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ADDRESS

DELIVERED ON THE EVENING OF THE

TWENTY SECOND OF FEBRUARY,

MDCCCXLVII.

BEFORE THE

YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATION

OF THE

CITY OF ALBANY.

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE.

ALBANY :

PRINTED BY JOEL MUNSELL

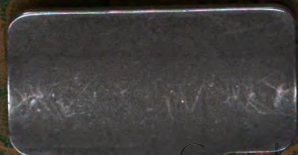
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TO THE
GENTLEMEN COMPOSING THE YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATION

OF THE CITY OF ALBANY,

THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

WITH EARNEST WISHES

THAT THEIR CHARACTERS MAY BE CONFORMED

TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS MODEL WHICH IT COMMEMORATES,

BY THEIR OBEDIENT SERVANT,

W. B. S.



ADDRESS.

If any one were to ask me so strange a question, as, Where he might look for a record of the character of Washington, I might properly enough answer, Look upward, and read it on the face of these heavens, so bright at noon-day, so serene at evening; for to the eye of a slave nothing is bright; to the heart of a slave nothing is serene; and but for Washington, who can tell but that we might have been an enslaved nation to this hour? If this should be rejected as fanciful, I might say, Look abroad among the nations, and read it in the deep veneration with which many of the great and good pronounce his name; in the hearty welcome with which many an American is greeted to this day, for the sake of the Father of his Country. Or

if this should not be thought palpable enough, I might say; Look over our own happy land; mark the simplicity, the dignity, the efficiency, of our institutions; see every thing, but the one leprous spot upon our body politic, telling of enlightened freedom; count up, if you can, the springs of private and public prosperity, which are centered in our independence; and remember that in all this life and beauty and power, Washington lives; that there is scarcely any thing around us, save the air we breathe, for which we are not indebted to his wisdom and energy. Or if this should be pronounced insufficient, inasmuch as it is not a *written* record, I might turn over my inquirer to one of our most illustrious historians, who has immortalized himself, not more by his theme than by the manner in which he has treated it; who, in giving us the productions of Washington's mind, has portrayed his matchless character with such fidelity, that we seem to have before us the whole man, body, soul and spirit, in all his perfect proportions, and all his colossal dimensions. Or even if this should be objected to, as too voluminous a work for persons of ordinary leisure, I would say there is still no reason to

despair of a satisfactory answer to the inquiry ; for in Washington's Farewell Address, which it requires but half an hour to read, there is a glorious epitome of his whole character. If the world holds another civil document which combines more of truth and wisdom and dignity, than this, I know not where to look for it. It ought to be as familiar to us all, as the first lesson which our parents taught us. It ought to be as accessible to the eye, as if it were written in letters of light, and hung up in mid-heaven. The rising generation, every young man especially, ought to carry it nearest to his heart, and ponder it night and day. Be this then the subject of the present commemorative exercise,—WASHINGTON'S CHARACTER, PARTICULARLY AS ILLUSTRATED BY HIS FAREWELL ADDRESS, A STUDY FOR THE YOUNG MEN OF OUR REPUBLIC.

In fixing the time, you have also virtually designated the subject, of my address ; and, in doing so, I hardly need say that you have forbidden even the attempt to lead you into any other than a most familiar path. And I am glad that it is so. I am glad that the character of Washington stands out so prominently, that it can be known and read of

all men. The sun is not the less glorious to my eye, because I know that he has been shining upon the world for ages, and that all the dwellers upon earth are familiar with his illuminating and quickening beams; nor is the theme on which I am now to discourse to you, the less grateful to my heart, because I know that eloquent tongues and eloquent pens have glowed with it, until nothing that is worthy to be said, *can* be said, but at the expense of acknowledged repetition. I aspire to no higher office, on this occasion, than that which he who exhibits a magnificent picture, performs, as he calls the attention of his visitors to its more striking peculiarities, while yet they can examine it for themselves as minutely as they will. Yonder is *our* picture, hanging as if amidst the splendours of the sun. I shall have fulfilled my purpose, if I may be permitted to ask you not only to notice its general harmony and beauty and incomparable effect, but to pause a little upon some of those peculiar features, out of which chiefly, its irresistible attraction arises.

Let me ask you, in the first place, to contemplate the intellectual character of Washington, as indicated by this matchless document.

Notice the admirable clearness of his perceptions, the perspicuity of his style, his ability to produce in another's mind the perfect image of what exists in his own. I know that with a certain modern school of thinkers and writers, this quality is any thing but a recommendation. They live and move and have their being in the mist. Their hearts are ever open to the novel, the wild, the curious; but the true, the good, the useful, must look for advocates elsewhere. You cannot put yourself in communion with them, but you feel that you are walking in darkness, and know not whither you go. But this mode of thinking, by no means, marks the highest order of intellect; and this mode of writing is nothing less than an imposition upon the world; for, however a man may abuse his own mind by a course of dark and absurd speculation, he surely has no right to tax other minds to follow him in his perplexing and profitless mazes. Washington's address, thrown in among the mystical writings of the day, would be a light shining in a dark place. It contains not a sentence nor a part of a sentence, to comprehend the meaning of which the mind of the humblest peasant need

to pause. And because it is so intelligible, a superficial reader might imagine that any body could have written it; and yet this is one of the very qualities that render it so inimitable. But it is nothing more than a fair reflection of its author's mind. It belonged to him, in a pre-eminent degree, to perceive truth clearly, and to express it as clearly as he perceived it. No matter what might be the subject upon which his mind or his pen was employed, it was thrown into a flood of sunbeams: certainly his thoughts were never recorded, till they were so simple both in matter and form, as to be level to the humblest intelligence.

Another attribute of his mind, as here developed, was comprehensiveness. He discerned, as if by intuition, every element and every condition of the body politic. He contemplated its healthful action, and indicated the means of its continuance. He contemplated its diseased action, and prescribed the appropriate remedies. His eye ran along the distant future, and his pen, with unerring certainty, recorded what was to be, and marked out for the embryo nation, its path to a glorious destiny. He looked upon every event that occurred

in its bearing upon the state, with the eye of a philosopher; viewing it, on the one hand, as the effect of some cause or train of causes, and thus analogically shedding light upon the future; and on the other, as being in its turn a cause, requiring to be watched and guided, in order to secure the appropriate result. He was thoroughly at home amidst the deepest springs of human action: nothing was so distant, but that his far-reaching mind seemed to overtake it; nothing so intricate, but that it yielded to a glance of his searching eye.

Here also we have evidence of wonderful power of concentration. Show me a document, if you can, either of ancient or modern date, occupying no greater space than this, that has in it so much of deep and strong thought, so many practical lessons in civil polity, so many earnest admonitions to adhere to the right, as this farewell address contains. What is written in these few pages, might have easily been expanded into a volume; and the marvel is, that any mind could have condensed so much. But it was characteristic of its illustrious author, to say much in a little, and to stop when he had done. He saw intuitively the multiform bearings of every

subject to which his attention was directed, and he knew how to select the most practical, the most important, the most impressive. It was emphatically true of him, that his words were few and well chosen. He never spoke, or wrote, or acted, on any great occasion, but the energies of his vast mind seem to have been brought to a point, and to have operated as efficiently as if they had been trained with exclusive reference to the particular end to which they were directed.

I will only add in respect to his intellectual endowments, that the address upon which I am commenting, shows that he was gifted with consummate taste. The style is perfectly adapted to the subject; and the language is chosen with such uniform and rigid exactness, that criticism herself retires from it in despair. I have read it over and over, to see if I could find a single sentence or a single expression that could be replaced by a better; but I have been constrained to the conclusion that, if there are faults there, my eye cannot detect them. Is it not wonderful that a taste so exact and exquisite, could have been formed, not only without the advantages of early intellectual culture, but amidst protracted scenes

of war and tumult; that a hand which had been trained so almost exclusively to the use of the sword, could, as occasion required, wield the pen in a manner which might shame a very master of rhetoric?

I have attributed to Washington great intellectual powers; but mere intellect never decides the character. The intellects of Gabriel and Lucifer, for ought I know, may be alike; but the one is a shining seraph, the other a prince among fiends. If we knew nothing of Washington, apart from his intellectual constitution, we might be unable to conjecture whether his history was that of an Alfred or a Gustavus Adolphus on the one hand, or of a Julius Cæsar or a Napoleon on the other. It is the moral element that decides the character for good or evil. Fortunately the founder of our republic was alike gifted in the moral and the intellectual. The pulsations of his noble heart were a simple response to the actings of his noble mind. Let the immortal document before us be our witness to the truth of this declaration.

The spirit which breathes and glows pre-eminently, from the beginning to the end of it, is the love of country. The fact that his life

had been devoted to his country's service, and had been rendered tributary, under God, to her substantial welfare, and that the morning star of promise in respect to her glorious destiny had dawned upon him, was evidently the great fact upon which his thoughts reposed with the most intense satisfaction. He stands forth as an earnest and eloquent expounder of all the great principles of national prosperity. He recommends courses of policy,—the result of his profound reflection and vast observation,—fitted, as he believes, to secure the stability of our institutions. He discovers in the distance, rocks and whirlpools and tempests, amidst which he fears that our vessel of state may founder; and he would fain have her provided, so far as possible, with the means of her own protection. He commits the institutions which he had been instrumental of establishing, to the fostering care of his countrymen, with as warm a solicitude as a parent would feel in providing a suitable guardianship for his own child. And the spirit which animated this noble effort, instead of being kindled for the occasion, was the ruling passion of his life. The miser does not love his gold more than he loved his country. Alexander never longed

more intensely to see the world at his feet, than *he* longed to see his country great and good, as well as free. It seemed like the very breath of his life; a primary element of his being. He sustained indeed other relations than to his country; and he sustained them all gracefully and honourably; but this so far eclipsed all others, that though you should be familiar with every thing else concerning him, you might be said to have his whole history yet before you, so long as you were not acquainted with the records of his patriotism.

But the development of his love of country involved the development of a cluster of other great and generous qualities; all of which shine out with unrivalled lustre, from the document we are contemplating.

To what mere human record will you look for such sublime political wisdom as is here exhibited? I mean not that wisdom which consists in knowledge alone; nor yet that which does not rise above the character of mere sagacity, irrespective of the end to which it is applied; but I refer to that quality in which the intellectual and the moral unite, thus securing the selection of the best ends and the fittest means for their accomplishment: and in

this kind of wisdom, especially as it stands related to the state, I ask, fearlessly, who so great as our Washington? What end in respect to his country could he have proposed to himself so noble as the preservation of her liberties, and her exaltation on the basis of truth and right, to be a glorious example to the world? And what means for the attainment of this end, so reasonable, so fitting, so practicable, as those which are here so perspicuously and beautifully detailed? It were easy to show, if the time would allow a minute analysis of the paper before us, that all that the greatest and best minds have ever devised for the welfare of the nation, since that period, is at least shadowed forth in this almost unearthly production. He saw with a prophet's eye; he wrote with a prophet's pen; and when we see how much more he knew of the future and how much wiser he was in providing for it, than other great men of his age, even the greatest, we are ready almost to say, without a figure, that he was a prophet indeed.

Nor was his wisdom greater than his integrity. In suggesting a caution against interweaving our destiny with the destinies of other nations, he says, "Tis our true policy to steer

clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world; so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy. I repeat it, therefore, let those engagements be preserved in their genuine sense." And this is but a sample of what he was always and in every thing. He revered conscience as God's representative in his soul; she was his counsellor by night and by day; and her teachings, though they came only in a whisper, he never disregarded. In the course of his eventful life, there were some attempts made to put him in conflict with his own principles; and there were occasions on which a mind of almost any other mould than his, would have been in danger of yielding; but he always triumphed over the temptation and scorned the author of it. What a contrast to Arnold the traitor—a name which it would be unpardonable to mention here, except as its darkness and loathsomeness seem to throw the name of Washington into a brighter glory. It were not a more hopeless undertaking for the

Parthian to shoot his arrows against the sun, or for the maniac to put forth his hand to overturn the everlasting hills, than it was for any power on earth or in hell, to attempt to bring this great man even into a questionable attitude in respect to integrity.

Here also we find a beautiful illustration of his magnanimity,—that noblest form of human virtue. In announcing his determination to withdraw from the chief magistracy of the nation, he distinctly declares that in the repeated acceptance of the office, he had sacrificed his own personal wishes to what appeared to be the voice of the people; and the whole tenor of his remarks shows that he would have sacrificed them still farther, if he had believed that the welfare of his country demanded it. And in speaking of the treatment due to other nations, he says, “It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and (at no distant period) a great nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that in the course of time and things, the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it?” It were

quite too little to say that he was a stranger to every thing sordid and selfish: his magnanimity was a high, strong, positive feeling, which came out in a corresponding course of conduct, and made itself felt by every mind within the range of its operation. No man understood military tactics better than he; and in the prosecution of the war, he displayed the utmost skill and foresight in all his movements. But he never exercised his sagacity at the expense of his honour. He kept even the enemy with which he was contending, impressed with the conviction that he was not merely a great warrior, but in the best sense, a great man. I remember to have seen a letter addressed to him by the accomplished General Burgoyne, after he became a prisoner of war, soliciting some private favour; and he justifies the liberty by saying that certain traits in Washington's character which the incidents of war had brought under his observation, had made it easy for him to forget his official relations in the admiration which he felt for his personal qualities. A noble testimony from an illustrious foe;—a testimony that is abundantly confirmed by the history of his whole life.

Observe, next, the breathings of his humility

and modesty from this incomparable address. Hear his own language—"I will only say that I have, with good intentions, contributed towards the organization and administration of the government, the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was capable. Not unconscious, in the outset, of the inferiority of my qualifications, experience in my own eyes, perhaps still more in the eyes of others, has strengthened the motives to diffidence of myself: and every day the increasing weight of years admonishes me more and more that the shade of retirement is as necessary to me as it will be welcome. Satisfied that if any circumstances have given peculiar value to my services, they were temporary, I have the consolation to believe that while choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, patriotism does not forbid it." And again—"Though 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 after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its service, with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest." Did ever a great man stand forth more thoroughly attired in the garments of humility? Did ever one form an opinion of himself so inferior to that which the whole world had formed concerning him? There is nothing here of the silly cant of affectation; for he claims for himself an honest devotion to the best interests of his country; nor does he depreciate the importance of the results to which, by the blessing of Heaven, his labours have been brought; nevertheless, he is deeply conscious of his own imperfections; and he loses sight, in a great measure, of his particular agency, in the united agency of the common country, and especially in the benignant control of an ever wise and watchful Providence. Is not his modesty, I ask, among the brightest of his attractions? Do not all his other great and good qualities gather fresh lustre from the humble estimate which he himself placed upon them?

You would naturally conclude that such a

character as this must have been formed in the school of Him who was meek and lowly in heart; and if we look again into this farewell address, we shall find that it is pervaded by a deep sense of the importance of religion, especially by a strong feeling of dependence and obligation. No man ever felt more deeply, or expressed more strongly, than he, the necessity of religion as a means of public and national happiness. Here again, listen to his impressive words:—"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who would labour to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish 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 the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever

may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." I would not claim more, under this head, for the Deliverer of our country, than the truth will warrant. I do not pretend that Washington's religious character was so strongly marked as was that of Wilberforce for instance, whose spirit was always glowing with the fervours of devotion; or that of the celebrated Colonel Gardiner, after the Christian had succeeded to the profligate; but I mean that, making all due allowance for the circumstances in which he was placed,—circumstances in many respects the most adverse to the cultivation of the Christian graces, we have reason to believe that he was habitually controlled by the fear and the love of God; and if any insulated incidents that would seem to speak a different language have come down to us, we are constrained to regard them not as proving the absence of a principle of religion, but only as evidence of an imperfect Christian development. The spirit of Christianity seemed to preside over his whole public as well as private life; and unless history

brings us a false report, he forgot not that the eye of the Invisible was upon him, even amidst the terrible scenes of the battle-field.

And yet another attribute of his character, as illustrated by this legacy of truth and wisdom,—an attribute which may be considered, in one sense, as the crown of all the rest, is its admirable symmetry. It is rare to find a perfectly balanced character, even where the qualities which compose it rise not above a humble mediocrity. And it is rarer still to find an assemblage of the loftiest qualities so harmoniously combined, that no one can say that any one quality casts any of the rest into the shade. And yet who that knows any thing of Washington,—who, especially, that reads his farewell address, can doubt for a moment, that he was pre-eminently one of these rarest specimens of human character? Our country can indeed boast many other names that are deservedly called great; but, in almost every instance, if you scrutinize closely, you find some doubtful spot that you wish to hide; something to disturb harmony, or mar dignity, or lessen usefulness. Washington, on the other hand, not only possessed every quality that belongs to true greatness, but so far as we

can see, possessed all in perfect proportions. The intellectual, the moral, even the physical, are so admirably blended, that every one feels that the elements of his character must have been weighed out in a perfectly even balance; and no one thinks of exalting one of his faculties at the expense of another. I well know that this is not the type of character which multitudes love to contemplate; for many have a passion for the monstrous as well as the marvellous. It is a common remark that genius is eccentric; and hence not a few admire eccentricity from its supposed alliance to superior intellect; and some even feign eccentricity, as a means of acquiring an intellectual reputation. But this quality, where it actually exists, always supposes imperfection: a correct taste uniformly condemns it. It may be notorious for a little time; but it is like the transient and startling light of a meteor—not like the clear and steady shining of the sun. Cases indeed there are in which ill-balanced minds possess great strength, and make themselves every where known and always remembered; but the admiration which they excite at first, rarely survives their own generation. Napoleon's name no doubt will live as long as

Washington's; but the one will gather around it, in the distance, a darkness that can be felt, the other will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

In thus glancing at some of the leading traits of our country's chief Benefactor, you perceive that I have scarcely looked beyond the document from which I proposed to gather my materials. But though I have purposely kept myself within these narrow limits, aware that, if I should go beyond them, I should find myself in a field too vast to be occupied or even successfully entered within the brief hour allotted to me, I must not forget to remind you that each of the traits to which I have referred, to say nothing of others to which I have not had time to refer, as illustrated by this memorable document, is variously, I had almost said endlessly, illustrated by the history of his brilliant career. What I have said, with his farewell address before me, may suffice as the starting outline of his character; but if you sit down to the careful study of his life, you will find that the little that you have now heard in illustration of his greatness, compared with what is furnished by authentic history, is but the first hint of a lawyer's brief, in comparison

with the most elaborate and protracted argument. I would not indeed be afraid to trust to this unparalleled document to vindicate the claims of its author to the character of the first man of his age,—nay, of one of the noblest specimens of the race. I look upon it as that in which his greatness, his goodness, the epitome of all that belongs to his memory, is embalmed; and if it were possible that the time should ever come, when every other witness concerning him was dumb, this of itself would keep his name glorious and glowing to the end of time. Nevertheless, in our estimate of him, it is fitting that we include his whole history, instead of limiting ourselves to a single point, no matter how important; and I pledge myself to those who have not already made the experiment, that, if they will follow him from the beginning to the close of his career, each successive step will increase their admiration of his character, by throwing into a brighter light some one or more of the exalted qualities that compose it.

Such a character as Washington's must have been designed by Heaven to accomplish wonderful results; but it is manifest that it can never exert its legitimate influence without

being known; and it can never be known without being studied. It becomes then an important question, in what manner it should be studied in order that the desired end may be secured.

Need I say that, in this case as in every other, the character must be studied in the life. If you will find out what a man is, you must first find out what he does; for the life is the only true revealer of the heart. Washington's history is to be collected from a thousand sources. You may, if you please, begin with the farewell address; but if you will be just to yourself, you must not end there. You must read, so far as you can, all that he has written, and all that has been written concerning him. You must even gather up all authentic traditions of him that may come in your way; in short, you must act upon the admission that no circumstance, however trivial, that serves to illustrate his character, is too unimportant to be carefully treasured up. You occasionally meet now with an old man, who has once, or perhaps often, stood in Washington's presence; who remembers his august person, his considerate and dignified manner, and perhaps some weighty words that fell from his lips. I

counsel you not to be afraid of asking such a man too many questions. You owe it to yourself and your country that you draw from him whatever his memory retains; and that you not only turn it to good account as material for your own private contemplations, but embody it in some substantial form, that it may meet the eye of those who come after you. It was once my privilege, in the earlier part of my life, to pass considerable time in a family, the heads of which were not only among Washington's nearest relatives, but had actually, for many years formed part of his domestic circle. His name became to my ear like a household word. His noble face was always looking down upon us from the canvass. The furniture of the dwelling was his gift, and some of it had actually been used by himself, and had descended as a legacy. I regret that I did not better improve the privilege I then enjoyed, of gathering and treasuring interesting facts connected with his history. I remember only enough of what I heard, to be ashamed that I remember so little. None of you may have so good an opportunity of learning what he was from those who knew him best; still there are innumerable sources of

authentic information within your reach, and I cannot doubt that you will take counsel of my want of wisdom, and eagerly and gratefully avail yourselves of them.

Washington's character is to be studied as well in its individual features, as in its general effect. In one act you may read his humility; in another his self-government; in another his high sense of justice; in another his generosity; in another his reverence for the divine character and providence, and for the truths and precepts and institutions of Christianity; in another his glowing patriotism, in which all these other qualities would seem to be combined: each act you are to refer to its appropriate disposition; in other words, you are to hold the history to your mind, till the character comes out of it. And when you have found out the various elements of which the character is composed, then you are prepared to study it as a whole; to take in its combined qualities at once, just as the eye, by a glance, comprehends the mingled colours of the bow. And when the character thus gathered, has fairly imprinted its image upon your mind, that image will remain with you as the glorious companion of all your hours; as the true

representative of greatness and goodness. You can even redeem time in the contemplation of it; for when you have nothing else to do, here you can find standing occupation; and those are far from being wasted hours that are spent in this noble study. Yes, you must view the character in its component parts, or you will never suitably estimate its entire effect. Become familiar with each of its various qualities, and they will group themselves into a magnificent form, which may itself very properly become the study of a life.

Washington's character should be studied in the influences by which it was formed, and the influences by which it operates.

Its elements were supplied by the Creator; they were once bound up in the mind of an infant; and because that infant was thrown into a world of antagonist influences, no wisdom but that of the Highest could decide whether they were to be moulded into one form or another. *There* was indeed true nobility in embryo; but who could tell what these corrupt and withering blasts that are always sweeping over the world, might do to nip that bud of promise? Fortunately, the first place on which the infant rested, was a place

of safety: it was a bosom hallowed as the dwelling of truth and goodness, between which and the Heaven of heavens there was a constant intercommunion. And the aspirations which that mother breathed forth for her precious charge, were such as infinite mercy and faithfulness are pledged to regard. And the first light that shone upon that infant's mind was the pure light of an excellent mother's teachings and example: it is not too much to say that it was her influence that gave to his faculties their first and ultimate direction. When you have seen how much he was indebted to parental and domestic influences, you may follow him into the world, and you will find him cast upon a theatre wonderfully fitted to the development of his powers. The movements of his mind seemed to harmonize with all the movements of providence. Though he was always in places of trust and honour, he never occupied one of his own seeking. He found his country in most delicate and perilous circumstances; with much of the lofty spirit of freedom, amidst the breathings of a deep disquietude; and the news that they were forging manacles for her beyond the sea, brought her into the attitude of stern resistance;

and he was designated to conduct the enterprize,—an enterprize which filled the world with wonder, and took from the brightest crown on earth the choicest of its jewels. And after our national independence was acknowledged, such a man as he could not go into retirement. There was glorious work found to be waiting for him. His hand had gained the victory, and his brow must wear the laurels. And hence we quickly find him in the chief magistracy of the nation; discharging the duties of the statesman with the same ability and success, which had before marked his course as a warrior. I need not enter into any of the particulars of his history: suffice it to say that the circumstances in which he was placed, would seem to have been as well adapted to the formation of his noble character, as if that had been the only end for which Providence designed them. The more you contemplate these circumstances in detail, the more you will know of the process by which Washington's name has become the admiration of the world.

But it is no less needful, if you will study this character to good purpose, that you should note the influences by which it operates; in

other words, that you should consider the wonderful train of causes and effects which his agency has constituted, and in which he is ever fulfilling his mission as an angel charged with blessings to the world.

I shall not be suspected of claiming too much for him, when I say that he was the master spirit in the most perilous and the most glorious scenes of our country's history. Be it so that he had many illustrious coadjutors,—but is there one of them who would not be constrained to retire before *his* superior splendour? I would indeed pronounce their names with reverence always; I would encourage Patriotism to build monuments to their honour; I would invoke Gratitude to lay her fragrant offerings upon their graves; I would have their noble deeds chronicled, as if in letters of gold, that the memory of them might be securely transmitted to the latest posterity; but I would not admit, even in thought, that the greatest of them all had ever earned the laurels of Washington. It was his hand that guided us through the perils of the revolutionary conflict, to the dignity of national independence. It was his wisdom, far more than that of any other man, that contributed to form the glorious consti-

tution under which we live. And as he was the first occupant of the Presidential chair, and remained in it during a period of eight years, in which were settled a variety of weighty questions incident to the earliest operations of the government, it is not too much to say that he gave the first impulse to the machine, which he had had a primary agency in constructing,—an impulse which we trust will not cease to be felt, while our free institutions continue to exist. And thus the very same circumstances and actions by which his own character was so nobly developed, became in turn a channel through which his influence operated to secure and establish his country's freedom.

In due time Washington died. The bosom that had been so long the nursery of lofty purposes, gathered the coldness and insensibility of a clod. The voice through which wisdom and power had been accustomed to speak, was hushed in a silence that will yield only to the voice of the archangel. That majestic form, which needed only to be seen to be admired and revered, disappeared not only from the scenes of public life, but from the retirement of his dwelling and his chamber; and the whole world knew that the sepulchre had

claimed it. But it was little that death accomplished after all; for even before death had done its work, the noble character was embalmed in all its life and power; provision was already made by which it would as certainly become the property of each successive generation, and perform for each a glorious work, as that the ordinance of Heaven changes not. Look around you, my countrymen, and see how bright is the light in which you are walking. Contemplate the means of personal safety, of intellectual and moral culture, of domestic and social enjoyment, and above all, the privilege of exercising without constraint and without fear, the right of thinking for yourselves,—and say whether, in view of these blessings, which are as free to you as the air you breathe, your pulsations are not sometimes quickened even into a glow of rapture. But believe me, in all this, you are only receiving the breathings of the spirit of Washington. The causes which he put in operation before death palsied his hand and congealed his life-blood, continue to operate with undiminished, nay with constantly increasing vigor. Though, when you think of his body, you are obliged to think of the grave; and when you think of

his soul, your mind involuntarily rises to a purer region, yet there is a sense in which you realize his presence still in the midst of you: you feel that he is at work in much of the good that you experience; and that his spirit can never be dislodged from these free institutions, till the institutions themselves are swept from the earth.

But if we will estimate aright the work which Washington was raised up to accomplish, we must not stop with our own country, but must take in the world; we must not limit ourselves to the past and the present, but must include the future also. It is the nature of influence, that it is at once cumulative and diffusive. It may become less perceptible, especially to a superficial observer; but it really grows stronger as it grows older; and it is always working for itself new, though often secret, channels. We trust in the gracious Ruler of the world, that these institutions in which we now rejoice, will shed their light upon us, without even a temporary eclipse, so long as the sun and the moon shall endure; and if this bright vision of our faith should be realized, who can calculate the amount of blessing to be dispensed to our country in the

progress of ages? But we are to bear in mind that we are a city set upon a hill. Young as we are in the family of nations, the nations are still looking towards us, some with a jealous, some with a grateful, all with a watchful eye; and it would be false modesty in us not to feel that our influence already circles the globe, and that it cannot otherwise be than that, in the common course of events, it should tell mightily upon the world's destiny. When I see our country, yet in her infancy, represented all over the world, not only through her commercial enterprize, but her philanthropic and missionary ardour, and especially her well established political relations; when I mark the heaving of enslaved nations, premonitory, as I cannot doubt, of the approaching end of that system under which they have groaned so long; and especially when I hear of men of mark and men of might, with their eye turned towards these shores, boldly avowing their preference for republican institutions, I am not slow to believe that, at no distant period, the tree of liberty first planted here, will be sending forth its scions throughout the whole earth; and mark it, when that day shall come, the world will be full of the glory of our Washing-

ton. His influence has darted across the ocean, and is at work there with mighty energy, already; but I expect that it will ere long perform greater works than these. I look for the time when it shall stamp every iron sceptre as a hateful thing. In the vista of future years, I seem to see Spain and Italy, bowed for so many ages beneath the oppressor's rod, walking erect, and breathing the pure air of freedom. My eye traverses the vast empire of Russia, where the immortal mind shudders to find itself thinking its own thoughts; it stretches over the wilds of Siberia, that prison-house of the world; it takes in the wide region in which Mohamedism points a sword at the heart of every man who would be free;—and throughout this immense dominion I see tyranny brought down into the dust, and liberty well established upon her throne. I do not say that Washington's influence has done it all; but I believe that when this glorious vision shall be realized, Washington's spirit will have breathed upon that wide spread desolation; and posterity need not marvel, if they should hear of monuments erected to his memory, of songs sung to his praise, even in the ends of the earth.

And to crown all, Washington's character should be studied in a manner to involve the vigorous exercise of the moral as well as the intellectual faculties; it should be studied not merely that it may be known, but that it may be admired, loved, imitated. You are only on the surface of any great subject, when you have reached a correct apprehension of the truths which pertain to it. There is an inward sense lodged deep among the sensibilities of the soul, which takes up such a subject where a mere intellectual perception leaves it; and you feel then that you are not only in contact with truth, but in contact with its loveliness and power. If it be an illustrious character that you are contemplating, you seem to breathe the atmosphere which it creates; the inmost sanctuary of the spirit is thrown open to you; and if you take note of your own inward experience, you quickly come to realize that the beautiful object on which your eye lingers so gratefully, is gradually impressing its image on your heart. When every fact in the history, and every trait in the character, of our country's Deliverer, that is within your reach, has become familiar to you, you have still done nothing to purpose, if all this is

to serve no higher end than to furnish materials for curious speculation, or to furnish occasion for an ostentatious display of your knowledge. You must take up and inwardly digest with the moral what has come to you through the intellectual. You must let the great man come into your heart, and maintain a sort of empire among your affections. In short, you must feel that you are studying the character as a model, and must never rest contented while there remains in it any thing of attainable excellence, which has not become engrafted upon your own character.

Where now is the man, where especially is the American citizen, to whom the study of the character of Washington is not a most fitting employment? May not the military man study it, to learn the nature and the operations of true heroism? May not the politician study it, that he may not confound the statesman with the demagogue, the patriot with the partizan? May not the private citizen study it, that he may become more deeply impressed with the dignity of civil government, and more earnest in the discharge of the duties which he owes to it? Especially may not, ought not, every young man to study it, as a fountain of

light upon the path of his duty, as a fountain of strength to enable him to walk in it? It is with this latter class that I am now specially concerned; and I doubt not that the young men composing the association which I have the honour to address, will pardon me, if, in the few remarks which I am now to make, illustrative of the importance of studying this exalted character, I speak directly to *them*, as if they were the authorized representatives of the whole body of young men within the limits of this republic.

I say then, gentlemen, it is due to self-regard, that Washington's character be as familiar to you as the face of a friend, as dear to you as your country's honour. Are you not the admirers of true greatness? Does not the man of cultivated powers, and lofty aims, and heroic deeds, find favour in your eyes? When you think of such a man, with a character bright as the light, and a conscience void of offence; honoured in his life, honoured in his death, honoured in his memory; are you not constrained to say that to be like him is to be all that the noblest ambition can crave? Believe me, in studying Washington as a model, you are in the way to the attainment of this object.

In the contemplation of his moderation and self-government, his firmness and dignity, his justice and generosity, his reverence for the divine authority, his trust in the divine providence, his hearty acknowledgment of the divine testimony, you are brought directly into communion with the spirit of true greatness and goodness; and if prejudice or passion does not intervene, that spirit will work within you both to will and to do. I say again, study this character, as you would accomplish the legitimate end of your existence. Study it, as you would be virtuous and useful, honourable and happy.

Patriotism also lifts up *her* voice, and charges you to put yourselves into communion with this greatest of patriots. Your country's institutions, in all their delicate and complicated machinery, and in all the responsibility that pertains to them, are about to be surrendered to your guardianship. The great minds that are labouring for them now will quickly have done their work; the great hearts that are beating to their prosperity will be cold beneath the turf; and this whole acting generation will be moving in other spheres and mingling in other scenes; but you and such as you will be

here, to speak and act, and if need be, to suffer, for their defence and preservation. Who knows what tempests may rise and beat upon the nation in your day;—especially what lightning and hail may come forth from that dark cloud which has been so long hanging in our Southern sky? Who can tell what exigencies may arise either from our domestic or foreign relations, to require the most profound wisdom, the most invincible firmness? Who can assure you that you may not have to meet some awful crisis, in which the life or the death of the nation's liberty, shall be decided by a single measure or a single vote? Oh if I could know that you would not only be familiar with the life but imbued with the spirit of Washington, I should know that you would be adequate to any emergency; I should feel that there was nothing to fear for the safety of my country's institutions, even in the darkest times. For you could not sit at Washington's feet and take counsel of his wisdom, you could not get your hearts beating in unison with *his* great and patriotic heart, you could not keep his venerable image always before your eye, without having both the mind and the will to protect and transmit the inheritance which he

hath bequeathed to us. Only let his farewell address be engraven on the memory and the heart of the young men of the nation, and till they shall have gone to their graves at least, there will be a wall of fire round about our liberties, which will be proof alike against treason and faction at home, and jealousy and tyranny abroad.

Philanthropy too has a word to say in favour of the duty which I am urging; for Washington's patriotism was not at the expense of his philanthropy; it was consistent with it; it was even a part of it. He loved his country not merely because it had furnished his cradle and he expected it would furnish his grave, but because he saw that it was destined to be a mighty theatre of humanity; and that whatever was done for it, was done for the improvement and elevation of the race. Here was indeed the only field in which he directly laboured; but his benevolent wishes, aye and his benign influence, compassed the world. Instead of desiring a selfish monopoly of the blessings of freedom, it was his prayer that every nation might be as free and happy as his own. In his devout aspirations, he stopped nothing short of the universal reign of truth and peace and virtue.

In the sacred name of Philanthropy, let me say, Go ye and do likewise. Do you ask, Where? I answer, the world is your field. Wherever there is ignorance to be enlightened, wherever there is vice to be reclaimed, wherever there are chains to be knocked off, wherever there are tears to be wiped away, wherever the body or the spirit is in want, there, there is appropriate work for you. And if you require that I should be more particular still, I would say, join with hearty and vigorous co-operation in the struggle against the monster intemperance, which is still abroad, blasting hopes and multiplying graves and leaving the impress of the brute upon the noblest forms of humanity. Not only banish him from your society, but if you can, kill him, and hide his loathsome carcass where the world shall never look upon it again; and if you succeed in this, you will have set a large proportion of earth's stricken hearts to throbbing for joy. And as I have mentioned one field of philanthropic labour, I may as well mention another;—for who can forget, in such a connection as this, poor starving Ireland? The sun does not shine upon a nation more instinct with generous feeling; nor upon one which,

at this hour, has a fuller cup of anguish wrung out to her. Her sufferings are so deep that the whole world is obliged to take knowledge of them; her groans so piercing that we seem to hear them from across the sea, mingling with the winds that come from that enchanting but unfortunate island, that beautiful dwelling place of want and wretchedness. Fly, ye young men, to the work of mercy. Fly to that phrenzied mother before she does the desperate deed to the child which she is pressing to her bosom; whose cries for bread she is unable to satisfy; and rather than endure them much longer, she is fast working herself up to stifle them in death. Fly to that old man who has looked on every side for a morsel to sustain him, and because no hand is reached forth for his succor, he is making ready to stretch himself on a rough board for his final slumber. Fly, by your grateful charities, all over that extended territory in which famine has set up her dominion, and see how those warm hearts will cling to you, and those wo-worn countenances be relumed with smiles, when they understand your mission as angels come to help. Young men, I know that ye cannot stand aloof from this work. Many of you, I

believe, are doing it already; and I am sure that you will do it with the greater alacrity, when you remember that it is just the work upon which Washington would have smiled.

I will detain you only to say that to refuse to study Washington's character, is to be unjust to his memory; nay, it is to turn away from the teachings of a wise and merciful Providence. You may be in danger of overlooking the obligation, because you share it with the country at large; but, believe me, you are as truly and as deeply indebted, as if the wing of his favour had been stretched over you alone;—nay even more so,—for your own interests are the more secure from being identified with these great institutions which involve the interests of so many. And besides, you have facilities hereby secured to you for labouring for the common good, which a generous mind surely will not reckon among the least of its blessings. Is it so then, that Washington's life has been a free-will offering to the safety and dignity of the country to which you belong? Has he fought battles and won victories for *you*? Has he projected great plans of national improvement, that you might be the

better for them? Has he left on record words of wisdom and of weight, that you might be instructed by them? In a word, is he, by way of eminence, the Father of your country? Say then, if gratitude be due to a benefactor, what should be the measure of your gratitude to him. And can there be a more appropriate expression of it, than the earnest and practical contemplation of the life which he led, of the character which he formed, in his devotion to American liberty? Besides, if you consider this matter well, you are obliged to feel that a greater than Washington is here. Washington's country commissioned him to his work; but God gave him to his country. God constituted him with those noble endowments; and ordained all the influences by which his character was formed; and opened his way to every place of authority which he occupied; and guided him, as by a pillar of cloud and of fire, in all his movements. Heaven's wisdom was in his counsels; Heaven's might was in his arm; Heaven's goodness was in his heart; and in all that constitutes his character, there is a voice from Heaven, challenging your earnest regard. Am I not justified then in saying that, in refusing to study this great

character, you offend against the memory of Washington; you offend against the mercy of God?

But you will not thus offend,—I know you will not; and one pledge of it I read in the spirit which hath instituted this evening's service. It was a noble impulse, Mr. President, that led you and your associates in the direction of this institution, to look forward to this glorious birthday, months before it dawned upon us, and to resolve that it should be hallowed by some mark of appropriate and grateful recognition. If I might be allowed to express a wish, it would be that the example you have so laudably set, should be followed in all coming years; that this twenty-second day of February should hereafter be marked in your calendar as a day for gratitude and gladness; and that, in each successive return, it should be consecrated by some lofty purpose of patriotism or philanthropy. Such an observance would be at once a beautiful offering to the memory of Washington, a welcome service to these free institutions, and a glorious testimony to the world.

Gentlemen, I will detain you no longer. I wish I could have spoken to you more impres-

sively on this great theme; but I have endeavoured at least to speak words of truth and soberness. I implore the Dispenser of all good to give you a place among your country's best benefactors; to exalt you to become polished stones in the temple of universal freedom. I invoke especially the genius of American liberty to smile upon you,—that bright angel that was rocked in Washington's cradle, and that now watches around his tomb.

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