Dr. West's Sermen.

# Greatness the Result of Goodness.

A

# SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

# GEORGE WASHINGTON,

LATE COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMIES, AND FIRST PRESIDENT, OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

WHO DIED DECEMBER 14, 1799, AGED 68.

BY

SAMUEL WEST, D.D.
Pastor of the Church in Hollis Street, Boston.

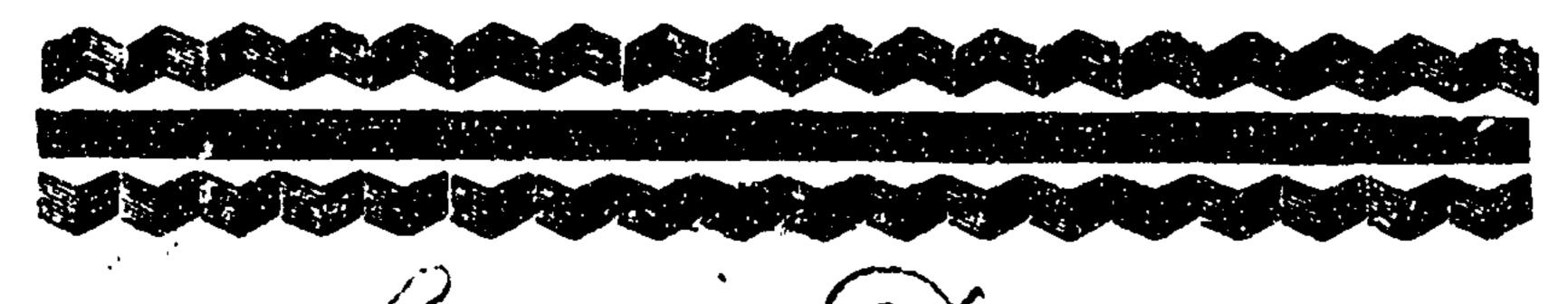


BOSTON:

FROM THE PRINTING-OFFICE OF MANNING & LORING.

AT a Meeting of the Society in Hollis Street, Voted, That Messrs. Ebenezer Seaver, Ebenezer Dorr and John Parker be a Committee, to wait on the Rev. Dr. West, and request a copy of his Sermon on the Death of General WASHINGTON, delivered on the 29th of December, 1799, for the press.

Also, Voted, That General WASHINGTON's FARE-WEL ADDRESS be printed with and annexed to it.



Lucula Son

Sermon.

UNDER the deep impression of that great event which has clad a nation in mourning, you will feel the propriety of my addressing you, in the words of David, on the death of the General of the armies of Israel, 2d Samuel, iii. 38.

### GREAT MAN IS FALLEN.

NEVER could this sentence be applied with greater justice, to any natural descendant of our primitive parents, than in the present instance. Every heart assents, whilst awakened by his death, to melancholy reslection; our thoughts naturally run back to former periods, and retrace the numerous and extensive services to his country and to mankind, by which the subject of our mourning obtained, and forever secured, to himself, a just claim to greatness.

We might here, with very little reserve, adopt the language which our divine Saviour applies to John the Baptist. "Among those who are born of women hath not arisen a greater than" our illustrious WASHINGTON.



But he is fallen—fallen a victim to death, that last enemy, that universal destroyer of our species, whose shafts level, without distinction, the great with the little, in the grave. Adored be the GOD of mercy, this last enemy shall, in the end, be compelled to release his captives, restore his prey, and be himself completely vanquished, by Him who is higher than the highest, and greater than the greatest of the children of men.

In conformity to our text, we will

- I. Give the general outlines of true greatness, as it respects the character of man; and then,
- II. Apply it to the present occasion, with suitable improvement.

One great, wife and benevolent design is apparent, in all the works and ways of GOD: this leads us to the knowledge of his character, and to adore him as infinitely good, the fountain of being and of blessedness. This affords us a standard by which we are to estimate every subject presented to our thoughts, whether in the material, animal, or rational world.

It is not merely the diffusive light and warmth of the sun, the salubrity of the air which we breathe, the verdure and fertility of the earth, with the numberless sources of innocent and virtuous pleasure, which he has opened to his rational offspring; but the painful discipline of affliction, by which he trains us for an happy immortality, equally



equally evidences the parental goodness of GOD, his affection for us, and that the end of all his dispensations is the happiness of his universal family.

By this standard we are to estimate the value of every subject; and the characters of men rise to greatness, or sink to contempt, in proportion as they are or are not qualified and disposed to further the accomplishment of this great design of the benevolent Parent of the universe. When we apply this rule to rational and intelligent beings, we take into consideration what constitutes the beauty and moral excellence of every action; it must result from inclination and choice.

We thus assign to all nature, and to all creatures, their proper place in our estimation. Different shades of glory or of greatness are, as St. Paul observes, annexed to the sun, the moon and the stars; not because they shine with different degrees of splendour; but because they tend, in different degrees, to promote the comfort and happiness of mankind.

THE Saviour of the world founds greatness on services performed. If any man will be great among you, let him be your servant—let him be the servant of all. On this he founds his own greatness—I am among you as one who serves. Many qualifications, and many favourable circumstances, must unite in the man who rises to distinguished greatness in this way, and by such means as we have mentioned above.

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He must possess a vigorous, active and enterprising genius, capable of the most extensive and comprehensive views, of discerning at once what is proper to be done, and the best means for effecting his purpose. This superior genius must be connected with a body equally vigorous, and which is capable, not only of sustaining, but of seconding, the energies of the mind.—To this must be added a form and address, suited at once to inspire respect and to conciliate affection.—He must possess an high degree of self government, the control of his passions, his words and his actions, that each, in its place, may be made to subserve his purpose. This self government must be the effect of exalted piety towards God; followed by the most extensive good will to men, measured and regulated by the different grades of social, civil and domestic relation. These are some of the qualities which must unite in forming the character of the truly great man.

But, in addition to these, there must be an happy concurrence of circumstances to call his talents and his virtues into action. Some theatre must be opened to him, adapted to his capacity and equal to his views. He must be called to act on an extensive stage. The part assigned him, in the providence of God, must be arduous and dissicult; such as might terrify another, but is only suited to call into action the superior powers with which he is entrusted.



The exercise of the greatest tall the concurrence of every favourable circumitance, is not always followed with success, which it is not in mortals to insure. The exertions of the good man, in the cause of human happiness, ought to be acknowledged, though unfuccessful; they cannot, in the end, lose their reward from Him, whose judgments are righteous altogether. But, with men, success is wisdom. In order, therefore, to render a man great in the view of the world, it is necessary that the exercise of the assemblage of virtues, and the improvement of the happy concurrence of circumstances mentioned above, should be followed with the accomplishment of some purpose of extensive and lasting utility to mankind.

This fuccess, instead of being attended or followed with the general pride of conquest, or an increasing fondness for the wealth, pomp and splendour of this world, must produce effects directly the contrary, and afford an opportunity for exhibiting an example of disinterestedness, self-denial and humility, equally extraordinary, and worthy of admiration, as the services performed.

To give to greatness effects still more distinct, extensive and lasting, we must suppose the possessor to have been equally useful, by the exercise of the same exalted talents in different departments; and that his exertions, successful in each, have procured new blessings on his country and on mankind; and consequently thrown new rays of greatness



greatness or of glory around the character of our illustrious mortal.

To complete the picture, which we meant to draw, of human greatness, to give it all the force and render it as impressive as possible on the public mind, we must suppose this distinguished character is withdrawn from our sight, at a period when it shone with its full splendour, ere the shades of evening had in any perceptible degree dimmed the lustre of its rays, or the debilitating influence of years had lessened our veneration for or expectations from it. In that case, whilst we follow the illustrious spirit to the realms of light and glory, we are ready to lament for ourselves and our country in the language of Elisha, when he beheld the ascension of Elijah, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

Such are the requisites to true greatness of character in man. It admits of infinite varieties, indeed, from the lowly cottager, who acts his little part in obscurity, confined to the domestic circle, to him who figures in the view of admiring nations, and is instrumental of obtaining the most rich and lasting blessings for his country, and for mankind.

How widely different is this from what the world has been used to estimate as greatness, and to distinguish with its loudest applause! A wanton triumph over all that is dear and valuable to man, the peace, order, liberty and happiness of society; a throne to which the aspiring son of pride



pride has waded, through rivers of human blood, or climbed over heaps of flaughtered fellow creatures, the splendour of which is supported by the groans and tears of oppressed millions. Cursed of the GOD of mercy is such destructive greatness; it well deserves the sate assigned it by the prophet—"Hell is moved to receive it."

The character which we have drawn is in direct opposition to this havor of lawless ambition; it represents an earthly god, imitating the example of the GOD of heaven, in disfusing blessings on all around him.

You have anticipated me in applying this character to the subject of our present mourning. Such was our country's favourite son; and whilst we behold her, with downcast eyes, weeping over the urn which contains his sacred ashes, we approve her grief, and say, Weep on; never could tears slow for a cause more just.

All the various qualities and circumstances mentioned above, are combined in the subject of our present mournful admiration.

A MIND capable of the most extensive views; active as light; at once embracing a variety of objects, comparing them, and forming the most accurate judgment on the whole; a form and address, adapted at once to please and command respect; a perfect mastery over his passions, calm and collected in the most trying situations; a profound sense of the being, perfection and providence of GOD, and of the necessary de-

pendence



pendence of man upon the great Author of his existence, for individual and for social happiness; an highly cultivated sense of moral relations, the obligations and duties resulting from them; purity of heart and life; an ardeat, but rational affection for his country and for mankind, are some of the natural, moral and religious qualities, with which he was enriched and adorned, and which rendered him instrumental, in the hand of GOD, of performing the most extensive services, the result of which is, the most solid and lasting greatness.

But, enriched as he was with all the endowments mentioned above, they might have been exercised in promoting the interest of some obscure village, confined to a family, or wasted like the virtues of the recluse within the walls of a cloifter, had not the providence of GOD so disposed his lot in the world, as to call his talents and virtues into action, on a stage so extensive and conspicuous, as that admiring millions should at once witness the extent of his services, and be filled with pleasing astonishment at the splendour of his greatness.

His military talents were exercised in arduous enterprize at an early period; and when, as yet but a youth, it is a well known fact, that his more than manly prudence, had it been listened to, would have preserved a veteran British General from the most fatal disaster.\*

When war commenced between this country and our oppressive parent State, WASHINGTON

was the man to whom a propitious Providence directed the eyes of his country for her defence and deliverance. He soon reduced our armies from consusion to order; economized our scanty military stores, and in a measure supplied the desiciency by his wisdom and prudence.

Time will not permit us to follow this illustrious father of our revolution, through that admirable train of events which astonished the world, and terminated in the complete vindication of our liberty, and establishment of our independence and peace, we trust, on a basis which shall last with time itself.

Never could we have had any suitable conception of the worth of WASHINGTON, had we not been favoured with his letters, which breathe at once the greatness of his views, the ardour of his affection for his country, and the resolute sirmness and perseverance of his soul. When retiring, through the Jerseys, in the greatest apparent distress, followed by a powerful and exulting enemy, not a single word do we hear of discouragement, much less did he despair of the Commonwealth. He retired with dignity, with his eye steadily sixed on his enemy, and the sirst moment their inattention afforded opportunity, he turned the torrent of war on his pursuers, and, by repeated strokes, humbled their pride and re-animated our hopes.

"God," said a wise ancient, "is never absent where prudence presides." How forcibly is this verified in the example before us. Prudence presided



fided in the counsels of WASHINGTON, and Heaven, almost by miracle, crowned his efforts with success.

How do our hearts bleed, for this best and greatest of men, when we read that he freely exposed himself to the censure of his countrymen, by hiding from them the weakness of their own army, lest it should come to the knowledge of their enemies.

Thus the wise parent consults the interest of his children, at the hazard of their displeasure.

THE last scene, in this great military drama, was worthy the preceding acts, and equally affecting. With what indescribable dignity did the Hero retire, when he had accomplished the wish of his country, to enjoy the rewards of his exalted virtues in the shades of solitude.

But, at his country's call, he once more quits his beloved retirement, to preside in that Convention which formed a Constitution of Government; at once the boast of the American States, and the admiration of other nations.

WITH what inimitable modesty did he accept the first Presidency in compliance with the united voice of his country, to him ever sacred. The same greatness marked his character in civil as in military life. He held the balance of independence with a steady hand, and taught us a lesson of the greatest importance, to consider ourselves as Americans, and to disdain foreign influence.

THE legacy he bequeathed us, when he retired from the chair of government, is worthy to

be written in letters of gold, or, rather, to be infcribed on the hearts of an enlightened, free, and grateful people. He was still our shield, our refort and hope, under Providence, in the day of our trouble; and whilst WASHINGTON lived, his life seemed to be the pledge of our safety and happiness.

THE time and the manner of his death, like every circumstance of his life, are adapted strongly to impress the public mind. His sun set ere the rays of its lustre were dimmed with age. He has quitted the stage with the unimpaired admiration of his country and mankind.

HAIL, illustrious shade of our departed father! We follow thy progress to the reward of thy virtues in the happiness of heaven; forever live thy great example, for the instruction of mankind; may it inspire millions yet unborn to emulate thy greatness, by copying thy virtues; may thy fervent prayers, offered on her behalf, secure to our country peace, prosperity and public happiness, till time shall be no more.

Thus transient is the glory of this world.

Earth's highest station ends in, Here he lies, And dust to dust concludes the noblest song.

Dr. Young:

Let us learn to cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and to repose unlimited considence in that GOD who liveth and reigneth for ever.

# The Legacy

OF THE

# Father of his Country.

### ADDRESS

O F

## GEORGE WASHINGTON,

ON DECLINING BEING CONSIDERED A CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF THE UNITED STATES.

## 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 insluenced by no diminution of zeal for your future interest; no desiciency 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 fuffrages 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 our affairs with foreign nations, and the unanimous advice of persons entitled to my considence, 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 services, 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 intentious, contributed towards the organization and administration of the government, the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was capable. Not unconscious, in the



outset, of the inseriority of my qualifications, experience, in my own eyes, perhaps still more in the eyes of others, has strengthened the motives to dissidence of myself; and every day the increasing weight of years admonishes the 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 honours it has conferred upon me; still more for the stedfast 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 your praise, and as an instructive example in our annals, that under circumstances in which the passions, agitated in every direction, were liable to missead—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 effected. Profoundly penetrated with this idea, I shall carry it with me to my grave, as a strong incitement to unceasing vows, that Heaven may

may continue to you the choicest tokens of its benesicence—that your union and brotherly affection
may be perpetual—that the free constitution, which
is the work of your hands, may be facredly 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
awhich is yet a stranger to it.

Here, perhaps, I ought to stop. But a 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 refult 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 see in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias his counsel. Mor 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 tranquillity at home, your peace abroad; of your safety; of your prosperity; of that very liberty which you fo 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 infidiously) 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 immoveable 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



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 out-weighed by those which apply more immediately to your interest.—Here every portion of our country sinds 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, sinds in the productions of the latter, great additional resources of matitime and commercial enterprize, and precious materials of manufacturing industry. The South, in the iame 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 Welt derives from the East supplies requisite to its. growth and comfort; and, what is perhaps of itill greater consequence, it must of necessity owe the secure enjoyment of indispensable outlets for its own productions to the weighty influence, and the future

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 connexion 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 most 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 resecting and virtuous mind, and exhibit the continuance of the Union as a primary object of patriotic desire. Is there a doubt, whether a common government can embrace so large a sphere? Let experience solve it. To listen to mere peculation,

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. It is well worth a fair and sull 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 have been furnished for characterizing parties, by geographical discriminations—Northern 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 Missippi: They have been witnesses

nesses 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 there 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 must 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 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, until changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is facredly obligatory upon all. The very



very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government, presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.

All obstructions to the execution of the laws, all combinations and affociations, under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, control, 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 triumph 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 affociations, 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 discountemance irregular oppositions 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

be to effect, in the forms of the Constitution, afterations which will impair the energy of the fystem, 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 governments, 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 interests, in a country so extensive as ours, a government of as much vigour 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 a 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 essects 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.



form, it is seen in its greatest rankness, and is truly their worst enemy.

The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, which, in disserent 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 ferves 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; and foments, 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 encourged. 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 assuage it. A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a slame, lest, 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 be 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 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

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 indispenfable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labour 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 connexions with public and private felicity. Let it be simply asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if a 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 to 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.

It is 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 disfusion of knowledge.



edge. 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 fource of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preferving it is, to use it as sparingly as possible; avoiding occasions of expense by cultivating peace; but remembering also, that timely disbursements, to prepare for danger, frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it; avoiding, likewise, the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertions, in time of peace, to discharge the debts which unavoidable wars may have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burden 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; that no taxes 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



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 permanent felicity of a nation with its 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 fuch 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 fufficient 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 oceasions of dispute occur. Hence frequent collisions, obstinate, envenomed and bloody contests. The nation, prompted by ill will and resentment, fometimes 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 the projects of hostility, instigated by pride, ambition, and other finister 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 favourite 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 favourite 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 favourite nation) facility to betray, or sacrifice the interests of their own country, without 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 compliance, 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 practise 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

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 favourite, are liable to become suspected and odious; while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and considence of the people, to surrender their interest.

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 connexion 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 essicient 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

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, rivalship, interest, humour or caprice?

It is 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 insidelity 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 seeking nor granting exclusive favours or preferences; consulting the natural course of things; disfusing and diversifying, by gentle means, the streams of commerce, but forcing nothing; establishing, with the 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



cumstances 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 it is 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. It is an illusion which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard.

In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression I could wish; that they will control 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 sury of party spirit, to warn against the mischies of foreign intrigue, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism; this hope will be a full recompense 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 upon me, to maintain it with moderation, perseverance and firmness.

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 be best referred to your own resections 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

Though in reviewing the incidents of my adminification, 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-sive 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 to the mansions 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 favourite object of my heart, and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual cares, labours and dangers.

G. Washington.

United States, 17th Sept. 1796.

