

Dryden

Jan 20 1800

A
S E R M O N,

D E L I V E R E D

**BEFORE THE MILITARY OFFICERS, APOLLO LODGE,
AND A LARGE AND RESPECTABLE NUMBER
OF THE CITIZENS OF TROY,**

JANUARY 12th, 1800.

IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE DEATH OF

Lieutenant-General George Washington.

BY JONAS COE, A. M.

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[Published at the Request of the Hearers.]

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THE following Discourse was hastily composed, without any view to publication : But, at the particular request of a number of those who heard it delivered, it is submitted to the Public, without any material alterations. That it may contribute to instamp on the public mind, more deeply, the memory of LIEUT. GENERAL WASHINGTON, whose death gave rise to it, and excite a general emulation to imitate his virtues, is the ardent desire of

THE AUTHOR.

TROY, January 13, 1800.



II. SAMUEL, 1. 27.

“ How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished !”

THE sudden and alarming death of our venerable Father and illustrious Citizen, who is lately fallen, is an event so affecting and important, that I rise to address you, on the present occasion, with the mingled emotions of diffidence and sorrow. When we consider the magnitude of the subject which is to occupy our present attention, and the universal gloom it has spread over every mind throughout this extensive country, it seems utterly beyond the power of human description to paint it in a proper manner. In order, however, to accomplish this, as far as possible in my present situation, and lead our minds to a suitable contemplation and improvement of this melancholy dispensation of Divine Providence, I have chosen the passage of sacred scripture which is now before us.

It is a part of an elegant elegy, composed by the Poet of Israel; and sung by him, to express the deep sorrow of his heart, on a mournful and solemn occasion. The occasion was this. When the royal leader of God's chosen people had received information that his country was invaded by a numerous army of the Philistines, he led forth the armies of Israel against them. Zealous of his country's rights, and attached to the highest interest of his people,

like an intrepid hero, he personally entered the field of battle, with his brave and affectionate sons around him. But, notwithstanding all his military prowess and mighty achievements, his army gave way to their formidable enemies; whose archers singled out the royal family, and pressed hard after the valiant Saul and beloved Jonathan, and overtook and slew them on mount Gilboa.

WHEN tidings of this melancholy and mournful event reached the ears of the pious David, the son of Jesse, his benevolent heart was overwhelmed with sorrow, and he burst forth in the pathetic language of our text. “*How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!*”

WAVING all remarks on the analogy, which may be supposed to exist, between the King of Israel and our beloved WASHINGTON—we shall immediately proceed to consider the passage before us, with particular reference to the latter, who has so recently fallen under the power of death; and hold up to your view, the improvement which we should make of it.

IN this view of our subject, I am persuaded that every heart in this assembly will resound our text, and exclaim, “*How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!*”

I SHALL consider the word *mighty*, in discussing this subject, in the most extensive sense, as implying *greatness* and *excellence*, as well as *power*.

OUR venerable father, whose death we this day commemorate, was *mighty*, in the first place, in his PERSONAL TALENTS and VIRTUES.

NOT only, my Brethren, was he peculiarly majestic in his external form, and uniformly dignified in the whole of his deportment, but he was endowed with a mind of superior talents and illustrious virtues, which fitted him for great and mighty achievements. He possessed a clear and comprehensive understanding, which seemed at once to enter into the most intricate subjects, and almost instantly view them in all their connections and parts. He appeared equally formed for the field or the cabinet; and could as readily marshal the contending army, as balance the power of civil government. His will was energetic and decisive, and seemed always subservient to his reason and judgment, and the will and sovereignty of the people. His affections were pure and ardent, and glowed with one steady and increasing flame of love to his friends and his country. All the powers of his mind were enlarged, noble, and dignified; far superior to every thing mean, low and debasing; and were generally employed, from early life, in the great affairs of our nation.

As to his virtues, they were as splendid as his talents, and shone conspicuous in all his conduct. He was clothed with a dignified humility as with a garment; and his great mind appeared never elated with all the triumphs of victory, the plaudits of his country and splendour of courts. He was temperate, amidst all the luxury and entertainments of life; and made his appetite wholly subservient to fit him for more vigorous exertions, more extensive usefulness and elevated glory. He was patient under the most severe trials and unprovoked abuses; so that "*when he was reviled, he reviled not again: when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously.*" He was persevering in the midst of the most perplexing difficulties and gloomy discouragements, and rose paramount to every obstruction, which was thrown in his way, in the

salvation of his country : And nothing was able to daunt his courage, or move his firm and unshaken mind. In battle, he was the determined and invincible warrior : When victorious, the humane friend of peace. Benevolence was a distinguishing trait in his character ; and he was the generous benefactor of the citizen, the soldier, and the prisoner whom the fortune of war cast into his power. The whole train of cardinal virtues appear to have resided in our venerable father, in an eminent degree. In his enlarged mind, was combined the wisdom of a senate, and his majestic presence struck with more profound awe than a host.

NEITHER are these splendid virtues, which we have now been contemplating, all that embellished our illustrious citizen. In addition to these, he had others of a superior nature, which adorned and finished his dignified character.

DEEPLY in his heart appears to have been implanted, a supreme veneration for the most high God, as well as a tender regard for his fellow-men : And he uniformly attributed all his causes of martial victory, and political glory, to HIS universal, beneficent, and overruling Providence. His great mind was superior to modern licentious philosophy ; and he readily discerned, and cordially embraced, the Christian religion, as of divine authenticity, and as the only rational system of moral truth, upon which guilty mortals can build a permanent hope of immortal life, and eternal salvation.— Under these impressions, he annexed himself to the church of Christ, and avowed his attachment to the glorious gospel. Thro' all the vicissitudes of his important life, he uniformly attended the public worship of God, with punctuality and reverence ; and gave his highest sanction to all the institutions of religion. And we have ground to believe, that his elevated soul was embellished with the

grace of the gospel ; and that he was enabled, by the divine influence which he constantly derived from its author, to maintain that circumspection of conduct, that dignity of character, and majestic glory, for which he is so universally famed. Of such vast importance did real religion appear to this great and good man, that he inculcated it upon the inhabitants of the United States, in the most forcible manner, in his farewell address. Hear it, as recorded in that ever-memorable bequest, which he made when he retired from public life ; and let it sink deep into our hearts, as the words of a dying father. “ Of all the dispositions and habits, (said he,) which
 “ lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensa-
 “ ble supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patri-
 “ otism, who should labour to subvert these great pillars of human
 “ happiness, these firmest props of men and citizens. The mere
 “ politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and che-
 “ rish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with
 “ private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, where is the
 “ security for property, for reputation, for life, if a sense of reli-
 “ gious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of in-
 “ vestigation, in courts of justice ? And let us with caution indulge
 “ the supposition, that Morality can be maintained without Religion.”

SUCH, my Brethren, were the religious sentiments of our venerable father, which he bequeathed to us, his children, in his last legacy : And such, as we have been considering, were the illustrious assemblage of talents and virtues, which constituted his amiable character. They were early discovered to reside in him : And President Davis, as if endowed with a prophetic spirit, when preaching before the Virginian volunteers, in the year 1755, pointed him out as the probable saviour of his country.

IN the view of all these great talents and amiable virtues, which adorned the character of our illustrious citizen, who is now mouldering in the gloomy grave, we might, with the utmost propriety, adopt the language of our text, and exclaim, "*How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!*"

2. OUR illustrious WASHINGTON, whose death we this day commemorate, was *mighty*, in his PUBLIC TRANSACTIONS and ACHIEVEMENTS.

IN describing these, it will not be expected that a minute detail be given. This would far exceed the limits to which we are circumscribed, and would swell our discourse to volumes. All, therefore, that I at present intend, is to give a very general view of the public transactions and martial achievements of this great man, in order to instamp his memory more deeply on our hearts, and lead us to suitable mourning and lamentation.

THE superior talents and splendid virtues with which he was endowed by Divine Power, fitted him to shine in public life, and capacitated him for great and mighty achievements. An opportunity presented, in the morning of his days, to call them forth into vigorous exertion. In 1755, about the twenty-third year of his age, he marched, at the head of the American volunteers, to defend our western frontiers, against the common enemies of our country. In the forests of Ohio, in General Braddock's defeat, he displayed such martial skill, such undaunted bravery and feats of arms, as endeared him to his country, and pointed him out as our rising patriot, and invincible hero.

BUT a far more extensive and important field was afterwards opened for the display of his great talents and amiable virtues, and which gave full scope for his mighty achievements. When haughty Britain assailed our rights, and invaded our privileges; when she assumed an unlimited jurisdiction over the citizens of America, and declared she would bind us in all cases whatsoever, without our consent; when she threatened the subversion of both our liberty and religion, by sovereign taxation and ecclesiastical establishments; and when our whole country stood fearful and dismayed, trembling at the issue of such unbounded usurpation and arbitrary power: Then, O! then it was, that our venerable father, brave patriot, and invincible hero, flew to arms, organized our armies, and determined, under God, that he would conquer or die. His majestic presence animated our disheartened citizens, and called forth our forces, from every part of the country. He soon taught our hands to war, and our fingers to fight, and led forth our troops into the field of battle. With an army of his sons, though inexperienced in war, yet lovers of liberty and the rights of their country, he attacked and beat the veterans of tyranny, and soon acquired laurels of military glory.

ALTHOUGH, in the course of our revolutionary war, he was frequently placed in the most perplexed situation, and embarrassing circumstances; although he was betrayed by some in whom he confided, and was deserted by others; and although he had every difficulty to encounter, which could originate from scanty resources, unequipped troops, and a formidable foe; yet his great and unshaken mind surmounted the whole. He persevered, in spite of every obstacle which was thrown in his way, in obtaining our freedom and independence. Neither prosperity appeared to elevate, nor adversity to depress his spirits: But with one calm, unmoved,

and magnanimous temper of mind, he travelled through the various vicissitudes of eight years war ; and finally led our youthful, determined, and brave armies, to splendid victory and glory : And permanently established both the liberty and independence of our country.

WHILE the mere recollection of the martial achievements, and public transactions, of our illustrious father and invincible hero, fires our souls with veneration and love for his amiable character ; how are their ardour damped by these sable ensigns and garments of woe with which we are surrounded, and by the irresistible impression, that so much greatness and human glory is buried in the dust !

" How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished !"—

Mourn, O ye lofty hills, and embattled plains, which have been witness to his mighty achievements ! Weep, ye American heroes, who have fought and bled at his majestic side ; for your illustrious leader, and glorious commander, is now no more ! Lament, ye Brethren of Masonic order ; for your father, your brother, and the brightest ornament of your respectable fraternity, is mouldering in the silent dust ! Grieve, all ye sons and daughters of America, and let tears of sorrow stream down every cheek ; for the securer of our rights, the defender of our liberties, and the glory of our land, is shrouded in the gloomy grave !

WERE I to stop here, in recounting the public transactions of this great man, I should not give you a general view of one half his worth.

No sooner had he accomplished the great object of his martial career, and presented us with our freedom and independence, than

he was called to concert, with the patriots and statesmen of our country, the best means for *their* preservation and perpetuity. And here his talents and virtues were not less conspicuous than in his former great transactions. He appeared equally capacitated for framing governments and commanding armies ; and he presided over, and took an active and decisive part in, that august body which formed the constitution of the United States : A constitution which admirably combines the ~~clashing~~ interests of this extensive country ; which secures liberty with order ; and which is happily calculated to promote the peace, prosperity, and felicity of all classes of citizens.

NOR did the great transactions of this good man cease to shine here. More resplendent glory was yet in reserve, for him, whom God delighted to honour. For as soon as the federal constitution was reduced to form, and adopted by the states in the union, our venerable father was called to preside as chief magistrate of our country, by the unanimous voice of the people. He filled this highest seat in the western world, with the highest dignity and glory ; and administered the government of the United States with an inexplicable mixture of mildness and energy. He adhered, with the utmost fidelity, to the constitution of our government, and never discovered the least ambition to overleap the bounds there prescribed him. And he appeared uniformly to study the peace, prosperity, and happiness of his country ; and constantly exerted his great talents, during the whole course of his civil administration, to raise our infant empire to respectability, dignity, and glory.

IN this elevated situation, he was grave, plain, and accessible. His great mind was superior to the regalia and haughtiness of kings, and the splendid trappings and pomp of courts. And his virtuous

soul seemed never to desire to avail himself of any personal or domestic advantage, from all his victory and glory. He loved his country ;—therefore he endured the most painful toil, and laborious fatigue, and fought for her liberty and independence. He loved his people ;—therefore he governed them with moderation and justice, with mildness and energy, and uniformly sought their highest interest. While he was at the helm, under God, we were always secure, in the midst of the tempestuous political ocean. He rode out the storm of both foreign and domestic faction—steered us safely through the raging billows of European commotion—and retired from the chief magistracy of his extensive country, loaded with laurels of the most consummate earthly glory.

3. OUR illustrious WASHINGTON, whose death we this day commemorate, was *mighty* in his PRIVATE CHARACTER and LIFE.

AFTER our venerable father retired from the great theatre of public life, to which he had been repeatedly called by the general voice of his country, he cheerfully sat himself down as a private citizen, to enjoy that freedom and independence for which he had so nobly fought, and to submit to those laws, which he himself had sanctioned. In this situation, as a private citizen, he did not waste away the residue of his days in rounds of luxury and dissipation, like the heroes and statesmen of antiquity ; but he employed his time in promoting domestic and social happiness, and advancing the interests of his country ; and actually engaged, when again solicited, to become the commander and leader of her armies. His private character, as far as I am acquainted, is as spotless and dignified as his public life. He was the affectionate husband—the tender parent—the obliging neighbour—and generous friend ; as well as the in-

vincible hero—the wise legislator—and great statesman. Of him, it may be most emphatically said, “*When the ear heard him, then it blessed him ; and when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him ; because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him who had none to help him. The blessing of him who was ready to perish came upon him ; and he caused the widow’s heart to shout for joy. He was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a father to the poor, and the cause which he knew not he searched out ; and he break every yoke.*”

NOR were his moral and religious character less amiable, than his political and military were great. He appears obviously to have been endowed with that “*wisdom which cometh down from above ; which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, without partiality, and without hypocrisy, full of mercy and good fruits. He walked not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful ; but his delight was in the law of the Lord,*” and his happiness to do good to men.

THE close of his life was doubtless spent, as he intimates in his farewell address, in preparing for his approaching dissolution. For he was well apprized, that notwithstanding all his greatness and glory, he was a frail mortal, and must soon mingle with his original dust. He was thoroughly convinced that he was a dependant creature, that he was an accountable being, who stood in need of everlasting salvation ; and that he was destined for a boundless eternity. To prepare for this, he retired from the busy scenes of human life, to his peaceful abode at Mount Vernon ; where he died, in the *sixty-eighth* year of his age, with the same greatness of mind with which he lived : And from whence, we have good ground to believe, that his immortal spirit has been escorted by shining Angels, to the regions of celestial glory.

THUS terminated the life of our illustrious WASHINGTON, whose *personal talents and virtues*—whose *public transactions and achievements*—and whose *private character and life*, are without a parallel. As he was human, he was liable to the frailties and imperfections of our degenerate nature. But whatever these were, they were few in him, when contrasted those with which are usually attached to great political and military characters ; and are all swallowed up in the effulgence of his virtues and excellencies.

IN him were combined the Hero—the Statesman—the Patriot—and the Christian. A rare assemblage in a human character ! He was the light of our councils—the ornament of our church—the bulwark of our land—and the glory of the world.

BUT I dare not attempt his eulogium—Every transaction of his life—and the world, will resound his praise.

BUT notwithstanding all his greatness, majesty, and glory ; he is fallen ! he is fallen a victim to death ! “ *How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished ! The beauty of America is slain upon the high places. Ye Mount of Vernon, let there be no dew, neither rain, upon you ; for there the shield of the mighty is deposited. Ye sons and daughters of America, weep over our illustrious WASHINGTON, who is with us no more !*”

IN reviewing our subject, and reducing it to practical improvement, no person in this assembly, I am persuaded, can refrain from mourning the loss of so great and good a man. But while we give vent to all the feelings of our overwhelmed spirits, on this mournful and solemn occasion ; let us weep like Christians, with a holy resignation to the will of Heaven. Let us be thankful to the sovereign

of the universe, that he raised up such an eminent character among ourselves, furnished him with such illustrious talents, and continued him so long such a distinguishing blessing to this extensive country. Let us bless God, that he did not die by the hand of some cruel tyrant, or fall victim to some inhuman mercenary; but that he expired at his own peaceful retreat, surrounded with his affectionate friends, and furnished with every accommodation which could alleviate the agonies of dissolving nature, and facilitate his transition out of time into eternity. O! let us praise the eternal Jehovah, that we have such good foundation to hope, that he was fitted for, and has winged his way to brighter regions beyond the skies; where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest; and where he is joining the holy heroes and patriots of Israel, in exclaiming *“unto him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.”*

2. IN improving our subject, let us all be led to realize that we are mortal, and must shortly die. If our illustrious father, after all his usefulness, greatness, and glory, has fallen a victim to the king of terrors; who among us can expect to escape? Whatever talents and virtues we may any of us possess, however useful we may have been to our country; with whatever splendour and wealth we may be surrounded; and however elevated may be our situation in life; yet we are constantly liable to the arrest of death, and may be suddenly hurried into a boundless eternity. This was the lamentable case of our illustrious friend, whose death we this day deplore. While we, therefore, mourn his sudden death, with hearts of humble and genuine sorrow; let us wisely improve this melancholy providence, to prepare us for our approaching dissolution. Let us look with a holy indifference on all human glory, and learn to view it as fading and swiftly passing away. And let us be anxiously solicitous, to secure an interest in that immortal splendour in the kingdom of Heaven, which is in reserve for all the followers of the blessed Jesus; and which will increase and brighten throughout all eternity.

3. LET our subject excite within us, a high emulation to imitate the dignified example of our illustrious citizen. Like him, let us employ our time and our talents for the most important

and dignified purposes. Like him, let us devote ourselves to the service of God and our country; and uniformly maintain a profound veneration for the one, while we are engaged in promoting the highest interest of the other. Like him, let us be humble, temperate, patient, and persevering; and cherish and exercise the whole train of cardinal virtues. Like him, let us cautiously avoid modern philosophy, and adhere to the Christian religion; and cordially embrace its divine author, as the only foundation of our eternal salvation. And, like him, let us uniformly countenance, and solemnly stand upon, all the institutions of the gospel, and see that our souls are embellished with its divine grace, if ever we expect to be formed for great and dignified transactions. Copy after his great example, in both your public transactions and private life; and steadily follow his illumined path, to usefulness, to honour, and glory. And then, like him, you will be respected and loved while you live; you will be lamented when you die; and will dwell for ever with him, in the same bright regions of elevated joy and everlasting felicity.

FINALLY, Brethren, be assured that all terrestrial things are tending to dissolution, and will soon pass away. The time is hastening on, when Kingdoms, Empires, and Republics, and States, will all be dissolved, and tumble into ruin: When the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat: And when the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. The solemn period is coming, when God will stain the pride of all human glory, by the resplendent effulgence of his Son; and when Kings and Emperors, Heroes and Patriots, and all description of characters, will have to stand before HIM who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and receive their final doom.--- Blessed are they who shall receive from his sovereign voice that divine eulogium, "*Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joys of thy Lord.*"—AMEN.

ERRATA.

Page 5th, line 7th—for "He," read *It*.
 Page 6th, line 17th—for "causes," read *career*.

Du. 287