a great and powerful nation, dooms the former to be the satellite of the latter.

Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be *constantly* awake ; since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of Republican Government. But that jealousy to be useful must be impartial ; else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defence against it. Excessive partiality for one foreign nation, and excessive dislike of another, cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots, who may resist the intrigues of the favorite, are liable to become suspected and odious ; while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people to surrender their interests.

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations, is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little *political* connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith.—Here let us stop.

Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships, or enmities.

Our detached and distant situation, invites and enables us

to pursue a different course. If we remain one people, under an efficient government, the period is not far off, when we may defy material injury from external annoyance ; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality, we may at any time resolve upon, to be scrupulously respected ; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation ; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel.

Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation ? Why quit our own, to stand upon foreign ground ? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humour or caprice ?

'Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances, with any portion of the foreign world ; so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it ; for let me not, be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy. I repeat it, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But in my opinion, it is unnecessary, and would be unwise to extend them.

Taking care always to keep ourselves, by suitable establishments, on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.

Harmony, liberal intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity and interest. But even our commercial policy, should hold an equal and impartial hand ; neither sending or granting exclusive favours or preferences—consulting the natural course of things ; diffusing and diversifying by gentle means the streams of commerce, but forcing nothing ; establishing, with powers so disposed, in order to give trade a stable course to define the rights of our merchants, and to enable the Government to support them ; conventional rules of intercourse, the best that present circumstances and mutual opinion will permit, but temporary, and liable to be from time to time abandoned or varied as experience and circumstances shall dictate ; constantly keeping in view, that 'tis folly in one nation to look for disinterested favours from another ; that it must

pay with a portion of its Independence for whatever it may accept under that character ; that by such acceptance, it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favours, and yet of being reproached with ingratitude for not giving more.—There can be no greater error than to expect, or calculate, upon real favours from nation to nation. 'Tis an illusion which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard.

In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression I could wish—that they will controul the usual current of the passions, or prevent our nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the destiny of nations : But if I may even flatter myself, that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good ; that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism ; this hope will be a full recompence for the solicitude for your welfare, by which they have been dictated.

How far in the discharge of my official duties, I have been guided by the principles which have been delineated, the public records and other evidences of my conduct must witness to you and to the world. To myself, the assurance of my own conscience is, that I have at least believed myself to be guided by them.

In relation to the still subsisting war in Europe, my Proclamation of the 22d of April, 1795, is the index to my plan. Sanctioned by your approving voice, and by that of your Representatives in both Houses of Congress, the spirit of that measure has continually governed me ; uninfluenced by any attempts to deter or divert me from it.

After deliberate examination, with the aid of the best lights I could obtain, I was well satisfied that our country, under all the circumstances of the case, had a right to take and was bound in duty and interest to take a neutral position. Having taken it, I determined, as far as should depend on me, to maintain it, with moderation.

The considerations which respect the right to hold this conduct, it is not necessary on this occasion to detail. I will only observe, that according to my understanding of the

matter, that right, so far from being denied by any of the Belligerent Powers, has been virtually admitted by all.

The duty of holding a neutral conduct may be inferred, without any thing more, from the obligation which justice and humanity impose on every nation, in cases in which it is free to act, to maintain inviolate the relations of peace and amity towards other nations.

The inducements of interest for observing that conduct will best be referred to your own reflections and experience. With me, a predominant motive has been to endeavour to gain time to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions, and to progress without interruption, to that degree of strength and consistency, which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes.

Though in reviewing the incidents of my administration, I am unconscious of intentional error : I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils, to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope that my country will never cease to view them with indulgence ; and that after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its service, with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be the mansion of rest.

Relying on its kindness in this as in other things, and actuated by that fervent love towards it, which is so natural to a man who views in it the native soil of himself and his progenitors for several generations ; I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat, in which I promise myself to realize, without alloy, the sweet enjoyment of partaking, in the midst of my fellow-citizens, the benign influence of good laws under a free government—the ever favorite object of my heart, and the happy reward as I trust, of our mutual cares, labours and dangers.

G. WASHINGTON.

United States,
17th September, 1796. }