

AN
ORATION,
DELIVERED

AT THE REQUEST OF THE OFFICERS OF THE ASSEMBLED
CAVALRY AND INFANTRY, AND OTHER MILITIA OFFI-
CERS,

ON THE 22^d OF FEBRUARY, 1800;

IN THE

WEST PARISH OF LONDONDERRY,

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE DEATH OF

General George Washington.

BY WILLIAM MORISON.

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AN
O R A T I O N.

Mr FELLOWCITIZENS,

WHILE I attempt, with humble diffidence, a discharge of the duty, and acknowledge with cordial gratitude the honor assigned me on the present occasion ; it affords me high satisfaction, and produces correspondent freedom, that I arise to address a candid and enlightened audience, whose minds are not stained with impure adulation, nor that undue devotion paid to departed heroes, in æras of ignorance and superstition ; nor hardened by that rigid austerity, and envious ingratitude, that in this informed age, would consign the characters and actions of great men to oblivion. Encouraged by this happy state of intellect, in this numerous assembly ; I am free to say, your respect for the memory of **GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON** does you honor ; and your attachment to military order, and the government of your country, gives every good citizen pleasure.

Agreeably to the Proclamation of the President, we assemble today, to commemorate our beloved Patriot's

triot's birth ; to contemplate his illustrious life ; and to condole and lament in his death. What a high assemblage of different emotions of joy and sorrow, does the remembrance of his character in this view produce in our minds ? An assemblage combining distant years, important events, and various achievements.

On the 22^d of February, 1732, our Friend, our Father, our Statesman, our Hero was born—A day auspicious to the Columbian world ! a morning on which a day-star arose in America !—an æra, which neither our children, nor succeeding generations shall ever forget, till time expires, and days shall be no more. Then was America honored ! Then did Virginia, Westmoreland County, and Washington parish, become distinguished spots of the earth.

No sooner had WASHINGTON arrived at the age of twenty years, than the happy influence of his valuable life, bedewed the frontiers of his native state. His discerning and grateful country clothed him with honorable commissions, and vested him with plenary powers for a negotiation with her enemies. In discharging the duties of these youthful honors, he disarmed the savage, and disposed him for peace.

By his superior penetration and prowess, he distinguished himself a blessing to his country, triumphing over Indian victory, in saving the remains of Braddock's defeated army, from the wanton cruelty of a barbarous foe. These early and successful exertions were ominous of the future toils and dangers he endured ; by which he preserved his country from being a theatre of despotic diversions for European tyrants, to be a garden of liberty for the American nation.

When the rights of freemen were variously infringed in America ; when the chains of British slavery were cunningly hid in chests of tea ; when a Gage, a Dunmore, with many others, stood ready to rivet the shackles, by which his country was to be

be violated ; her chaste cries reached his ears ; he drew his sword which never delighted in blood, and determined to save her. Neither affluence of fortune, nor the prejudices of Britain, high in his favor for past services, could produce a single hesitation. He risks all, for love of country, of liberty, and of man. This principle drew him from his beloved and peaceful retirement. This principle induced him to renounce a life of private ease and honor ; in which he was distinguished as a Father to the fatherless, the orphan's Shield, the stranger's stay and the widow's Judge ; to be more eminently distinguished in the field of Mars, for his country's general salvation.

At that distressful period, when every moment seemed pregnant with events more important than the productions of a century ; we see WASHINGTON at the head of the American arms ; elevated in sight of the world, to the performance of command, perilous as *riding the whirlwind*, and arduous as *directing the storms* of heaven. His name carried order and government among his friends ; and set bounds to the insolence and arms of his enemies. The heights of Boston can tell ; and their warlike entrenchments can witness to his superior Generalship. The abstinence, the valor, the unwearied fatigues of Long-Island, York-Island, and the Jerseys ; when WASHINGTON carried his young and inexperienced country in his arms, with her countenance heavy, and her heart like to break, are proofs, that he, only grew brave by distress, and collected strength from disappointments. Undismayed by the threats of angry elements, in the storms of winter, and in the highest swellings of the Delaware ; unappalled by the smallness of his numbers, with the increase of every want ; and facing a powerful well equipt and veteran foe ; he marshalled his little host ; he fired their souls with love of liberty ; and by a single effort of his high genius crumbled the overgrown pride of his

his enemies to the dust. By this unexpected and surprising victory, he revived the desponding spirits of his country and invigorated her feeble arm for the field.

By his wisdom in war, he often saved the blood of his countrymen ; by retreats, triumphing over victory ; converting the advances of his enemies into ambuscades for their own destruction ; and convinced them, their conquests and successes were temporary and vain.

When we contemplate our American Hero at Brandywine, Germantown, and Monmouth ; how undaunted, traversing clouds of smoke, seas of blood, and tempests of fire !—His presence supplying every want—animating every soul—bracing every nerve—and braving every danger. His voice in the hour of trial, was as light to the blind, strength to the weak, courage to the fearful, and comfort to the dying.

Watched by the eagle eye of WASHINGTON, his enemies fly from City to City for rest ; and from State to State for territory, to no purpose. He soars aloft, alternately checks and pursues ; until the last exertions of his potent foe for fighting or fleeing, are exhausted. By a noble effort of his great abilities, and superior talents in command over our auxiliaries from a nation *then* our ally ; with the army of America, he finally forced his enemies to surrender to his clemency, as a Commander equally disposed to commiserate the vanquished, as to subdue those in arms ; and to convince the power of Britain of the necessity of turning her thoughts on peace.

These, my fellowmen, are but an imperfect sample of the heroic lustre and splendid achievements, by which he directed the arms of America ; until he evinced her importance, and weighed her independence before an astonished world, in the scale of Nations.

When the olive branch succeeded the glitter of arms,

arms, and the sound of industry and agriculture, the thunders of the field of Mars; the Americans beheld WASHINGTON with delightful admiration, resigning his high command into the hands of his beloved country, from whom he received it; and amidst the applauding shouts of thousands, returning to Mount Vernon, with the prayers of Millions for blessings perpetual to follow him. In the exercise of his high command, WASHINGTON convinced the wise, that he was more wise; the brave, that he was the most brave; but in his resignation, the good, that he was the best. How far inferior are the Heroes of Europe, the convulsed state of her nations can witness.

But though WASHINGTON had retired to the peaceful shades of private life; though America is deeply in arrears of gratitude for past services; still she looks to him, as the man that must secure by his counsel in the cabinet, that independence which he had gained in the field, by his sword. Possessing every qualification to finish the Statesman, as well as the General, he is unanimously chosen President of the Convention, which erected that noble structure, our federal Constitution. What sagacity in reasoning, penetration in judgment, and wisdom in conclusion, guided the Convention over which he presided, in rearing that stupendous fabric, is fully evinced by the happy effects America enjoys under its roof. To this strong hold (under God) are we indebted for preservation from the fury of domestic faction; and from the conquest of terror, and plunder, of foreign nations. It is under the covert of this all-protecting edifice, that our gaols are not thrown open by the hand of violence; that our Judges are not torn from the bench of justice; that our ministers of morality and religion are not dragged from their desks; that places of public worship are not converted to play houses, nor our precious sabbaths to a French decade. It is under the banner of this standing testimony of WASHINGTON'S abilities,

ties, with those of his copatriots, that we are safe from the storms of endless revolutions, conspiracies and intrigues ; and that our wisest statesmen have not felt the dagger of the assassin, on the floor of Congress. It is rallying round this standard of rational liberty, order and government, that our citizens are not robbed, our houses not rifled, our fair not violated, our old men not miserable ; nor our tender infants destroyed on the point of the spear. And give me leave to add, it is under the arch of this mighty building, that America sits yet in her own house, with her children around her ; and calls them happy. Happy will they still be, if they realize it, for it is the order of the family.

When the federal Constitution received the sanction of the people, America looks again to WASHINGTON, as the man, whom she still delights to honor ; and as worthy of her highest confidence in peace, as well as in war. He is unanimously chosen to hold the chief reins of government. At his country's call, attested by the joy inspired into all ranks of citizens at his election ; he rose from his seat of ease, on which he had been scarce allowed a moment's rest ; and in the exercise of self-denial for her good, bowed to her request ; and with a diffidence peculiar to a mind equally great in itself, and unfulled by pride or dissimulation, entered on his high office, with a dignified solemnity unknown before in America. How well he discharged the duties of this high honor, the nations of the earth and the grateful heart of every honest American can witness.—His whole life seemed to indicate, that a special Providence had raised him up, and given him a rare assemblage of virtues, and powers of judgment, to perform a complicated variety of important services ; in defending his country in war ; and refining and consolidating her government in peace. Like a focus of light, in which all rays centre ; he possessed whatever was noble, virtuous, and good in man.

To

To our American Hero, as to the greatest of mortals, has been, allotted the highest prize of human glory, in running his race, without stumble, stain, or defect. The fame of his illustrious deeds has explored every region of the earth, and crossed every latitude of the ocean. On WASHINGTON, as on a blazing comet, in the firmament of human stars, the inhabitants of the different Zones have had their eyes equally set; and whether friends or enemies to America, have been his equal admirers. His name shall remain in the archives of the world, till the records of time shall cease; and the sublime poet, the lively limner, the curious engraver, and every artificer of monumental remembrance, will be proud to exhibit the most lively stroke of taste, and the best testimony of invention, to perpetuate the memory of WASHINGTON.

His sword shall be the delight of the brave, and the wonder of the warrior, while arms are in use. And while earth is the habitation of man, the traveller—Indian—Foreigner—or American; as he passes Mount Vernon, will stop; make a solemn pause! and his commemorating soliloquy shall be, There is the honored residence of the FATHER of his Country, the DEFENDER of her Rights, and the BENEFactor of man. When the good, the great, the learned, or illiterate, the soldier or citizen, look at the tomb of WASHINGTON, they will drop the generous tear on his urn, while the memory of his virtues and valor enlivens their innate respect for his dust and ashes.

But alas, he is no more! We are bereaved of WASHINGTON forever! For this, our country utters her groans of grief, and is deeply sorry. For this, the chair of her state, and the desk of her temple are shrouded in sable—For this, the hilt of her sword, and the arm of her citizen, are clothed in crape—For this, her drums are muffled, her trumpets are hoarse, and her music mourns. And for this her national fortitude stands this day in arms reversed,
not

not ashamed of the tear of heavy woe on her cheek. Let us condole with her. If our hearts are not adamant ; if our eyes are not flint ; they will melt, they will weep for WASHINGTON. To melt is pleasant, to weep is manly ; to forget him ~~is~~ ingratitude of the blackest hue ; and to be indifferent under such a high-dispensation, is impious insensibility.

At his birth, the pillars of tyranny trembled ; in his life, kings and conquerors darkened under his superior lustre ; and at his death, the nations mourn. If the united abilities that accomplish the General, Patriot, and Statesman, could have baffled the power of death, WASHINGTON had never died. If the united prayers of the virtuous in America, from his Excellency ADAMS, to the lowest citizen, could have availed, WASHINGTON were yet alive. And the most expressive tokens of respect, from the first characters in the different quarters of the world, to WASHINGTON, authorize me to say ; that if the desires of the good and the great, in Europe, Asia, and Africa, added to the tears of the tawny tribes to the western Ocean, could have softened the king of terrors, our AMERICAN CHIEF were yet spared. But he is gone forever from us—we shall hear his voice no more—To us, in this stupendous dispensation,

“ The ways of Heaven are dark and intricate ;

“ Puzzled in mazes, and perplexed with errors !

“ Nor know we where the regular confusion ends.”*

“ Thy ways are in the sea, and thy paths in the mighty waters, and thy footsteps are not known.”†

Were an enemy to invade our coasts, wide as the sea, is the breach made in our army by his death ; and to those who realized his worth in the day of danger, heart-rending indeed is that dispensation by which the Deliverer of our country, the Founder of our government, and the Bulwark of our nation, is hid

* Addison.

† David.

hid forever from our sight. Had this awful Providence taken place in America, when his arm was her support in the field of struggle and distress; and when one stumble in his walk would have made her heart tremble, and her countenance sad; who can say, that we, with our little ones, might not sit to-day, under the darkness of monarchical government, in the sackcloth of slavery. Thank Heaven, it was otherwise ordered; and while submission to the high decree of his decease should humble every American in the dust, every heart should mingle gratitude with mourning, that heaven has spared his illustrious life so long.

Let us not forget the memory of our beloved WASHINGTON; and it will not cease to do us good. In his life, we have a combination of examples for all classes of citizens, from the chief seat of government, to the humble peasant. In the firmness of his integrity, wisdom of his administration, dignity of his manners, with his unremitted concern for the public good; we have a noble example for every description of public officers. In the pious goodness of his heart, illustrated by the justice, temperance, tender benevolence, and universal correctness and purity of his manners in private life; we have all an example in WASHINGTON for living; and in his magnanimous, resigned composure in death, a precious example for dying. The latter fully accords with the former. General GEORGE WASHINGTON died in the full possession of his reason, without a groan, though in extreme distress; perfectly resigned to the will of heaven, and ready to wing his way from this vale of tears, we trust, to the mansions of bliss, and endless repose. May a deep impression of our common Father's memory, excite millions of his extensive family to be like him, pious, brave, virtuous, wise, and good!

END OF THE ORATION.

MEMORANDUM.

THIS great man's ancestors came from Old England, in the year 1657. He is of the third descent after their migration, the first fruit of a second marriage; born on the 22d February, 1732, in the parish of Washington, Westmoreland county, Virginia. His Father's family was numerous.—His education was principally managed by a private Tutor, which has been often the case in families of distinction in Virginia. His Father died when he was but ten years of age.

In the fifteenth year of his age he had determined to go to sea; and had his baggage prepared for embarkation; but through the reluctance of his surviving parent to a seafaring life, he relinquished his determination.

When he was in the twentieth year of his age, he was honored with a Major's commission.—In his twenty second year, he was invested with plenary powers to negotiate with the French and Canadians, who were making inroads on the frontiers of the British Colonies.—He fulfilled the design of his mission with singular industry, intelligence, and address.—It is said his journals were published to the world and announced, at that early time of his life, the greatness of mind and correct manner of doing business, which have since characterized him in the management of more arduous undertakings.

In 1755, he saved the broken remains of Braddock's defeated army, at Fort Duquesne.—But innumerable, and too tedious to mention, were the hardships he endured, and the plans he devised, to defend the frontiers during the war with France.

Peace being restored to the middle colonies in 1758, and his health having been greatly injured by the war, he resigned his commission the year following.—

After his health was gradually restored, he married an amiable widow of merit and wealth, with whom he has no issue.—He was often chosen by the suffrages of his fellow citizens to fill a seat in the General Assembly of Virginia.—He was Magistrate in his county, and Judge of the Court.

In 1774, he was chosen a Member of the first American Congress—And the year following, Commander in Chief of the American Forces.—With what consummate abilities he formed a body of peasantry to a regular army, and fit to encounter the flower of veteran troops, remains unparalleled in the annals of past ages, and will remain the admiration of the world for ages to come.

At the close of the war, he resigned his command and retired to his seat in Virginia—Multitudes thronged his passage, both in city and in country, hailing him as the preserver of their liberties, the giver of their independence, and the restorer of peace.

In 1787, He was elected a member of the Federal Convention, and its President, while framing the federal Constitution, under which we now may so happily live.—In 1789, he was unanimously chosen President of the United States of America, and inducted into office on the 30th of April, in the City of New York in the gallery of the federal Hall in the view of thousands of spectators.—The oath was administered by Chancellor Livingston. Several circumstances concurred to render this ceremony unusually solemn—The presence of the Father and Deliverer of his country—The impression of gratitude for past services—The vast concourse of spectators—The devout and reverential manner in which he bowed, and in which he received the oath; together with the consideration of his being chosen to the most dignified office in America, and perhaps in the world, by the unanimous voice of more than three Millions of enlightened freemen; all conspired to place this among the most august and interesting scenes which have ever been exhibited on the theatre of time. A spectator of this scene was so struck with the solemnity of it, as an appeal to heaven and earth at once, that when the Chancellor pronounced, LONG LIVE GEORGE WASHINGTON, his sensibility was wound up to such a pitch, that he could only wave his hat without being able to join one word in the repeated acclamations that rent the air.—To this office he was rechosen until he finally declined a reelection; at which time he formed an address which for
wisdom

wisdom of policy, justness of thought, perspicuity of style and purity of language, is second to none, nor equalled by any. This address is recommended to us now, as the legacy of a political father to his family; and we are justly told to read it, and to read it aloud that all the house may hear.*

We add; his care for his country's good is very evident in his last public act of condescension in accepting the appointment of *Lieut. General* of the American army; which office he has resigned with his life; which we are informed took place as follows. On Friday, the day before he died, he spent some time in marking a gravel walk which he had in contemplation, on the banks of the Potowmac.—There came a fall of snow which did not deter him from his pursuit.—He continued till his neck and hair were quite covered with snow. He spent the evening with Mrs. Washington, reading the newspapers;—went to bed as usual about nine of the clock—waked in the night very unwell.—In the morning finding himself still so—sent for Dr. Craik of Alexandria. Soon after his arrival, two consulting Physicians were sent for, but all to no purpose.—His disorder would not yield to medicine; and by twelve of the clock at night on Saturday, the 14th of December, 1799—expired without a groan—in the 68th year of his age. He said a few minutes before his death, “Bury me decently, and not till two days after my decease.”—To Dr. Craik he said: “I die a very hard death, but I am not afraid to die.”—Before he breathed his last, he laid himself on his back, placed his hands before him, and closed his own mouth and eyes.

These extracts are from a letter sent from a Gentleman of respectability in Philadelphia, dated January 20th, who had recently returned, from Mount Vernon; after the General's death.

* The principal part of the preceding Memorandum is extracted from Dr. Morse's Geography, and is here inserted for the use of those who may have few means or opportunities of information on this most interesting subject.