

A ✓
MILITARY

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN

CARLISLE.

MARCH, THE 17th, 1776,

TO

**Colonel IRVINE'S Battalion of Regulars,
and a very respectable number of the
Inhabitants.**

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE OFFICERS.

By WILLIAM LINN, A. M. CHAPLAIN.

*Psalm xx. 7. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;
but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.*

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MILITARY DISCOURSE, &c.

2 Sam. x. 12.

Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God : and the Lord do that which seemeth him good.

IT is with some degree of diffidence that I arise to speak this day. The novelty of the scene, together with so large and respectable an assembly, are circumstances enough to damp the vigour of youthful blood, and put inexperience to the blush. I must not however hesitate in the way of duty ; and I hope the candour of my audience will make proper allowance, if the address of the speaker equal not the importance of the subject.

The words I have read to you, were the exhortation of a brave General, just before an engagement. David having sent messengers on a friendly visit to Hanun, the king of the Ammonites, he, by the advice of his nobles, treated them in a very shameful and ridiculous manner ; alledging for excuse, that David had sent his servants to

search the city, and to spie it out, and to overthrow it. The children of Ammon perceiving that this must needs draw upon them the displeasure of Dávid, or, as it is expressed in scripture, that they stank before him, levied war, and called to their assistance the Syrians, a numerous and powerful nation, who were forward enough indeed to combine against David, both to revenge their former losses and reproaches, and check his growing greatness. The mercenaries they employed in their service at this time, we are informed, were three and thirty thousand.

When David heard of it, he sent Joab, his commander in chief, and all the host of the mighty men. With all possible dispatch, he gathers his troops and orders them to march into the enemy's country.

We are here particularly informed of the disposition of the battle on both sides. The children of Ammon put the battle in array before one of their frontier cities, so that they might defend the entrance into their country, and be sheltered by the city in case of a defeat; the Syrians were by themselves in the field, and were intending to fall upon the rear of Joab's army. To answer this disposition, and to defeat the designs of the enemy, Joab, like a wise general, forms his lines as here related. " When
 " Joab saw that the front of the battle was
 " against him before and behind, he chose
 " of

“ of all the choice men of Israel, and put
 “ them in array against the Syrians. And
 “ the rest of the people he delivered into
 “ the hand of Abishai his brother, that he
 “ might put them in array against the
 “ children of Ammon. And he said, if
 “ the Syrians be too strong for me, then
 “ thou shalt help me: but if the children
 “ of Ammon be too strong for thee, then
 “ I will come and help thee.” Thus prudently contriving, that whatever side seemed to fail, should be reinforced by supplies from the other; as knowing their all depended, in this critical situation, on maintaining their ground, firm and unshaken.

Then follows the exhortation to the men, than which nothing can be more noble and animated. Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good. As though he had said, Be not afraid; let courage fire your hearts, and brace your nerves; behave like men. We fight not for conquest or fame, but in defence of ourselves and our brethren; in defence of our cities, devoted to the worship of God, who will certainly plead their cause. Courage, my heroes; manifest your prowess to-day, and leave the event to the good pleasure of God, who ordereth all things wisely.

Having briefly opened the occasion and meaning of the exhortation, I shall in the

sequel of the discourse, shew what is implied in true courage, and instance several persons in whom it shone illustrious ; next, I shall take notice of the excitements to courage ; thirdly, resolve success in battle into the good pleasure of God ; and, lastly, make an application adapted to our present circumstances. May the Lord enable me to do these things as in his fear, and agreeable to eternal truth.

I. Were I to define true courage, I would say, It is an inward strength and greatness of soul, that rises superior to danger, joined to a happy contexture of body, and sweetly tempered with prudence, wisdom, and clemency. That there is a daring intrepidity in some men, occasioned by a particular modification of the blood and spirits, and which will sometimes bear them thro' the greatest dangers, is readily granted ; but still this may be distinguished from true courage, to compleat the idea of which, we must add an inward dignity and nobleness of soul, which acts upon rational principles, and under a sense of duty, looks down on danger. Perhaps the one may do in the heat of action, the other affords a pleasing reflection afterwards, and will support the soul in midst of thickest dangers, and smile at death arrayed in all his horror. When they both unite in one person, he deserves the appellation of a brave man.

Nor are these the only things necessary
to

to constitute true courage. There must be prudence, to foresee dangers and take every lawful advantage; wisdom, to plan measures; and clemency to the enemies, when vanquished and in our power. He who will rush into danger without consideration, or some probability of success on his side, except in a case of great extremity, is rather rash than courageous. By the kind direction of heaven, rashness has sometimes succeeded; but surely every wise man, before he hazards his life, ought to know whether he does it from rational motives. Joab was, no doubt, well persuaded of the goodness of his cause; he had made the best disposition possible in his present circumstances, and saw there was a probability of success, if his men only acted their parts; therefore he bids them be of good courage, leads them bravely on, and in an instant they are crowned with victory.

Clemency is likewise a grand ingredient in true courage. For want of this, Alexander can be esteemed no better than a murderer of his species, and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden has been justly called the madman of the North. It is observed, I think of Cæsar, the Roman General, that he conquered more by his clemency, than any other way. The same may be said of Cyrus, who is among the most accomplished Generals antiquity can boast of. Every one who knows any thing of his history, cannot

cannot but admire, how remarkably the fierceness and intrepidity of the lion was blended in his person, with the innocence and meekness of the dove.

I might here enumerate many who were illustrious for their courage and skill in battle. Whether we consult the page of sacred or profane history, whether we trace the records of antiquity, or those of modern date, bright examples are presented to our view.

Joab, though in other respects none of the best of men, yet stands renowned, by the inspired pen, in praise of military virtue, as the greatest General in his day. Witness the battle of Gibeon, the siege of Rabbah, and the glorious victory gained at Mahanaim. In all these actions, he shared the greatest military glory; and though we cannot allow him to be the perfect hero, yet certainly he was a great soldier and a brave man.

But still of a higher rank is Joshua, who, under the particular direction of God, managed the war against the Canaanites, and took possession of the promised land.—“ And
 “ what shall I more say? for the time would
 “ fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak,
 “ and of Samson, and of Jephthah, of
 “ David also, and Samuel, and of the pro-
 “ phets; who through faith subdued king-
 “ doms, wrought righteousness, obtained
 “ promises, stopped the mouths of lions,
 “ quenched

“ quenched the violence of fire, escaped the
 “ edge of the sword, out of weakness were
 “ made strong, waxed valiant in fight,
 “ turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”

In profane history also, antiquity presents
 us with a long illustrious catalogue of he-
 roes. Among the Athenians, Miltiades,
 Phocion, Themistocles, Alcibiades, Aris-
 tides, and Pericles. Among the Romans,
 not to mention more, Cæsar, Pompey, and
 the two Scipios. Nor can we pass in si-
 lence, Hannibal, the famous Carthaginian,
 who, after his astonishing march over the
 Alps, penetrated to the gates of Rome, and
 under almost every disadvantage, maintain-
 ed a war for sixteen years in Italy, in spite
 of all the Roman force.

When we read the wonderful exploits of
 these Heathen warriors, we cannot but
 secretly wish, they had fought less for fame,
 and that their conquests had been made with
 less barbarity. It is, however, much to the
 honour of christianity, and shows its great
 excellence, that wherever it takes place, it
 softens the rugged dispositions of men, and
 inclines them to humanity and mercy. Up-
 on this account, we must prefer to these,
 such as in later days, have rose the protec-
 tors of innocence and scourge of tyrants ;
 such, as through an unconquerable passion
 for liberty and the rights of mankind, have
 stood as bulwarks, against the unrighteous
 encroachments of tyranny, and bravely
 fought

fought the battles of the Lord. A William and a Marlborough, are yet fresh in every one's memory ; and Wolfe shall live coeval with time itself. Though, alas, the present race of Britons are much degenerated ; yet we must allow merit its due. There have been brave Englishmen, and I doubt not, they would be still brave, did they fight in a just cause, and against their natural enemies.

Will it cause our wounds to bleed afresh, should I say, that America too can boast her bold Montgomery, and intrepid Warren ? Men distinguished for their valour, and who nobly fell in the present glorious cause. Unhappy Plains of Abraham, had not the blood of Wolfe satisfied you, but you must drink the blood of our Montgomery too ! — Let their fall, or the fall of a hundred such, far from discouraging, animate our souls, and urge us on to avenge their death, and assert the glorious cause in which they fell.

When this bloody page of American history is written, I hope proper justice shall be done to the memory of these noble heroes, and of all others who may yet fall a sacrifice to British insolence and cruelty. Their names shall be transmitted fair and unsullied to future generations ; posterity shall read the wondrous tale, and give them the credit they so justly deserve.

I shall only farther add under this head,
that

that courage, or heroism; in a good cause, joined to the prospect of immortal life in a future world, affords one of the most exalted ideas in human nature. It is noble; it is godlike.

II. As was proposed in the method, I shall now take notice of the excitements to courage. For our people and for the cities of our God.

Honour and shame are very powerful motives. Their influence over a soldier is allowed to be very great; insomuch that a soldier is generally trusted, in case he gives (as they phrase it) parole of honour. Many would rather chuse a voluntary death than disgrace. Sooner than be thought deficient in point of courage, it is the soldier's maxim to face the greatest dangers, and risque a thousand deaths.

But the motives in my text are those that might make even cowards brave. When ourselves, our brethren, our cities, our posterity; in short, when all that is worth living for is at stake, he has not the spirit of a man, that would not lift the sword and hazard his life in defence. How did Nehemiah act on a like occasion? "I looked," said he, "and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them; remember the Lord which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your

“ your sons and your daughters, your
 “ wives and your houses.”

Our contest, my countrymen, is remarkably for our people, and for the cities of our God.—Call to mind the cruel and oppressive acts of parliament, by which you and your children were to be made slaves forever; your money, which you had earned by the sweat of your brow, wrested from you, you know not why nor for what.—

Behold an omnipotent parliament, full of bribery and corruption, consisting of men abandoned and profligate, in whose choice we have had no vote, declaring they have a right to bind us in all cases whatsoever;—in consequence of this, breaking charters, blocking up harbours, establishing popery, and sending an armed force to dragoon us to submission.—Call to mind the bloody affair at Lexington and Concord, where, without provocation, our brethren were inhumanly fired on and slain.—And, O my soul, call to mind the ever-memorable action at Bunker’s-hill, where our small army encamped, a comparative handful bravely withstood the charge of two thousand of the flower of the British troops;—call to mind all the circumstances of that gloomy day, big with horror and confusion—an opulent town in flames—mourning widows—desolate mothers—and orphan children. Add to these, every species of violence

violence committed since ; — the hellish scheme of bringing upon us the savage bands, and arming our slaves.—Call to mind all these, and tell me, whether your breasts do not heave with ardour, and long for the day of combat ? Do you not in imagination, grasp the spear, and with a glorious enthusiasm, cry out, *For our people, and for the cities of our God.*—Be of good courage then, cherish this ardour, gather strength from every excitement ; and so shall your hearts be steeled with courage, and your swords edged with victory.

III. I shall now, thirdly, resolve success in battle, into the good pleasure of God.

Though force is opposed to force, and arms to arms, we must never forget that “ safety is of the Lord.” “ The battle,” says Solomon, “ is not to the strong ;” that is, victory and success in war do not always attend the greatest force and preparations ; nor doth that side which, in human estimation, is strongest, always prevail and get the better. There is a secret providence which governs and over-rules all things, and does, when it pleases, interpose to defeat the the most hopeful and probable designs. It was the saying of king Aha, in his prayer to God, “ It is nothing with thee “ to help, whether with many, or with “ those that have no power.”

The providence of God interposes more remarkably in battles, than in any other cases ; because, it being an appeal to God, the great judge of the universe, he takes the matter into his particular care, and orders it according to his infinite wisdom and justice.

The heathen themselves always acknowledged, in the affairs of war, a special interposition of fortune ; by which the wiser among them, understood the Divine Providence. Livy, their great historian, hath this remarkable observation, “ That in all human affairs, especially in matters of war, fortune hath a mighty stroke.” And again, “ No where,” says he, “ is the event less answerable to expectation than in war ; and therefore nothing is so slight and inconsiderable, which may not turn the scales in a great matter.” And Cæsar, who was a very prosperous and skilful warrior, makes the same acknowledgment. “ As in all other things,” says he, “ so particularly in war, fortune hath a huge sway.”

The scripture is full of examples to this purpose : that when the providence of God is pleased to interpose in favour of any side, it becomes victorious.

Sometimes God hath defeated great armies by plain and apparent miracles. Such

was

was the drowning of Pharaoh and his host in the Red-sea ; and such was the destruction of the proud king of Assyria's army by an angel, who slew an hundred and fourscore and five thousand of them in one night. Sometimes God does this by striking mighty armies with a panic and unaccountable fear ; and inspiring with extraordinary spirits and courage, the weaker side, so that an hundred shall chase a thousand, and a thousand shall put ten thousand to flight.

This made David so frequently acknowledge the providence of God, especially in the affairs of war. " There is no king," says he, " saved by the multitude of an host, neither is a mighty man delivered by much strength." And again, " I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me." Gideon, by a very odd stratagem, of lamps and pitchers, defeated a very numerous army, only with three hundred men. Jonathan and his armour-bearer, by climbing up a rock and coming suddenly on the back of the Philistine's camp, struck them with such a terror, as put their whole army to flight. King Asa, with a much inferior number, defeated that huge Ethiopian army, which consisted of a million. And how was Xerxes's mighty army overthrown almost by an handful of Grecians ? And to come nearer, how was

that formidable fleet of the Spaniards, which they presumptuously called invincible, shattered and broken in pieces, chiefly by the winds and the sea? So many accidents are there, especially in war, whereby the Divine Providence doth sometimes interpose, and give victory to the weaker side.

Providence has also, in many instances, favoured the American troops. Raw and undisciplined as they were, and unaccustomed to horror and bloodshed, the Lord has made them strong in battle. The few disappointments we have met with, teach us the great lesson I am inculcating, That there is an invisible agent that ruleth in the armies of heaven above, and among the inhabitants of this earth beneath. They serve to humble our pride, and learn us to go forth in the name and strength of the Lord of Hosts.

After fixing our eye upon heaven, and invoking Almighty aid, we ought to exert all the powers of soul and body, and leave the event to the wise disposal of Providence. And the Lord do that which seemeth him good.

I promised to conclude the discourse with an application, adapted to our present circumstances.

It would be wholly unnecessary to say any thing about the cause of our present dispute with Great-Britain, so much has
been

been said and written upon this subject, that, I suppose, there can scarce remain a scruple in the breast of any American, who is not blinded by prejudice or self-interest. It is as clear as the noon-day sun.

But however clear our duty may be, and however cheerfully we may endeavour to execute it, we cannot but bewail the unhappy necessity to which we are reduced. Surely abounding wickedness is the reason why heaven is so angry with us. It is very remarkable that these calamities approached gradually, as though God waited for our reformation, and was unwilling to bring upon us, all at once, the fury of his anger. No such reformation has yet appeared, save in a few externals, and therefore the dismal cloud has thickened fast; covers the whole continent, and, when it bursts, may sweep away numbers in the mighty deluge. Would to God, that my audience were properly affected with the dispensation, as coming from the righteous Governor of the universe, and as being a loud call to repentance! Would to God, that all our champions who hazard their lives in defence of liberty, understood how to fight the fight of faith, and were suitably impressed with the glorious truths of the gospel. Far from lessening their courage, it would add a double force, it would give calmness and fortitude in the hour of dan-

ger, support the soul in death, and some guardian angel conduct it afterwards to the regions of bliss above. How sweet and comfortable was the death of colonel Gardiner!—This brave officer having been long eminent for piety, closed the scene of his weary pilgrimage at the battle of Preston-Pans. Being deserted by his own regiment of dragoons, he fought on foot until he received several wounds, of which he soon expired. In his last moments, he said to one of his enemies, “ You fight for an earthly crown, but I am going to receive an heavenly.” Happy soul, no sooner were his eyes closed on all the horrors of war and bloodshed, but they opened on the invisible glories of another world; no sooner were his ears shut to the groans of the dying, the rattling of drums, and the roaring of cannon, but they were saluted with heavenly music. The redeemed above, with songs of praise, welcomed their Gardiner to his haven of eternal rest.—To die, as he did, in a good cause, and in full hopes of eternal happiness, is far from being a gloomy or a melancholy event. He was wounded to his honour, and died to his everlasting advantage.

Gentlemen-officers of this battalion, perhaps it is not improper to address you particularly on this occasion — You have professed a willingness to serve in the cause of
America,

America, and you have been dignified with command by the voice of your countrymen. Filled with a laudable enthusiasm for liberty, some of you have left the pleasures of a learned profession, others the delightful scenes of rural life; and all of you, your nearest friends and connections, to tread the rugged paths of war, and solicit fatigue and danger. For this, you deserve the esteem and gratitude of all good men; and we would fondly hope, you never will, in any instance, act unworthy of the confidence your country has reposed in you. As to your courage, we would not so much as insinuate a suspicion, nor touch you in so nice a point, the point of honour.

Permit me then, to recommend to you religion, as the finishing accomplishment either of a gentleman or a soldier. Endeavour to obtain an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, and pay the strictest attention to all his precepts. Beware of the intoxicating ways of sin; they will enervate your constitutions and damn your souls. However unfashionable a thing religion may be among officers, I can assure you from the Word of God, that it is your greatest glory and truest happiness. It may indeed expose you to the ridicule of fools, but it will support you under the most pressing difficulties of life, and the Lord himself will be your exceeding great reward. The consolations of
if

the Holy Spirit are genuine and lasting, and if you are the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, he will never leave you, nor forsake you.

Permit me to recommend to you the christian panoply, or compleat armour. Take truth for a girdle to your loins; for a breast-plate, righteousness; and let your feet be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. Above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Take also the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Having thus taken unto you the whole armour of God, go forth in his name and strength, go forth breathing courage; let your men catch from you the generous flame, and lead them to death or victory. And O, when the important day of trial comes, may the Lord make you, like Saul and Jonathan, swifter than eagles and stronger than lions.

Gentlemen-soldiers, I mean now to address you; and I would fain do it with plainness and freedom.—You have beat your plow shares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears; you have exchanged the field of labour for the field of battle. With your lives in your hands, you must cheerfully go whenever the drum beats, and the trumpet sounds for battle.

What

"ous man his thoughts, and let him return
 "unto the Lord, and he will have mercy
 "upon him ; and to our God, for he will
 "abundantly pardon." "I am the bread
 "of life," says our Saviour, "he that
 "cometh to me shall never hunger, and
 "he that believeth on me shall never thirst ;
 "all that the Father giveth me shall come
 "to me, and him that cometh to me I will
 "in no wise cast out." With a painful
 heart and weeping eyes, I beseech you, O
 my countrymen, that you reject not the
 Lord Jesus Christ, who endured the cross
 and despised the shame, but make haste to
 obtain an interest in him. He will hide you
 in his pavilion in evil days—he will be a
 shelter from the wind and from the stormy
 blast.

Animated with all the hopes and comforts
 that religion can afford, let your hearts be-
 tray no unmanly fears in our glorious cause.
 When you come to be drawn in battle ar-
 ray, let your breasts rise high and your
 joints stand firm ; let a generous indignati-
 on sparkle in your eyes and flush on your
 cheeks. If you have any mettle, if any
 generous blood flows in your veins, if you
 would not have your names damned to
 perpetual infamy, behave like men, and
 fight for your people, and for the cities of
 your God. Courage! for the cause is good ;
 courage! for our all is at stake ; courage!
 for

for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth : let America rejoice, and all her colonies be glad thereof.

To conclude ; may the Lord God of hosts plead our cause, and interpose for our deliverance. May your summer's campaign be great and glorious, and may you be returned in safety to the bosom of your country, and meet the congratulations of your friends. Above all, may the peaceful reign of king Jesus soon commence, when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and the inhabitants thereof learn war no more.

F I N I S.