

A
DISCOURSE
ON
The Death
OF
GENERAL WASHINGTON,
LATE

President of the United States:

DELIVERED ON THE 22^d OF FEBRUARY, 1800,

IN THE
CHURCH IN WILLIAMSBURG.

By JAMES MADISON, D. D.

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of William and Mary College.

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To the Students of William and Mary College.

YOUNG GENTLEMEN,

TO excel in moral worth, we must form an ideal model of moral perfection. To assist you in forming such a model has been my constant endeavour. With the same view I here present you with a real model; not as the standard of perfection; for that, like the beauty of bodies, is not to be discovered in any individual; but as an exemplar of the happy combination of many of those moral beauties, which constitute the perfect character. Accept it as a small testimony of my affection; and be assured of my ardent prayers, that you may ever strive not only to equal, but to surpass it.

JAMES MADISON.

A

DISCOURSE, &c.

2 TIMOTHY iv. 7.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course.

IS there a spectacle under heaven so interesting to the human heart, as that of a free and numerous people putting on the ensigns of mourning, and, with one accord, pouring forth their sorrows for the loss they have sustained in the death of a beloved and honoured fellow citizen?—Such is the spectacle which America this day presents. Glorious spectacle! Glorious to humanity, which has displayed virtues capable of exciting such universal, such heartfelt veneration and love! Glorious to you, citizens of America, who thus honour yourselves, by evincing the high value you entertain for exalted merit.—Great God! on this day, whose rising sun we of late hailed with joyful acclamations, as ushering in the morn which gave birth to the illustrious WASHINGTON, but which now, sad emblem of all things human,
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is set apart to bewail his loss, and to retrace the energies of his departed soul ; on this day of woe, permit me to express the consolation which such a triumph of virtue excites within my heart. I behold a young, but enlightened people, testifying, with one voice, their sincere devotion to virtue : I see the flame of an ardent love for what is truly great and good bursting forth from every bosom : I see a people but just beginning to move in their political orbit, giving the surest testimony that the love of virtue pervades the breast of every citizen, and that they possess a force which will retain them, throughout their long career, in the path of social felicity, and social greatness : I see from this principle, this sincere love of virtue, the future glories of my country, already to commence. It will be, if preserved in all its strength, the shield of liberty, the protecting angel of the republics of this western world : it will render them for ever illustrious for patriotism, for heroic deeds, for arts and for sciences. It is thus they will defy the decrepitude of old age ; it is thus they will be perpetually renovated in youth ; and, under the guidance of thy providence, O God, it is thus they will shew to the astonished world, that the love of virtue has snatched from death, amid his dread conquests, one victory more ! May this love be ever cherished with a holy
zeal !

zeal! May it ever be the distinguishing characteristic of Americans, to pay to it the homage which is due. May this day ever serve to recall the bright example of a WASHINGTON; and to renew, in the hearts of succeeding generations, that love for virtue which animates the present!

Ah! my friends and fellow-citizens, I am sensible of the difficulty of addressing you, upon this mournful occasion, in a manner correspondent to your feelings. But the love of my country, veneration for those rare qualities which dignify and ennoble man, and which diffuse such blessings throughout society; and, above all, the invitations of religion, give to me a momentary confidence. Those virtues which once animated the heroes of America in the day of battle, now animate the minister of religion, of truth, and of justice.—It is true, that genius and eloquence have already exerted their powers in calling to memory the splendid talents, the meritorious actions of the deceased, and that they have depicted them with a glow of colouring which I dare not attempt; but the subject can never become trite—it can never be exhausted. Let us, then, endeavour to retrace some of those qualities which distinguished our deceased fellow-citizen, as the hero, the patriot, and the sage; let us review
some

some of the important scenes through which he passed ; and let us search, for the grief we feel in his loss, a consolation in the recital of the wonders of his life. It is a custom worthy of all free states, and which the most celebrated in antiquity religiously observed, “ to be mindful of their ancestors; to extol them with merited panegyrics, and to honour them on such occasions as the present, that, by doing justice to the actions of the dead, they may excite the virtues of the living.”

If, indeed, the illustrious WASHINGTON, whom all America deplores, and whom the whole civilized world will honour with their eulogies, had obtained only that celebrity, which extraordinary talents in war, in arts and sciences, or in politics, confer ; if he had not been distinguished for his firm adherence to the truths of religion ; if he had not served his God with a zeal worthy of his superior understanding, however full of glory he might have been in the eyes of man, Religion could not have added her voice to the general plaudit. But Religion joins in the universal woe ; she weeps over the tomb of WASHINGTON ! great in arms, great in peace, great in piety ! and, amidst her sorrows, feels a gleam of consolation in pronouncing his eulogium.

I. With

I. With the life of WASHINGTON is connected a new æra in the history of man. He seems to have been called forth by Heaven, as the instrument of establishing principles fundamental in social happiness, and which must and will pervade the civilized world.

When young, he was trained to hardihood and to arms ; he was educated in the school of war, and thus prepared for that mighty conflict, which shook the pillars of a distant throne. The government which nursed the youthful warrior, nursed a Sampson, who was one day to break its fetters, and burst its cords asunder. Virginia saw in her youthful son, traits of that character, which was to become the admiration of the world ; the morning of his life gave the well founded hope, that the meridian of his day would shine with augmented lustre, and that his setting sun would leave a long tract of glory behind. Great talents soon manifest themselves by the force with which they take their direction. “ David, when a youth, sought out the lion and the bear as subjects for his valour, and voluntarily joined himself to the armies of Israel, to be instructed in the arts of war.” WASHINGTON sought out the warrior of the wilderness, and, at an early age, provoked his courage and his

stratagems.* Monongalia, thy proud forests
 first saw the youthful hero impatient for the
 conflict; saw him firm and undaunted amid
 superior foes; saw him snatch from an entire
 destruction

* General WASHINGTON was born on the 22d of February, 1732, N. S. When a youth, he was entered a midshipman on board a British vessel of war, but relinquished his nautical views, in consequence of the entreaties of his friends. Before he attained his twentieth year, he was appointed Adjutant of one of the three districts, into which Virginia was then divided, with the rank of Major. In his 21st year he was sent, by Governor Dinwiddie, with plenary powers to examine into the encroachments, reported to have been made by the French and Indians, on the frontiers of Virginia; to treat with the latter, and to warn the former against future aggressions. His journal and report to the Governor have been published. The next year, 1754, he was appointed Colonel of a Regiment, raised for the defence of the frontiers; he signalized himself at Fort-Necessity, by a sally, in which he defeated an army much superior to his own. In 1755 he acted as Aid-de-Camp to General Braddock, and attended him, in that capacity, in the battle in which he fell. Not an officer whose duty obliged him to be mounted that day, except Colonel WASHINGTON, escaped death or wounds. The conducting of the retreat devolved upon him; it was effected with a judgment which acquired him a high reputation, both in Great-Britain and America. Such was the fatigue he underwent in the day of action, and the succeeding night, that he was obliged, the next morning, to be supported on his horse with cushions. The government of Virginia, soon after this period, gave him the command of all the troops raised, and to be raised, in the colony. He defended the frontiers, with skill and judgment, until the year 1758. In this year he commanded the Van-Brigade of General Forbes, in the capture of Fort Du-quesne. By this campaign, tranquillity was restored to the frontiers of Virginia. The health of Colonel WASHINGTON being greatly impaired, he resigned his military appointments in 1759. See also Dr. Ogden's Sermon.

destruction the shattered remnant of a brave but ill-conducted army.

The fatal battle in which Braddock fell was only the prelude to those torrents of blood, which flowed from the contest of two vast but rival powers. WASHINGTON, now commander of all the forces raised in Virginia, continued the career of military glory, which he had so happily commenced, until his constitution, naturally strong and robust, became debilitated, by incessant fatigue, and the unusual hardship to which he was exposed. He was thus compelled to retire from the service of his country, attended with the sincere regret of all his companions in arms. But this retirement was only a preparation for the august theatre upon which he was afterwards to appear. It would be delightful could we attend him in this retirement—could we here trace out the steps which his philosophic mind pursued in the acquisition of useful knowledge. Hitherto, Turenne, Marlborough, and Eugene, had been his preceptors. I know with what ardency, in the early stage of his life, he followed them through every campaign, retraced their battles, and thus served under those illustrious men. WASHINGTON has often been supposed to have made a Camillus, a Fabius, or an Emilius, his prototype. I believe

lieve that he was himself destined to be a high example to mankind, and that the native strength of his own mind soared above imitation; but still it is probable, that his knowledge in tactics was greatly perfected during this period of retirement, by cultivating an acquaintance with the most distinguished commanders of ancient and modern times. Nor can it be doubted, that politics, the true principles of all lawful governments, and especially the rights and interests of America, often occupied his active and penetrating mind. No one had a firmer hold of the chain of causes and effects. No one saw with more clearness the astonishing progress of America, in population and in wealth, or better knew how to estimate the operating causes. Perhaps his eagle-eye saw, that this vast continent could not long revolve round a small spot in the ocean. But, whatever may have been the pre-sentiment of his mind, it is certain that in this retirement he cultivated all those social virtues which attach man to man, and faithfully discharged those duties which a good citizen owes to his country; nor is it less certain, that he continued, without interruption, the active friend of religion, and at no time forgetful of his God.

During

During this retirement, a blind policy was preparing the way for an event the most important in the annals of the world. It is wonderful to consider, how often the agency of causes, which men put in motion, produce results the most opposite to their intentions, and which baffle all calculation. Ambition forms her plans of subjugation, and anticipates her triumphs; but they are controuled by an all-wise and over-ruling Providence. Instead of oppression and misery, there often spring forth liberty, social order, and social happiness.

That war, in which WASHINGTON had taken his first lessons in the military art, was concluded in the year 1761. “The prosperity of the American colonies had continued to flow with a quick current amid all the devastations of war.” The progress of population, of commerce, of improvement in the most useful of all arts, agriculture, had received an impulse which could not be restrained. “An enthusiastic affection for the parent country had taken deep root.” The sons of America had fought and conquered with the armies of Britain.* “Their feelings and their
interests

* See a short but judicious history of the American revolution, in the American Encyclopædia, to which the author of this discourse is indebted for many facts and observations.

interests had been interwoven with new strength" during the hour of danger and the triumphs of victory. But the tide of affection did not long continue at the height to which it had risen. An attempt, in 1764, to tax America in a manner unconstitutional, and incompatible with political liberty, aroused the vigilance of the colonies.

At this crisis, observe, fellow-citizens, Virginia first saw the lurking poison, and first dared to propose the first American Congress that ever met. At her request, it met at New-York in 1765. By the wisdom and the firmness of that Congress, the particular measure which had excited such irritation in America was abandoned. But the abandonment was attended with a declaration, that the right of Britain to bind America by laws and statutes was unlimited, or extended to all cases whatever. An assumption of power, so big with disgrace and ruin, was viewed by America with horror and indignation. In vain did reason and eloquence, on both sides of the Atlantic, demonstrate and deplore the calamities which would ensue from an attempt to enforce this assumed right. It was attempted. The patriotism of Boston foiled the attempt, and whelmed the insidious bait in the briny deep. Infatuated councils saw not, that an
obstinate

obstinate perseverance in this mad system of political ambition, would give to the world an example the most instructive; an example which would rouse nations from their lethargy, shew to them their own strength, teach them those primeval rights which men hold only from nature's charter, and awake the spirit to vindicate them. Then was the voice of Henry heard! then was heard the thunder of that eloquence, which shook this continent! His great soul, burning with the concentrated rays of wisdom and of patriotism, first proclaimed the meditated treason against the majesty of the people. Immortal Locke! thine was the glory to arm the orator with the sacred panoply of truth. Nor to him alone were thy energies confined. Thy hallowed page, dear to liberty, to virtue, and to religion, shed intellectual light over this western world, and taught a lesson congenial to the first sentiments of man. The American mind too, nursed in the bosom of Independence, spurned any other controul than that which was founded on legitimate government. At this eventful crisis, Virginia again stood foremost in the cause of liberty. Like another Athens watching over the safety of all Greece, and inspiring courage by her councils, Virginia first proposed a Congress of the different States.

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It met—a dreadful appeal to heaven drew near—a day of mourning and intercession was appointed, and observed with an awful solemnity. “God! give the people one heart and one mind, firmly to oppose every invasion of American rights,” was the prayer then enjoined and addressed to the throne of grace. In vain were the reasonings and the entreaties of that august assembly of statesmen, patriots and heroes, who were now consulting for the general interests of America, and who so eminently distinguished themselves for their moderation, their firmness, and their wisdom. Whose breast is so callous as not to be touched with the noble sentiments, the profound reasoning, the manly, energetic style, the sacred ardour, in the cause of liberty, which have immortalized their records! They are examples to all generations, and will remain, for ever, monuments of human genius, and human virtue. Virginia saw that the moment had arrived, when the rights of freemen, Heaven’s sacred gift, were to be yielded, or defended with a courage worthy of such a prize. “To die,” she said, “is common to all, but to die bravely is peculiar to few. Let us not, then, regard our lives as what properly belongs to us; but by exposing them for the public cause, let us acquire a renown which shall be peculiar, and truly our own. Let us again prove, that an
handful

handful of freemen, contending for their rights, is more powerful than a host, numerous as the sands of the sea, labouring with infamy to infringe them."—A third time she rose in all the strength of liberty, and first proposed the Declaration of Independance. Nay, she alone, with a patriotic courage, which astonishes even at this day, took the bold resolution to sever herself from Britain, and to meet every danger in defence of her rights. The great council of America soon saw the necessity of a similar decision.—America, be thou Independent! take thy place among the nations of the earth! was the high decree. Nor let it be forgot, that the voice of WASHINGTON sanctioned the decree.—To arms! to arms! re-echoed throughout the Continent. At this awful moment, when the sword was to reek with kindred blood, what were the agonizing pangs which wrung every heart!—Ah! ye whom the hand of Providence hath still preserved to this day, ye can tell—ye can recall the memory of times which tried men's souls. But the spirit of America, like the daring eagle, mounted as the storm advanced, pierced the thick clouds with inbred lightning fraught, and, from aloft, beheld the promised land of liberty and peace. It was then America hailed WASHINGTON as her conductor through the tempests of war. Like the chosen leader of the Israelites, reposing in his

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God,

God, he obeyed the voice. To him it was ever sacred. But what were his feelings at this moment! The sea of troubles, through which he must pass, lay before him. On one side he saw vast superiority in numbers, wealth unbounded, lust of domination insatiable, armies inured to war and conquest, fleets which waved their triumphant banners over the ocean, and which vexed, with their prows, the most distant seas: on the other, he saw a people, thinly scattered over an extensive continent, without arms, without funds, without a regular government to concentrate their force, without fleets; with no other allies than their own courage, their virtuous oaths, their love of liberty, and their confidence in the righteousness of their cause! But, ardent in the defence of the rights of his country, animated with the true spirit of exalted patriotism, he implored the assistance of Heaven, and hastened to the post assigned him. Never was there one more perilous. Never was there one which so called for all those great qualities of the soul, which command the admiration of the world. Never was there a trust reposed on which depended issues so momentous. On the wisdom, the integrity, the prudence, the fortitude of one man, hung the destiny of this western world. True glory is always modest and simple. Nothing but the noble principle of obedience to the
will

will of his country could have induced him to accept such a trust, or to appear as the chief vindicator of American liberty. His magnanimity was no less evinced by not declining the immense weight of the office to which he had been called, than his disinterestedness was by a refusal to accept any pecuniary compensation during the war.

No sooner had he arrived at the American army, than he diffused order through every department. The same greatness of soul which attended him throughout the war, manifested itself in the wisdom of his first arrangements, and the measures which he took to expel the enemy from Boston. Success crowned his efforts. But trials, which might have shaken the soul of a Joshua, a Maccabeus, or an Epaminondas, now awaited him. An hostile army, the most formidable in numbers, in discipline, in all the apparatus of war, commanded by a General brave, skilful and enterprising, had landed on our shores. It was now that the horrors of war were to rage in all their fury, and the plains of America to be drenched with human blood. Ah! soon did those horrors commence. Misfortune, for a long time, hovered round the banners of America. In vain did patriotism animate troops half disciplined, half armed, and inferior

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ferior in number. From Long-Island, from New - York and through the Jersies, discomfiture attended the American arms. Yet, amid these defeats, a courage was displayed, which was worthy of the first efforts of men struggling in the cause of humanity. Full many a hoary father wept the untimely fate of his gallant son. Full many a widowed matron was left the sad monument of woe. Fathers, mothers, wives, ye too, tender babes, whose tongues had just learned to lisp a father's name, your virtuous tears flowed not in vain; they plead with angel eloquence in their country's cause. Heaven itself saw and pitied the sufferings, and the impending dangers of America. Driven from Long-Island, beyond the Delaware, his army reduced to a few brave and faithful compatriots, despondence and dismay marked every countenance, except that of WASHINGTON. Superior to events, which seemed more than sufficient to shake the stoutest hearts, they served only to arouse, and to call forth the strength of WASHINGTON's genius. It was in this season of weakness, of despondency and dismay, when the rigour of winter seemed to oppose insurmountable obstacles, when the spirit of Delaware's angry flood shrieked loud, and threatened destruction, that WASHINGTON, attended by a few faithful heroes, formed the bold resolution to
 defy

defy every difficulty, to cross the enraged flood, to attack the victorious foe, and to snatch from him an immortal victory, in the midst of his triumphs. The design was formed and executed with a celerity, a judgment, and a fortitude, which was crowned with complete success. This was the first moment that presented the possibility of victory. It was seized. The bold and gallant achievement astonished the enemy, revived the American spirit, and opened the door to still greater enterprise. Reinforcements succeeded this first victory. WASHINGTON returned to Trenton, where he had just acquired so much glory. The active enemy, breathing revenge for their late misfortune, hasten also to the same place, and arrive on the same evening, with a force greatly superior. The setting sun beheld Trenton containing the two hostile armies, separated only by a small stream.—What a crisis! The returning light of the next morn threatened a period to the hopes of America. Destruction or captivity seemed inevitable. Scarce could the brave sons of America refrain from censuring the rashness of their commander. They cast their eyes upon each other, upon their arms, and upon their country. “The scoffs of the conquerors; their haughty looks, when, disarmed, they should be led through the hostile lines;”
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the loathsome jail, or the murderous imprisonment, all arose before their eyes. One consolation remained. They could die in defence of their country. But the genius of WASHINGTON, ever invigorated by difficulties, here displayed its native force. A situation so perilous, was to him only the means of acquiring new glory. "A retreat would have been ignominious, a battle fatal." See the event. At the return of day, a moment which his enemy had so anxiously anticipated, WASHINGTON was a conqueror on the plains of Princeton. He who appeared destined to certain captivity, was thundering upon his enemy in a distant quarter, and gaining new laurels. I do not say that this exploit was worthy of the sagacity of an Hannibal, or the wisdom of a Scipio. It was worthy of WASHINGTON; it will be itself an example to succeeding ages, and will for ever retain the full verdure of glory. A kind Providence forwarded, in an astonishing manner, an enterprise the most distinguished for that quickness of penetration which enables great minds to convert circumstances, apparently the most inauspicious, into such as are most favourable. This brilliant victory evinced the deep resources of WASHINGTON's mind, and excited the universal admiration and applause of a people who loved and revered him; whilst his

enemy

enemy saw, and had the generosity to acknowledge, the pre-eminence of talents, so dangerous to themselves, but so invaluable to his country.—Can we look back with cold indifference upon events so recent, at which the American heart once rebounded with joy, felt the full debt of gratitude to Heaven, and fervently expressed that gratitude in praise and thanksgiving?—Can we forget the man whom Heaven selected as the instrument of its loving kindness towards us? No; sooner shall gratitude cease to be a virtue! sooner shall the love and admiration of heroic deeds, of all those exalted talents which give dignity to man, be obliterated from the human breast!

Thus did a campaign, which, in its beginning, threatened unconditional subjugation, in its end, present a prospect the most animating and consolatory to the friends of liberty. The cause of America had now attracted the attention of the world. Her armies had evinced a spirit worthy of such a cause: her enemies had been compelled to retrace their path of victory, whilst WASHINGTON, tranquil in danger, sure in council, superior in his views and resources, had acquired the unbounded love, veneration and confidence of his fellow soldiers, had commanded the respect of his enemies, and proved that he was worthy of the
high

high trust committed to him. It was this love, this veneration, this confidence, daily increasing, as his talents and his virtues were more and more developed, which formed the treasury of America. Yes, ye brave and virtuous defenders of your country, ye companions of the illustrious WASHINGTON, I call you to witness, that, amid all your sufferings, this devotion to your chief was your bond of union, your support, and your reward! Whether ye lay untented on the frozen earth, or marked your way by the blood-stained ground on which ye trod, or caught in haste, a scanty morsel; still, amidst all your privations, your attachment to your commander, founded on the just admiration of his heroic virtues, supported you in every trial, consoled you under every difficulty, and animated you with a patriotic enthusiasm in the day of battle. This command of the affections of brave and virtuous men—this entire possession of the heart of every soldier—this unbounded veneration for their chief, whilst it forms the greatest glory of a general, converts each soldier into a hero! He seizes, as an example for himself, the great model which his general exhibits. His temperance, his self-command in the heat of battle, his patience in sufferings, his prudence, his magnanimity, his ardent patriotism, infuse themselves into every breast, give an elevation

tion to the mind, a dignity, a confidence, a spirit, which converts man into a new being, communicates to every power a new energy, and creates a force wonderful and irresistible. Such was the agency of WASHINGTON's genius. It possessed a creative power, which assimilated every thing to itself; or, which called forth in others talents they felt not before. His very presence inspired fortitude. No one approached him, but felt the spirit of heroism transfused into his bosom. I think I see, at this moment, the brave soldier, as he passes, hail him as his father, friend and champion; I think I see him rise to redeem his country, exult in his martial exercise, and with a holy fervency calling down blessings on his commander's honoured head; pant again to fight for freedom, or for freedom die!

But if WASHINGTON had hitherto discovered talents wonderfully great in seizing, with promptitude, the first avenues to success, or of profiting from the smallest inadvertence of a general, deservedly high in military estimation, the time had now arrived when the caution of a Fabius, or rather a caution so peculiar to himself, was to be displayed. His inferiority in numbers, and in all the equipments of war, compelled him to take a position on the strong grounds of Morristown. It

is doubtful whether he manifested greater talents as a commander, in this situation, or in those scenes of brilliant action which we have just mentioned. No one knew better the value of that golden curb which discretion hangs on bravery. A general engagement, which the enemy so ardently solicited, would, in all probability, have extinguished, for ever, the bright flame of liberty. To the invading army, procrastination was defeat. In vain did the impetuosity of the American councils urge him to battle. Nothing could move the soul of WASHINGTON but the spirit of wisdom, which, ever calm and serene, had determined him now to be content with checking the movements of the enemy, and to maintain a war of caution. It was this caution, so full of prudence and military skill, which, continually baffling the designs of the enemy, compelled them to embark, and to attempt to gain Philadelphia by sea. The attempt forced WASHINGTON from his strong posts. The battle of Brandywine ensued. The valour of our troops was unshaken, but the event was not fortunate for the American arms. "There are casualties which human prudence cannot always controul, but upon which the issues of battles often depend." One of these occurred. A false intelligence prevented the execution of a design, the most bold in its nature ; but

so admirably planned, that, had an attempt been made to carry it into effect, victory, and not defeat, would have been the result. Nor were the actions of Germantown and of Monmouth less signalized for the skill of the general, and the valour of his troops, than for those untoward events which defeated their hopes. WASHINGTON had not always the glory of success, but he had the glory of appearing to deserve it. The wisdom of his measures was never doubted; success, O God! depends upon thy providence.

But, fellow citizens, we should not do justice to the talents, or the virtues of WASHINGTON, were we to confine our view to those scenes only in which he himself was the principal actor. During the progress of a war, which raged from the frozen walls of Quebec to the burning sands of Savannah, the penetrating eye of WASHINGTON saw every movement; his comprehensive mind took in the vast whole; his councils were received as the monitions of an oracle; whilst from his example, sprung up heroes in every quarter. The enemy had soon, every where, if not a WASHINGTON to contend with, at least one who gloried in following the exalted model. His knowledge of human nature gave him the command of talents wherever they appeared;

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whilst

whilst his magnanimity rendered him always the first to announce the merit of others, and to participate in their triumphs. Whose bosom glows with the virtuous pride of being a citizen of America, and remembers not the gallantry of Greene at Red-Bank ; or the noble defence of Smith at Mud-Island ? Who bears not in vivid memory the victors of Saratoga, or him who rescued South Carolina from the fangs of the lion ? Who calls not to mind the brave, the virtuous, but unfortunate Fayette ? Thou, too, lamented Mercer, shalt live immortal in the memory of America. Thy wounds, received in the bloody contest which preceded the revolutionary war, had already evinced thy courage and thy patriotism. Ah ! weltering in thy blood, abandoned in the midst of the inhospitable wilderness, the deadly serpent thy only food, what but a kind Providence could have preserved thee from such perils ! It did preserve thee, long to live the delight of society, and to become the firm vindicator of liberty. Yes, the hand of God preserved thee, again to unite thy arms with WASHINGTON, and to pour forth thy gallant, but gentle soul, on the plains of Princeton, covered with glory.

Would time permit, I could here, with that joy which the love of noble deeds inspires,
trace

trace a long line of heroes, whose names will be for ever dear to America, and whose energies WASHINGTON saw, combined, and thus produced a force, constant in its action, and irresistible in its effects. Recall the image of this illustrious man; behold him, when not braving the dangers of the field, seated in council, deep deliberation engraven on his countenance; see him giving life and motion to distant armies, and incessantly directing every thing to the political salvation of his country. He seems another Archimedes, sitting on the shore, and moving at pleasure, a vast ship, on an ocean tossed with tempest, whilst he himself is immoveable.

A just eulogium of WASHINGTON requires a detail of the actions of his life. The wonderful properties, the inimitable beauties of those rays which enlighten and animate all nature, to be seen in their full lustre, must be viewed separately. But this detail, this separated view of the luminous actions of WASHINGTON, must be left to the judicious and impartial historian. The time with which you have already favoured me, admonishes me to hasten to that scene of glory which still awaited our beloved fellow-citizen, and which, by closing the bloody drama, established, we trust in God, for ever, pure republicanism in this
western

western world.—That last scene was reserved for Virginia. Her favourite son was destined, in her bosom, to receive the reward of all his toils, and to finish, in her sight, his career of military glory. I will not open wounds which are but just healed; I will not awake the feelings of the friend, the orphan, or the parent; nor will I call to mind the accumulated distress which mourned throughout this land. Suffice it to say, that a superior and a gallant foe, the conqueror of India, spread terror and desolation on every side. WASHINGTON saw the decisive moment; he saw that Providence had, at length, presented the opportunity of closing the sufferings of his country. With a decision, a profoundness of judgment, which astonishes, he projected, and formed, with his brave and generous allies, a plan apparently the most difficult in its execution, and which, to common apprehension, would have indicated only the feebleness of vanity and folly. A powerful enemy in New-York was to be kept in a state of alarm for his safety; allied troops were to be assembled at the same moment, not only from a distant quarter on the continent, but from islands still more remote; a fleet, which gallantry aided in the great design, was to second every movement, and to assume its place at the appointed time; his own troops, by rapid marches, were

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to ensure their arrival at the period affixed; the militia of Virginia, provisions of all kinds, were to be collected. How many powers were here to be combined! What difficulty in their arrangement! What prudence in adjusting means so discordant! What secrecy in the execution! The mind of WASHINGTON was superior to every difficulty. The hostile army beheld themselves surrounded by a force, which ensured their captivity, before they suspected the design. Nothing more clearly evinces the strength of mind which this extraordinary man possessed, than the sure calculation which he had made of the result of all his measures, and also of the consequences which would attend the success of this bold but well concerted enterprize. Weak minds, ever vacillating, find their emblem in the aspen's leaf. They have no centre of repose. That of WASHINGTON was self-poised; it felt its own weight, and rested upon its own determinations. The Admiral of the allied forces hesitated whether he should keep the station assigned to him. America should often review the letter which WASHINGTON wrote to him from this city. Hear it, fellow-citizens:—

“ I am unable to describe the painful anxiety under which I have laboured since the reception of your letter. It obliges me *warmly* to urge a perseverance in the plan agreed upon.

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The attempt upon York, under the protection of your shipping, is as certain of success as a superior force, and a superiority of measures, can render any military operation. The capture of the British army is a matter so important in itself, and *in its consequences*, that it must greatly tend to put an end to the war.”—After pointing out the certain and fatal event which would follow the removal of the allied fleet, he adds, “I earnestly beg your Excellency to consider, that, if by moving your fleet from the situation agreed upon, we lose the present opportunity, we shall never hereafter have it in our power to strike so decisive a blow, and the period of an honourable peace will be farther distant than ever.” He then assures the Admiral, that he had nothing to fear from the fleet of the enemy, however superior, stationed as he was ; and then concludes, “I am to press your Excellency to persevere in the scheme so happily concerted between us.”——This letter was the anchor of victory. WASHINGTON, with his brave allies, advanced to York. They came, they saw, they conquered !

Then did America exclaim, “If God be for us, who can be against us !” Yes, great God ! then was thy providential kindness manifested ; then was it felt and adored by all ;
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but by none with more ardour, or more humility, than by him who had been selected as the chief instrument in thy hands, for the establishment of liberty in this new world. “Let,” said he, “divine service be performed to-morrow in the different brigades and divisions. The commander in chief recommends, that all the troops which are not upon duty, do assist at it with a serious deportment, and *that sensibility of heart, which the recollection of the surprizing and particular interposition of Providence in our favour claims.*” His thanks are then tendered to the whole army in the warmest language; and let it be remembered, that the militia of Virginia, with their governor and general, the virtuous and the patriotic Nelson, received, in a particular manner, his sincere acknowledgments of their brave and zealous co-operation.

Joy, like the rapid lightning, ran from one extremity of the Continent to the other. Every house of public worship resounded with grateful praises and thanksgivings to the God of battles. Every heart called for blessings on the head of WASHINGTON. Every American now began to hail the glorious consummation of all his hopes. The vindicators of liberty now saw that the storm which had so long desolated their country, and deluged

it with blood, was rapidly subsiding : the horizon began to gleam around, and promised the speedy effulgence of the brightest day which ever illuminated this earth.

That day soon arrived. It was the day which witnessed the acknowledgment of the freedom, the sovereignty, and the independence of the different States of America.

Is the orb of WASHINGTON's glory now full? No! it is increasing in splendour. How many victors have found a Rubicon, whose small current only tempted its passage; and, when once passed, how oft has a mad ambition tossed the laws and liberties of the people in the air!—The integrity of WASHINGTON was a rock, in the midst of the ocean, which could not be moved. His patriotism was as firm as the continent he had saved. He was now to give another example to succeeding ages, another proof of the reality and the greatness of his virtues. By his prudence he first drew off silently the wrath of military tumult: it was an angry cloud, which might have been terrific to his country, had not WASHINGTON, like the immortal Franklin, known how to avert its fury. No sooner had the veterans of America, unrecompensed as they were for all their labours and their sufferings,

ferings, resumed the character of citizens, than their beloved commander repaired to Congress. Behold him, fellow-citizens, in this exalted act of patriotic duty. See him, with a modesty and a dignity of manners so peculiar to himself, rising in the august council of America, delivering an address replete with the noblest sentiments, and unrobing himself of all his military authority. “Happy,” said he, “in the confirmation of our independence and sovereignty, and pleased with the opportunity afforded the United States of becoming a respectable nation, I resign, with satisfaction, the appointment I accepted with diffidence; a diffidence in my abilities to accomplish so arduous a task; which, however, was superseded by a confidence in the rectitude of our cause, the support of the supreme power in the union, and the patronage of Heaven.

“The successful termination of the war has verified the most sanguine expectations; and my gratitude for the interposition of Providence, and the assistance I have received from my countrymen, increases with every review of the momentous contest.” He concludes with saying, “I consider it as an indispensable duty to close this last act of my official life, by commending the interests of our dear country to the protection of Almighty
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God, and those who have the superintendence of them to his holy keeping. Having now finished the work assigned, I retire from the great theatre of action, and, bidding an affectionate farewell to this august body, under whose orders I have so long acted, I here offer my commission, and take my leave of all the employments of public life."

The thousand emotions which crowded upon the minds of all present, rendered the scene awfully impressive. The answer of the President was delivered with a sensibility which almost suppressed utterance. It was a just tribute to the many virtues, military and civil, of the illustrious WASHINGTON, and deserves to be engraved upon his tomb.

The acclamations of a grateful country, the applause and admiration of the world, attended him to the peaceful walks of private life. Tyranny only trembled at the lesson he had taught; a lesson said the President of Congress, equally useful to those who inflict, and to those who feel oppression. Yes, fellow-citizens, the eloquent lesson which he taught, caused those scales with which the false lustre of power had obscured the vision of men to drop from their eyes. The American revolution like another Ananias, seems to have been
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sent by Heaven to open the eyes of the universe.

Hitherto, fellow-citizens, you have admired the departed, but immortal WASHINGTON, as a commander. Follow his steps still further, and you will equally admire him as the statesman and the sage.

II. When the interests of America indicated a closer union of those sovereignties which the revolution had established, Virginia, ever watchful over the general prosperity, and faithful to her principles, again stood foremost. This is the fourth time that she first suggested to her equals the adoption of measures which were essential to the liberties, the prosperity, and the aggrandizement of all. Great God! we thank thee that reason, and not arms, is the force which hath hitherto directed the political movements of a virtuous and enlightened people. The general council, which was proposed, met—WASHINGTON was again called into the service of his country, and unanimously elected president of an assembly of men illustrious for their talents and their patriotism. From this assembly emanated the present constitution of the Federal Government. He who never solicited an office, was solicited by all America to accept the important

tant office of President of the United States. With what diffidence he received this testimony of the confidence, the love, and the veneration of a free and independent people, is in the memory of every one; nor is the exultation, which spread like the break of morning light, less strongly recollected. To see WASHINGTON again at the head of the American people, no longer clad in armour, but seated in the curule chair, giving energy to the laws of the Union, and stability to the liberty he had vindicated, watching over the interests of all, harmonizing discordant states, establishing order and method in every department, and thus making a fair but grand experiment of the subserviency of the newly-created government to the general happiness, was a spectacle the most dignified, as well as the most grateful to every heart. With what assiduity he devoted himself to the duties of his office; with what consummate prudence and judgment he directed the legitimate powers entrusted to him to their proper ends, let the voice of his country declare! Let the policy pursued, whilst Europe, maddening with contention, was convulsed to her centre, and whilst conflicting nations were labouring to plunge this country into the whirlpool of war, testify the wisdom, the magnanimity and the patriotism of its conductor. Peace with all nations, close connections with
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none, union among ourselves, measures favorable to commercial intercourse, both internal and external, a militia properly organized, not extensive military establishments, institutions to develope and to extend the powers of the intellect, and to diffuse knowledge; these were the objects which engaged his attention, and formed the basis of his policy. During his administration, it is true, that parties, the concomitants of all free governments, arose. WASHINGTON, too, had his party; it was that of the public good. He was the chief magistrate of a whole nation, and not of a part of that nation. Onward he bent his steady course, inflexible in the pursuit of what he deemed just and proper; conscious of his own integrity; relying upon the favour of Heaven; and affording an example of that rare assemblage, or rather constellation of virtues, which will and must be the admiration of ages.

Was, then, WASHINGTON exempt from error? This I do not say. He was a man; and, consequently, had the infirmities of man. But this I do believe, and think the whole tenor of his life justifies the belief—that, if he did err, his errors were never intentional. Human wisdom and human virtue claim no higher prerogative. To Heaven only infallibility belongs. But though WASHINGTON may
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have erred, he had the merit of extracting glory even from his errors. How worthy of a great soul are the following sentiments, which he delivers in his last address: “Though,” says he, “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 forty-five years of my life having been 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.”

Twice called to the presidential office, his fellow-citizens waited only for the return of that day, on which they should exercise the sovereign right of election, again to clothe him with the same honours. But, more anxious to enjoy the rights of a private citizen than the honors of office; wearied too with the long and laborious service, which had constantly occupied his mind, and desirous to spend the evening of his day in domestic tranquillity, he announced his intention of retiring. He did not, however

ever forget that he still owed to his country an important duty. This was discharged by an address worthy of WASHINGTON. It contains the outlines of the policy he pursued when in office, and which I have attempted slightly to sketch. It contains, also, admonitions the most wise, founded on long experience and deep reflection; admonitions which ought to be indelibly imprinted upon the mind of every American. It is the advice of the father of American liberty, no less illustrious as a statesman and a sage, than as a commander in war. America, hear this sentence: "Of all the dispositions and habits which tend to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labour to subvert those great pillars of human happiness, those firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician ought to respect and cherish them. A volume could not trace their connection with private and public felicity." The mind of WASHINGTON saw, that republicanism without morality was a chimera; and that morality without religion was as evanescent as the baseless fabric of a vision: he saw that the morality, the virtue which republics require, must have its utmost link fastened to the footstool of the throne of God.—May the hearts of all be open to this

great truth! When WASHINGTON becomes a preacher, who will not listen? O! ye who love your country, and labour for the preservation of her liberties; ye too, who, surrendering yourselves to your passions, have sacrificed your judgments to your zeal, come to this pure fountain of reason; it will quench your animosities; look into it as it flows; it will be a mirror to shew you the path to public good; it will reflect the bright image of that eternal justice which ought to rule the universe. Yes, fellow citizens, it is by the observance of principles contained in this last address that the happiness of the people, in these States, under the auspices of liberty, will be complete; and *that* free Constitution, the work of their own hands, will be so sacredly maintained and preserved (I use the words of WASHINGTON), as will acquire to them the glory of recommending it to the applause, the affection, and the adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it.

WASHINGTON retired; but he carried along with him the sentiments which a dutiful citizen ever owes to his country. Impending dangers, during this retirement, alarmed America.—WASHINGTON was again ready to protect her with his shield, and, old as he was, to lead her armies to the field of battle.

III. But,

III. But, that we may do justice to WASHINGTON, as a sage and a truly good man, we must view him in the private life. "When man is placed upon an elevated theatre—the eyes of the world, the glory of success, give to his soul a force and a grandeur which is often foreign to it. Pride borrows the sentiments of virtue: we do not see the person but the personage." How many have acted as heroes at the head of armies, or appeared more than men, when conscious that they attracted universal attention; and yet, in the shade of retirement, in their common intercourse with society, have shewn that they were less than men, devoid of all that real moral worth which constitutes human excellency! To WASHINGTON the shade of retirement was as luminous as that of the most public theatre. It was here that his soul, unbent, displayed all those virtues which are the ornament and the delight of society. Humane, charitable, wise and just, in every situation, he was always consistent, always equal to himself, always evincing that rectitude of conduct was his sovereign good. The poor found, in him, a guardian; genius a patron; the honest and the meritorious a friend; the dissolute, the impious, and the profane, always an enemy. Sincerely religious, his attendance upon the service of his God was the dictate of real piety.

piety. *Such his modesty, that whilst he was the admiration of all, he alone, like Moses, descended from the mount, seemed ignorant of the light which shone around him.* Such his prudence, that not a word, not an action escaped him, which would not admit of a rational justification. This singular character of reason accompanied him through life. Yes, brethren, it was in WASHINGTON that those four cardinal virtues, justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude, formed an union so rare and so complete. To these virtues was added an understanding the most clear and extensive. His various official communications, his addresses to his countrymen, his answers to the innumerable congratulations which he received, all of which are sufficient to form volumes; whatever came from his pen, whilst it was always distinguished by a style the most perspicuous, the most strong and manly, evinced, at the same time, a vast mind, a superior intellect, which could grasp every thing, and which laboured incessantly to promote public and private felicity.

Such was, in part, the illustrious citizen who filled so wide and so honourable a space in the eye of America, and of the civilized world; and whose loss a nation this day deplores. I know that my attempts to do justice to his character have fallen infinitely short of
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what your affection demanded : but I am little conversant in the language of panegyric. “ Recorded honours shall gather round the monument of WASHINGTON, and thicken over him. It is a solid fabric, and will support the laurels that adorn it.”

But ah ! great and good as he was, the scene of mortal existence is closed for ever. Yes, fellow citizens, your beloved WASHINGTON has finished his course. He is gone to appear before that God in whom he trusted ; and his works have followed him. Happy moment for thee, illustrious shade ! but afflictive to a nation which mourns thy loss, and which can find its consolation only in the remembrance of thy virtues, in an humble resignation to the decrees of an all-wise Providence, and in its gratitude for benefits received through thy instrumentality. Long shall thy name be dear to thy country. Long shall the aged father, calling to his son, point to thy tomb, and bid him remember WASHINGTON ! bid him recollect thy virtues, and seize the patriotic flame which once glowed within thy bosom. The tender mother, too, hanging over her beloved son, shall drop the anxious tear, and hail the name of WASHINGTON ! shall exclaim, O ! like him be thou brave, prudent, temperate, and just ! O ! be
thou,

thou, like him, thy country's shield in war, its ornament in peace. And thou, America! incumbent as thou now art over the tomb of thy beloved citizen, mayest thou annually retrace his virtues, and consecrate his memory! May his actions be ever the objects of thy emulation and thy praise!

Ah! fellow-citizens, remember that virtue only is estimable in the eyes of God; and that, without it, republics are victims destined for the altars of ambition. Remember, that without just sentiments of religion, virtue perishes; a dreadful prostration of morals inevitably ensues, and, with that prostration, liberty is gone for ever. Would you shoot an arrow at the rapid lightning as it flies athwart the sky? or would you attempt to arrest the ocean's tide by a single pebble? As well might you attempt to retain virtue, the basis of private and public happiness, the rock of all rational government, without religion. Ah! in an age when religion has become the sport of libertinism and philosophists; in an age when impiety is too often considered as the first proof of brilliancy of genius; in an age when thy religion, blessed Jesus! is scoffed and reviled by those who are ignorant of it; in an age when even our relation to a God has been derided by wickedness and folly; in such
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an age, religion feels more than a momentary consolation in embracing the tomb of WASHINGTON, and in holding him forth as another immortal example, that man, in his greatest perfection, is ever religious and faithful.—O! ye who love your country; ye who would preserve, for yourselves and your posterity, republicanism pure and uncontaminated, again I entreat you, be it yours to cherish religion, and to bear in mind the example of WASHINGTON. Ye who yet condemn the degrading idea, that death is an eternal sleep; ye who do not rest upon the miserable and the dreadful hope of that destruction, that extinction of being, at the thought of which virtue trembles, and the soul shrinks back with horror; ye who can look beyond the grave, and there behold regions enlightened by the eternal meridian of God's unclouded smile—regions in which piety and innocence live immortal; O! make that God your friend. Then, like your beloved fellow-citizen, will you be strong in virtue, and incapable of dismay: then will you, in that awful moment which must soon tear us from all the soul holds dear in this world, be enabled, like him, to exclaim, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which

which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing." AMEN.



Finis.

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