VARIOUS

HOMES OF AMERICAN STATESMEN; WITH ANECDOTICAL, PERSONAL, AND DESCRIPTIVE SKETCHES

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Содержание

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PUBLISHERS' NOTICE

We need hardly commend to the American public this attempt to describe and familiarize the habitual dwelling-places of some of the more eminent of our Statesmen. In bringing together such particulars as we could gather, of the homes of the men to whom we owe our own, we feel that we have performed an acceptable and not unnecessary service. The generation who were too well acquainted with these intimate personal circumstances to think of recording them, is fast passing away; and their successors, while acknowledging a vast debt of gratitude, might still forget to preserve and cherish the individual and private memories of the benefactors of our country and race. We therefore present our contribution to the national annals with confidence, hoping that in all respects the present volume will be found no unworthy or

unwelcome successor of the "Homes of American Authors."

Dr. R.W. Griswold having been prevented by ill health from contributing an original paper on Marshall, we have availed ourselves, with his kind permission, of the sketch which he prepared for the "Prose Writers of America." All the other papers in the present volume have been written expressly for it: and the best acknowledgments of the publishers are due to the several contributors for the zealous interest and ability to which these sketches bear witness.

For several of the original letters which we have copied in *fac-simile*, we are indebted to the kindness of the Rev. Dr. Sprague of Albany.

The drawing of the residence of the "Washington Family," and a few of the smaller cuts, have been copied, with some variations, from Mr. Lossing's very valuable work, "The Field-Book of the Revolution." Most of the other illustrations have been engraved from original drawings, or daguerreotypes taken for the purpose.

WASHINGTON

1732 – 1799

To see great men at home is often more pleasant to the visitor than advantageous to the hero. Men's lives are two-fold, and the life of habit and instinct is not often, on superficial view, strictly consistent with the other – the more deliberate, intentional and principled one, which taxes only the higher powers. Yet, perhaps, if our rules of judgment were more humane and more sincere, we should find less discrepancy than it has been usual to imagine, and what there is would be more indulgently accounted for. The most common-place man has an inner and an outer life, which, if displayed separately, might never be expected to belong to the same individual; and it would be impossible for him to introduce his dearest friend into the sanctum, where, as in a spiritual laboratory, his words and actions originate and are prepared for use. Yet we could accuse him of no hypocrisy on this ground. The thing is so because Nature says it should be so, and we must be content with her truth and harmony, even if they be not ours. So with regard to public and domestic life. If we pursue our hero to his home, it should be in a home-spirit – a spirit of affection, not of impertinent intrusion or ungenerous cavil. If we lift the

purple curtains of the tent in which our weary knight reposes, when he has laid aside his heavy armor and put on his gown of ease, it is not as malicious servants may pry into the privacy of their superiors, but as friends love to penetrate the charmed circle within which disguises and defences are not needed, and personal interest may properly take the place of distant admiration and respect. In no other temper is it lawful, or even decent, to follow the great actors on life's stage to their retirement; and if they be benefactors, the greater the shame if we coolly criticize what was never meant for any but loving eyes.

The private life of him who is supereminently the hero of every true American heart, is happily sacred from disrespectful scrutiny, but less happily closed to the devout approach of those who would look upon it with more than filial reverence. This is less remarkable than it may at first sight appear to us who know his merit. The George Washington of early times was a splendid youth, but his modesty was equal to his other great qualities, and his neighbors could not be expected to foresee the noon of such a morning. And when the first stirring time was over, and the young soldier settled himself quietly at Mount Vernon, as a country gentleman, a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses, a vigorous farmer and tobacco planter, a churchwarden in two parishes, and a staid married man with two step-children, to whom he was an active and faithful guardian, no one thought of recording his life and doings, any more than those of his brother planters on the Potomac, all landed men,

deer and fox-hunters and zealous fishermen, who visited each other in the hospitable Southern fashion, and lived in rustic luxury, very much within themselves. Few, indeed, compared with the longings of our admiration, are the particulars that have come down to us of Washington's Home – the home of his natural affections; but he had many homes of duty, and these the annals of his country will ever keep in grateful memory. Through these our present design is to trace his career, succinctly and imperfectly indeed, and with the diffidence which a character so august naturally inspires. Happily, many deficiencies in our sketch will be supplied by the intimate knowledge and the inborn reverence of a large proportion of our readers.

It seems to be a conceded point that ours is not the age of reverence, nor our country its home. While the masses were nothing and individuals every thing, gods or demigods were the natural product of every public emergency and relief. Mankind in general, ignorant, and of course indolent, only too happy to be spared the labor of thought and the responsibility of action, looked up to the great and the fortunate till their eyes were dazzled, and they saw characters and exploits through a glorious golden mist, which precluded criticism. It was easy, then, to be a hero, for a single success or a happy chance sufficed. Altars sprang up in every bye-road, and incense fumed without stint or question.

To-day the case is widely different. We give nothing for nothing. Whatever esteem or praise we accord, must be justified,

inch by inch, by facts tangible and productive, successes undimmed by any after failure, and qualities which owe nothing to imagination or passion in the observer. No aureole is allowed about any head unless it emanate from it. Our Apollo must actually have sent the shaft, and to the mark, too, or we sneer at the attitude of triumph. If we erect a statue, no robe is confessed to be proper drapery but the soiled and threadbare one of every-day life and toil. No illusion – no poetry! is the American maxim of our time. Bald, staring, naked literality for us! He is the true philosopher who can

> Peep and botanize
> Upon his mother's grave

if the flowers required by science happen to grow there.

All this may be very wise and knowing, yet as long as the machine called man has something within it which is not exactly a subject for mathematical measurement, there will remain some little doubt of the expediency of thus stripping life of its poetry, and bringing all that is inspiring to the test of line and plummet. Just now, however, there is no hearing for any argument on this side.

What shall we think, then, of a character which, in a single half century, has begun, even among us, to wear something of a mythical splendor? What must the man have been, whom an age like this deliberately deifies? Who but Washington has, in any

age, secured for himself such a place in the universal esteem and reverence of his countrymen, that simple description of him is all that can be tolerated, the public sense of his merits being such as makes praise impertinent, and blame impious?

Washington! It were almost enough to grace our page and our volume with this honored and beloved name. The commentary upon it is written in every heart. It is true the most anxious curiosity has been able to find but a small part of what it would fain know of the first man of all the earth, yet no doubt remains as to what he was, in every relation of life. The minutiæ may not be full, but the outline, in which resides the expression, is perfect. It were too curious to inquire how much of Washington would have been lost had the rural life of which he was so fond, bounded his field of action. Providence made the stage ready for the performer, as the performer for the stage. In his public character, he was not the man of the time, but for the time, bearing in his very looks the seal of a grand mission, and seeming, from his surprising dignity, to have no private domestic side. Greenough's marble statue of him, that sits unmoved under all the vicissitudes of storm and calm, gazing with unwinking eyes at the Capitol, is not more impassive or immovable than the Washington of our imaginations. Yet we know there must have been another side to this grand figure, less grand, perhaps, but not less symmetrical, and wonderfully free from those lowering discrepancies which bring nearer to our own level all other great, conspicuous men.

We ought to know more of him; but, besides the other reasons

we have alluded to for our dearth of intelligence, his was not a writing age on this side the water. Doing, not describing, was the business of the day. "Our own correspondent" was not born yet; desperate tourists had not yet forced their way into gentlemen's drawing-rooms, to steal portraits by pen and pencil, to inquire into dates and antecedents, and repay enforced hospitality by holding the most sacred personalities up to the comments of the curious. It would, indeed, be delightful to possess this kind of knowledge; to ascertain how George Washington of Fairfax appeared to the sturdy country gentlemen, his neighbors; what the "troublesome man" he speaks of in one of his letters thought of the rich planter he was annoying; whether Mr. Payne was proud or ashamed when he remembered that he had knocked down the Father of his Country in a public court-room; what amount of influence, not to say rule, Mrs. Martha Custis, with her large fortune, exercised over the Commander-in-chief of the armies of the United States. But rarer than all it would have been to see Washington himself deal with one of those gentry, who should have called at Mount Vernon with a view of favoring the world with such particulars. How he treated poachers of another sort we know; he mounted his horse, and dashing into the water, rode directly up to the muzzle of a loaded musket, which he wrenched from the astounded intruder, and then, drawing the canoe to land, belabored the scamp soundly with his riding whip. How he would have faced a loaded pen, and received its owner, we can but conjecture. We have heard an old gentleman, who had

lived in the neighborhood of Mount Vernon in his boyhood, say that when the General found any stranger shooting in his grounds, his practice was to take the gun without a word, and, passing the barrel through the fence, with one effort of his powerful arm, bend it so as to render it useless, returning it afterwards very quietly, perhaps observing that his rules were very well known. The whole neighborhood, our old friend said, feared the General, not because of any caprice or injustice in his character, but only for his inflexibility, which must have had its own trials on a Southern plantation at that early day.

Painting and sculpture have done what they could to give us an accurate and satisfying idea of the outward appearance of the Father of our Country, and a surpassing dignity has been the aim if not the result, of all these efforts. The statue by Chantrey, which graces the State House at Boston, is perhaps as successful as any in this respect, and white marble is of all substances the most appropriate for the purpose. From all, collectively, we derive the impression, or something more, that in Washington we have one of the few examples on record of a complete and splendid union and consent of personal and mental qualifications for greatness in the same individual; unsurpassed symmetry and amplitude of mind and body for once contributing to the efficiency of a single being, to whom, also, opportunities for development and action proved no less propitious than nature. In the birth, nurture and destiny of this man, so blest in all good gifts, Providence seems to have intended the realization of

Milton's ideal type of glorious manhood:

> A creature who, endued
> With sanctity of reason, might erect
> His stature, and, upright with front serene
> Govern the rest, self-knowing; and from thence
> Magnanimous, to correspond with Heaven;
> But, grateful to acknowledge whence his good
> Descends, thither, with heart voice and eyes,
> Directed in devotion, to adore
> And worship God supreme, who made him chief
> Of all his works.

We may the more naturally think this because Washington was so little indebted to school learning for his mental power. Born in a plain farm-house near the Potomac – a hallowed spot now marked only by a memorial stone and a clump of decaying fig-trees, probably coeval with the dwelling; none but the simplest elements of knowledge were within his reach, for although his father was a gentleman of large landed estate, the country was thinly settled and means of education were few. To these he applied himself with a force and steadiness even then remarkable, though with no view more ambitious than to prepare himself for the agricultural pursuits to which he was destined, by a widowed mother, eminent for common sense and high integrity. His mother, characteristically enough, for she was much more practical than imaginative, always spoke of him as

a docile and diligent boy, passionately fond of athletic exercises, rather than as a brilliant or ambitious one. In after years, when La Fayette was recounting to her, in florid phrase, but with the generous enthusiasm which did him so much honor, the glorious services and successes of her son, she replied – "I am not surprised; George was always a good boy!" and this simple phrase from a mother who never uttered a superfluous word, throws a clear light on his early history. Then we have, besides, remnants of his school-exercises in arithmetic and geometry, beautiful in neatness, accuracy and method. At thirteen his mathematical turn had begun to discover itself, and the precision and elegance of his handwriting were already remarkable. His precocious wisdom would seem at that early age to have cast its horoscope, for we have thirty pages of forms for the transaction of important business, all copied out beautifully; and joined to this direct preparation for his future career are "Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation," to the number of one hundred and ten, all pointing distinctly at self-control and respect for the rights of others, rather than at a Chesterfieldian polish or policy, and these he learned so well that he practised them unfailingly all his life after.

A farm in Stafford County on the Rappahannoc, where his father had lived for several years before his death, was his share of the paternal estate, and on this he lived with his mother, till he had completed his sixteenth year. He desired to enter the British Navy, as a path to honorable distinction,

and one of his half brothers, many years older than himself, had succeeded in obtaining a warrant for him; but the mother's reluctance to part with her eldest boy induced him to relinquish this advantage, and to embrace instead the laborious and trying life of a surveyor, in those rude, early days of Virginia exposed to extraordinary hazards. Upon this he entered immediately, accepting employment offered him by Lord Fairfax, who had come from England to ascertain the value of an immense tract of land which he had inherited, lying between the Potomac and Rappahannoc rivers, and extending beyond the Alleghanies. The surveying party was accompanied by William Fairfax, a distant relative of his lordship, but the boy of sixteen was evidently the most important member of the party. When the hardships of this undertaking became too exhausting, he returned to the more settled regions, and employed himself in laying out private tracts and farms, but he spent the greater part of three years in the wilderness, learning the value of lands, becoming acquainted with the habits and character of the wild Indian tribes, then so troublesome in the forests, and fitting himself by labor, study, the endurance of personal hardships and the exercise of vigilance and systematic effort, for the arduous path before him.

At nineteen Washington had made so favorable an impression that he was appointed, by the government of Virginia, Adjutant-General with the rank of Major, and charged with the duty of assembling and exercising the militia, in preparation for expected or present difficulties on the frontier. He had always

shown a turn for military affairs, beginning with his school-days, when his favorite play was drilling troops of boys, he himself always taking command; and noticeable again in his early manhood, when he studied tactics, and learned the manual exercise and the use of the sword. It was not long before the talent thus cultivated was called into action. Governor Dinwiddie sent Major Washington as commissioner to confer with the officer commanding the French forces, making the delicate inquiry by what authority he presumed to invade the dominions of his Majesty King George III., and what were his designs. A winter journey of seven hundred and fifty miles, at least half of which lay through an unbroken wilderness, haunted by wild beasts, and more formidable savages, was the first duty of the youthful Major under this commission, and it occupied six weeks, marked by many hardships and some adventures. The famous one of the raft on a half-frozen river, in which Washington narrowly escaped drowning, and the other of a malcontent Indian's firing on him, occurred during this journey; but he reached the French post in safety, and had an amicable, though not very satisfactory conference, with the Sieur St. Pierre, a courteous gentleman, but a wily old soldier. Governor Dinwiddie caused Major Washington's account of the expedition to be published, and when a little army was formed for the protection of the frontier, Washington received a command, with the rank of Colonel, at twenty-two years of age. Advancing at once into the wilderness, he encountered a French detachment, which he took

prisoners, with their commander, and so proceeded during the remainder of the season, with general success. The next year, serving as a volunteer, it was his painful lot, when just recovering from a severe illness, to witness Braddock's defeat, a misfortune which, it is unanimously conceded, might have been avoided, if General Braddock had not been too proud to take his young friend's prudent counsel. All that an almost frantic bravery could do to retrieve the fortunes of this disastrous day, Washington, whom we are in the habit of thinking immovable, and who was at this time weak from the effects of fever, is reported to have done; and the fact that he had two horses shot under him, and his coat well riddled with rifle balls, shows how unsparingly he exposed himself to the enemy's sharp-shooters. A spectator says – "I saw him take hold of a brass field-piece as if it had been a stick. He looked like a fury; he tore the sheet lead from the touch-hole; he pulled with this and pushed with that; and wheeled it round as if it had been nothing. The powder-monkey rushed up with the fire, and then the cannon began to bark, and the Indians came down." Nothing but defeat and disgrace was the result of this unhappy encounter, except to Washington, who in that instance, as in so many others, stood out, individual and conspicuous, by qualities so much in advance of those of all the men with whom he acted, that no misfortune or disaster ever caused him to be confounded with them, or included in the most hasty general censure. It is most instructive as well as interesting to observe that his mind, never considered brilliant,

was yet recognized from the beginning as almost infallible in its judgments, a tower of strength for the weak, a terror to the selfish and dishonest. The uneasiness of Governor Dinwiddie under Washington's superiority is accounted for only by the fact that that superiority was unquestionable.

After Braddock's defeat, Washington retired to Mount Vernon, – which had fallen to him by the will of his half-brother Lawrence – to recoup his mind and body, after a wasting fever and the distressing scenes he had been forced to witness. The country rang with his praises, and even the pulpit could not withhold its tribute. The Reverend Samuel Davies hardly deserves the reputation of a prophet for saying, in the course of a eulogy on the bravery of the Virginian troops, – "As a remarkable instance of this, I may point out that heroic youth, Colonel Washington, whom I cannot but hope Providence has hitherto preserved in so signal a manner for some important service to his country."

When another army was to be raised for frontier service, the command was given to Washington, who stipulated for a voice in choosing his officers, a better system of military regulations, more promptness in paying the troops, and a thorough reform in the system of procuring supplies. All these were granted, with the addition of an aid-de-camp and secretary, to the young colonel of twenty-three. But he nevertheless had to encounter the evils of insubordination, inactivity, perverseness and disunion among the troops, with the further vexation of deficient support on

the part of the government, while the terrors and real dangers and sufferings of the inhabitants of the outer settlements wrung his heart with anguish. In one of his many expostulatory letters to the timid and time-serving Governor Dinwiddie, his feelings burst their usual guarded bounds: "I am too little acquainted, sir, with pathetic language, to attempt a description of the people's distresses; but I have a generous soul, sensible of wrongs and swelling for redress. But what can I do? I see their situation, know their danger and participate in their sufferings, without having it in my power to give them further relief than uncertain promises. In short, I see inevitable destruction in so clear a light, that unless vigorous measures are taken by the Assembly, and speedy assistance sent from below, the poor inhabitants that are now in forts must unavoidably fall, while the remainder are flying before a barbarous foe. In fine, the melancholy situation of the people, the little prospect of assistance, the gross and scandalous abuse cast upon the officers in general, which reflects upon me in particular for suffering misconduct of such extraordinary kinds, and the distant prospect, if any, of gaining honor and reputation in the service, cause me to lament the hour that gave me a commission, and would induce me, at any other time than this of imminent danger, to resign, without one hesitating moment, a command from which I never expect to reap either honor or benefit; but, on the contrary, have almost an absolute certainty of incurring displeasure below, while the murder of helpless families may be laid to my account here. The supplicating tears

of the women and moving petitions of the men melt me into such deadly sorrow, that I solemnly declare, if I know my own mind, I could offer myself a willing sacrifice to the butchering enemy, provided that would contribute to the people's ease."

This extract is given as being very characteristic; full of that fire whose volcanic intensity was so carefully covered under the snow of caution in after life; and also as a specimen of Washington's style of writing, clear, earnest, commanding and business-like, but deficient in all express graces, and valuable rather for substance than form. We see in his general tone of expression something of that resolute mother, who, when her son, already the first man in public estimation, urged her to make Mount Vernon her home for the rest of her days, tersely replied – "I thank you for your affectionate and dutiful offers, but my wants are few in this world, and I feel perfectly competent to take care of myself." Directness is the leading trait in the style of both mother and son; if either used circumlocution, it was rather through deliberateness than for diplomacy. Indeed, the alleged indebtedness of great sons to strong mothers, can hardly find a more prominent support than in this case. What a Roman pair they were! If her heart failed her a little, sometimes, as what mother's heart must not, in view of toils, sacrifices, and dangers like his; if she argued towards the softer side, how he answered her, appealing to her stronger self:

Mount Vernon, 14th Aug., 1755.

"Honored Madam,

"If it is in my power to avoid going to the Ohio again, I shall; but if the command is passed upon me by the general voice of the country, and offered upon such terms as cannot be objected against, it would reflect dishonor upon me to refuse it; and that, I am sure, must, or ought to, give you greater uneasiness than my going in an honorable command. Upon no other terms will I accept of it. At present I have no proposals made to me, nor have I advice of such an intention, except from private hands.

"I am, &c."

When the object for which he had undertaken the campaign – viz.: the undisturbed possession of the Ohio River – was accomplished, Washington resigned his commission, after five years of active and severe service, his health much broken and his private affairs not a little disordered. The resignation took effect in December, 1758, and in January, 1759, he was married, and, as he supposed, finally settled at Mount Vernon – or, as he expresses it in his quiet way – "Fixed at this seat, with an agreeable partner for life, I hope to find more happiness in retirement than I ever experienced amidst the wide and bustling world." And in liberal and elegant improvements, and the exercise of a generous hospitality, the young couple spent the following fifteen years; the husband attending to his duties as citizen and planter, with ample time and inclination for fox-hunting and duck-shooting, and the wife, a kind, comely, thrifty dame, looking well to the ways of her household, superintending fifteen domestic spinning-wheels, and presiding at a bountiful

table, to the great satisfaction of her husband and his numerous guests. When the spirit of the people began to rise against the exactions of the mother country, Washington was among the foremost to sympathize with the feeling of indignation, and the desire to resist, peaceably, if possible, forcibly if necessary. Of this, his letters afford ample proof. When armed resistance was threatened, Washington was immediately thought of as the Virginia leader. When Congress began, in earnest, preparations for defence, Washington was chairman of all the committees on the state of the country. When the very delicate business of appointing a commander-in-chief of the American armies was under consideration, Washington was the man whose name was on every tongue, and who was unanimously chosen, and that by the direct instrumentality of a son of Massachusetts, though that noble State, having commenced the struggle, might well have claimed the honor of furnishing a leader for it. What generosity of patriotism there was, in the men of those days, and how a common indignation and a common danger seem to have raised them above the petty jealousies and heart-burnings that so disfigure public doings in time of peace and prosperity! How the greatness of the great man blazed forth on this new field! What an attitude he took before the country, when he said, on accepting the position, "I beg leave to assure the Congress that as no pecuniary consideration could have tempted me to accept this arduous employment, at the expense of my domestic ease and happiness, I do not wish to make any profit from it. I

will keep an exact account of my expenses. These, I doubt not they will discharge, and that is all I desire." There was a natural, unconscious sovereignty in thus assuming to be the judge of what it might be proper to expend, in concerns the most momentous, extensive, and novel, as well as in taking the entire risk, both of payment and of public approbation, – in a direction in which he had already found the sensitiveness of the popular mind, – that equals any boldness of Napoleon's. We can hardly wonder that, in after times, common men instinctively desired and expected to make him a king.

The battle of Bunker Hill had taken place in the time that intervened between Washington's consent and the receipt of his commission, so that he set out for Cambridge, with no lingering doubt as to the nature, meaning, or result of the service in which he had pledged all. He writes to his brother, "I am embarked on a wide ocean, boundless in its prospect, and in which, perhaps, no safe harbor is to be found." His residence at Cambridge, a fine old mansion, still stands, and in worthy occupancy. Here it was that he undertook the intolerable duty of organizing a young army, without clothes, tents, ammunition, or money, with a rich, bitter and disciplined enemy in sight, and boiling blood on both sides. Here it was that General Gage, with whom he had fought, side by side, twenty years before, on the Monongahela, so exasperated him by insolent replies to his remonstrances against the cruel treatment of American prisoners, that he gave directions for retaliation upon any of the enemy that might fall

into American hands.

He was, however, Washington still, even though burning with a holy anger; and, ere the order could reach its destination, it was countermanded, and a charge given to all concerned that the prisoners should be allowed parole, and that every other proper indulgence and civility should be shown them. His letters to General Gage are models of that kind of writing. In writing to Lord Dartmouth afterwards, the British commander, who had been rebuked with such cutting and deserved severity, observes with great significance, "The trials we have had, show the rebels are not the despicable rabble we have supposed them to be."

Washington was not without a stern kind of wit, on certain occasions. When the rock was struck hard, it failed not in fire. The jealousy of military domination was so great as to cause him terrible solicitudes at this time, and a month's enlistments brought only five thousand men, while murmurs were heard on all sides against poor pay and bad living. Thinking of this, at a later day, when a member of the Convention for forming the Constitution, desired to introduce a clause limiting the standing army to five thousand men, Washington observed that he should have no objection to such a clause, "if it were so amended as to provide that no enemy should presume to invade the United States with more than *three* thousand."

Amid all the discouragements of that heavy time, the resolution of the commander-in-chief suffered no abatement. "My situation is so irksome to me at times," he says after

enumerating his difficulties in a few forcible words, "that if I did not consult the public good more than my own tranquillity, I should long ere this have put every thing on the cast of a die." But he goes on to say, in a tone more habitual with him – "If every man was of my mind, the ministers of Great Britain should know, in a few words, upon what issue the cause should be put. I would not be deceived by artful declarations, nor specious pretences, nor would I be amused by unmeaning propositions, but, in open, undisguised and manly terms, proclaim our wrongs, and our resolution to be redressed. I would tell them that we had borne much, that we had long and ardently sought for reconciliation upon honorable terms; that it had been denied us; that all our attempts after peace had proved abortive, and had been grossly misrepresented; that we had done every thing that could be expected from the best of subjects; that the spirit of freedom rises too high in us to submit to slavery. This I would tell them, not under covert, but in words as clear as the sun in its meridian brightness."

The house No. 1 Broadway, opposite the Bowling-green, remained unaltered until within a year or two in the shape here presented, in which it had become familiar to all New-Yorkers. It was built by Captain Kennedy of the Royal Navy, in April, 1765. There Lee, Washington, and afterwards Sir Henry Clinton, Robertson, Carleton, and other British officers were quartered, and here André wrote his letter to Arnold. —*Lossing.* It was afterwards occupied by Aaron Burr. Very recently, this

interesting house, which in New-York may be termed *ancient*, has been metamorphosed by the addition of two or three stories, and it is now *reduced* to be the Washington Hotel.

When the British evacuated Boston, Congress voted Washington a gold medal, with abundant thanks and praises; and, thus compensated for the cruel anxieties of the winter, he proceeded with unwavering courage to New-York, where new labors awaited him, and the mortifying defeat at Gowanus, turned into almost triumph by the admirable retreat Afterwards.

The movement from New-York city to Harlem Heights should have been another glory, and nothing on the part of the Commander-in-Chief was wanting to make it such, but a panic seized two brigades of militia, who ran away, *sans façon*, causing Washington to lose, for a moment, some portion of the power over his own emotions for which he is so justly celebrated. He dashed in among the flying rout, shouting, shaming them, riding exposed within a few yards of the enemy; and, finding this of no avail, drew his sword and threatened to "run them through," and cocked and snapped his pistol in their faces. But all would not do, and General Greene says, in a letter to a friend, "He was so vexed at the infamous conduct of the troops, that he sought death rather than life." Washington, the "man of marble," would have preferred a thousand deaths to dishonor.

A new army was now to be raised, the term of the last enlistment having expired; and, to form a just opinion of Washington's character and talents, every letter of his, to

Congress and others during this period, should be studied. Such wisdom, such indignation, such patience, such manly firmness, such disappointment! every thing but despair; the watchfulness, the forethought, the perseverance displayed in those letters, give a truer idea of the man than all his battles.

Take a single passage from one of his letters: – "I am wearied almost to death with the retrograde motion of things, and I solemnly protest, that a pecuniary reward of twenty thousand pounds a year would not induce me to undergo what I do; and after all, perhaps, to lose my character, as it is impossible, under such a variety of distressing circumstances, to conduct matters agreeably to public expectation, or even to the expectation of those who employ me, as they will not make proper allowances for the difficulties their own errors have occasioned."

And besides that which came upon him daily, in the regular line of duty, the yet more difficult work of bearing up the hearts of others, whose threats of abandoning the service were the running bass that made worse the din of war. "I am sorry to find," writes the Chief to General Schuyler, "that both you and General Montgomery incline to quit the service. Let me ask you, sir, what is the time for brave men to exert themselves in the cause of liberty and their country, if this is not? God knows there is not a difficulty that you both very justly complain of, which I have not in an eminent degree experienced, that I am not every day experiencing. But we must bear up against them, and make the best of mankind as they are, since we cannot have them as

we wish." In studying the career of Washington, nothing strikes one more frequently than that no fame came to him fortuitously, not only did he borrow none, usurp none, fall heir to none that belonged to others; he earned every tittle that has ever been awarded to him, and evidently contributed very much, by his secret advice and caution to officers placed in difficult positions, to enhance the measure of praise bestowed on his companions in arms.

Dark as these times were, Washington's peculiar merits were every day becoming more and more evident; indeed the darkest hours were his opportunities. He might well say, after the loss of Fort Washington, which had been held contrary to his judgment, – "No person ever had a greater choice of difficulties to contend with than I have;" yet he carried the war into New Jersey with all the resolution and courage of a victor. Never without a party, too often a very large one, ready to disparage his military skill, and throw doubts upon his energy in the conduct of the war, he pursued his plans without swerving a hair's breadth to court the popular gale, though a natural and honorable love of reputation was one of the ruling passions of his soul. It was impossible to make the people believe that a series of daring encounters would have cost the Commander-in-chief far less than the "Fabian policy," so scorned at the time; but Washington saw then, in the very heat of the contest, what the result has now made evident enough to all, that England must carry on a war on the other side of the globe under an immense disadvantage,

and that considering the general spirit of the American people, the expense to an invading power must be greater than even the richest nation on earth could long sustain. That the necessity for delay was intensely mortifying to him, we have a thousand proofs; and it was not the least bitter drop in his cup, that in order to conceal from the enemy the deficiencies occasioned by the delay of Congress to meet his most strenuous requisitions, he was obliged to magnify his numbers and resources, in a way which could not but increase the public doubts of his promptness. No one can read his letters, incessant under these circumstances, without an intense personal sympathy, that almost forgets the warrior and the patriot in the man.

His being invested with what was in reality a military dictatorship, did not help to render him more popular, although he used his power with his accustomed moderation, conscientiousness and judgment. In this, as in other cases, he took the whole responsibility and odium, while he allowed others to reap the credit of particular efforts; giving to every man at least his due, and content if the country was served, even though he himself seemed to be doing nothing. This we gather as much from the letters of others to him as from his own writings.

The celebrated passage of the Delaware, on Christmas-day, 1776, – so lifelike represented in Leutze's great picture, – flashed a cheering light over the prospects of the contest, and lifted up the hearts of the desponding, if it did not silence the cavils of the disaffected. The intense cold was as discouraging here as the

killing heat had been at Gowanus. Two men were found frozen to death, and the whole army suffered terribly; but the success was splendid, and the enemy's line along the Delaware was broken. The British opened their eyes very wide at this daring deed of the rebel chief, and sent the veteran Cornwallis to chastise his insolence. But Washington was not waiting for him. He had marched to Princeton, harassing the enemy, and throwing their lines still more into confusion. New Jersey was almost completely relieved, and the spirits of the country raised to martial pitch before the campaign closed. Those who had hastily condemned Washington as half a traitor to the cause, now began to call him the Saviour of his Country. Success has wondrous power in illuminating merit, that may yet have been transparent without it. But even now, when he thought proper to administer to all the oath of allegiance to the United States, granting leave to the disaffected to retire within the enemy's lines, a new clamor was raised against him, as assuming undue and dangerous power. It was said there were no "United States," and the Legislature of New Jersey censured the order as interfering with their prerogative. But Washington made no change. The dangers of pretended neutrality had become sufficiently apparent to him; and he chose, as he always did, to defer his personal popularity to the safety of the great cause. And again he took occasion, though the treatment of General Lee was in question, to argue against retaliation of the sufferings of prisoners, in a manly letter, which would serve as a text in similar cases for all time.

What a blessing was Lafayette's arrival! not only to the struggling States, but in particular to Washington. The spirit of the generous young Frenchman was to the harassed chief as cold water to the thirsty soul. No jealousies, no fault-finding, no selfish emulation; but pure, high, uncalculating enthusiasm, and a devotion to the character and person of Washington that melted the strong man, and opened those springs of tenderness which cares and duties had well-nigh choked up. It is not difficult to believe that Lafayette had even more to do with the success of the war than we are accustomed to think. Whatever kept up the chief's heart up-bore the army and the country; for it is plain that, without derogation from the ability or faithfulness of any of the heroic contributors to the final triumph, Washington was in a peculiar manner the life and soul, – the main-spring and the balance-wheel, – the spur and the rein, of the whole movement and its result. Blessings, then, on Lafayette, the helper and consoler of the chosen father of his heart, through so many trials! His name goes down to posterity on the same breath that is destined for ever to proclaim the glory of Washington.

Chad's Ford, in Delaware, was the scene of another of those disasters which it was Washington's happy fortune to turn into benefits. The American army retreated from a much superior force, and retreated in such disorder as could seem, even to its well-wishers, little better than a flight. But when, after encamping at Germantown, it was found that the General meant to give battle again, with a barefooted army, exhausted by forced

marches, in a country which Washington himself says, was "to a man, disaffected," dismay itself became buoyant, and the opinion spread, not only throughout America, but even as far as France, that the leader of our armies was indeed invincible. A heavy rain and an impenetrable fog defeated our brave troops; the attempt cost a thousand men. Washington says, solemnly, "It was a bloody day." Yet the Count de Vergennes, on whose impressions of America so much depended at that time, told our Commissioners in Paris that nothing in the course of our struggle had struck him so much as General Washington's venturing to attack the veteran army of Sir William Howe, with troops raised within the year. The leader's glory was never obscured for a moment, to the view of those who were so placed as to see it in its true light. Providence seems to have determined that the effective power of this great instrument should be independent of the glitter of victory.

Encamped at Whitemarsh, fourteen miles from Philadelphia, Washington, with his half-clad and half-fed troops, awaited an attack from General Howe who had marched in that direction with twelve thousand effective men. But both commanders were wary – the British not choosing to attack his adversary on his own ground, and the American not to be decoyed from his chosen position to one less favorable. Some severe skirmishing was therefore all that ensued, and General Howe retreated, rather ingloriously, to Philadelphia.

This brings us to the terrible winter at Valley Forge, the

sufferings of which can need no recapitulation for our readers. Washington felt them with sufficient keenness, yet his invariable respect for the rights of property extended to that of the disaffected, and in no extremity was he willing to resort to coercive measures, to remedy evils which distressed his very soul, and which he shared with the meanest soldier. His testimony to the patience and fortitude of the men is emphatic: "Naked and starving as they are, we cannot enough admire the incomparable patience and fidelity of the soldiery, that they have not been, ere this, excited by their sufferings to a general mutiny and dispersion." And while this evil was present, and for the time irremediable, he writes to Congress on the subject of a suggestion which had been made of a *winter campaign*, "I can assure those gentlemen, that it is a much easier and less distressing thing to draw remonstrances, in a comfortable room, by a good fireside, than to occupy a cold bleak hill, and sleep under frost and snow, without clothes or blankets. However, although they seem to have little feeling for the naked and distrest soldiers, I feel superabundantly for them, and from my soul I pity those miseries which it is neither in my power to relieve nor prevent."

It was during this period of perplexity and distress on public accounts, that the discovery of secret cabals against himself, was added to Washington's burthens. But whatever was personal was never more than secondary with him. When the treachery of pretended friends was disclosed, he showed none of the warmth which attends his statement of the soldiers' grievances. "My

enemies take an ungenerous advantage of me," he said, "they know the delicacy of my situation, and that motives of policy deprive me of the defence I might otherwise make against their insidious attacks. They know I cannot combat their insinuations, however injurious, without disclosing secrets which it is of the utmost moment to conceal." * * * "My chief concern arises from an apprehension of the dangerous consequences which intestine dissensions may produce to the common cause."

General Howe made no attempt on the camp during the winter, but his foraging parties were watched and often severely handled by the Americans. When Dr. Franklin, who was in Paris, was told that General Howe had taken Philadelphia, "Say rather," he replied, "that Philadelphia has taken General Howe," and the advantage was certainly a problematical one. Philadelphia was evacuated by the British on the 18th of June, 1776, General Clinton having superseded General Howe, who returned to England in the spring. Washington followed in the footsteps of the retreating army, and, contrary to the opinion of General Lee, decided to attack them. At Monmouth occurred the scene so often cited as proving that Washington *could* lose his temper – a testimony to his habitual self-command which no art of praise could enhance. Finding General Lee with his five thousand men in full retreat when they should have been rushing on the enemy, the commander-in-chief addressed the recreant with words of severe reproof, and a look and manner still more cutting. Receiving in return a most insolent reply, Washington

proceeded, himself, by rapid manœuvres, to array the troops for battle, and when intelligence arrived that the British were within fifteen minutes march, he said to General Lee, who had followed him, deeply mortified, – "Will you command on this ground, or not?" "It is equal with me where I command," was the answer. "Then I expect you to take proper measures for checking the enemy," said the General, much incensed at the offensive manner of Lee. "Your orders shall be obeyed," said that officer, "and I will not be the first to leave the field." And his bravery made it evident that an uncontrolled temper was the fault for which he afterwards suffered so severely. During the action Washington exposed himself to every danger, animating and cheering on the men under the burning sun; and when night came, he lay down in his cloak at the foot of a tree, hoping for a general action the next day. But in the morning Sir Henry Clinton was gone, too far for pursuit under such killing heat – the thermometer at 96°. Many on both sides had perished without a wound, from fatigue and thirst.

The headquarters at Tappan will always have a sad interest from the fact that Major André, whose fine private qualities have almost made the world forget that he was a spy, there met his unhappy fate. That General Washington suffered severely under the necessity which obliged him, by the rules of war, to sanction the decision of the court-martial in this case, we have ample testimony; and an eye-witness still living observed, that when the windows of the town were thronged with gazers at the stern

procession as it passed, those of the commander-in-chief were entirely closed, and his house without sign of life except the two sentinels at the door.

The revolt of a part of the Pennsylvania line, which occurred in January, 1781, afforded a new occasion for the exercise of Washington's pacific wisdom. He had felt the grievances of the army too warmly to be surprised when any portion of it lost patience, and his prudent and humane suggestions, with the good management of General Wayne, proved effectual in averting the great danger which now threatened. But when the troops of New Jersey, emboldened by this mild treatment, attempted to imitate their Pennsylvania neighbors, they found Washington prepared, and six hundred men in arms ready to crush the revolt by force – a catastrophe prevented only by the unconditional submission of the mutineers, who were obliged to lay down their arms, make concessions to their officers, and promise obedience.

As we are not giving here a sketch of the Revolutionary War, we pass at once to the siege and surrender at Yorktown, an event which shook the country like that heaviest clap of thunder, herald of the departing storm. All felt that brighter skies were preparing, and the universal joy did not wait the sanction of a deliberate treaty of peace. The great game of chess which had been so warily played, on one side at least, was now in check, if not closed by a final check-mate; and people on the winning side were fain to unknit their weary brows, and indulge the repose they had earned. Congress and the country felt as if the decisive

blow had been struck, as if the long agony was over. Thanks were lavished on the commanders, on the officers, on the troops. Two stands of the enemy's colors were presented to the Commander-in-Chief, and to Counts Rochambeau and De Grasse each a piece of British field ordnance as a trophy. A commemorative column at Yorktown was decreed, to carry down to posterity the events of the glorious 17th of October, 1781. There was, in short, a kind of wildness in the national joy, showing how deep had been the previous despondency. Watchmen woke the citizens of Philadelphia at one in the morning, crying "Cornwallis is taken!" Sober, Puritan America was almost startled from her habitual coolness; almost forgot the still possible danger. The chief alone, on whom had fallen the heaviest stress of the long contest, was impelled to new care and forecast by the victory. He feared the negligence of triumph, and reminded the government and the nation that all might yet be lost, without vigilance. "I cannot but flatter myself," he says, "that the States, rather than relax in their exertions, will be stimulated to the most vigorous preparations, for another active, glorious, and decisive campaign." And Congress responded wisely to the appeal, and called on the States to keep up the military establishment, and to complete their several quotas of troops at an early day. With his characteristic modesty and courage, Washington wrote to Congress a letter of advice on the occasion, of which one sentence may be taken as a specimen. "Although we cannot, by the best concerted plans, absolutely command success; although

the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; yet, without presumptuously waiting for miracles to be wrought in our favor, it is an indispensable duty, with the deepest gratitude to Heaven for the past, and humble confidence in its smiles on our future operations, to make use of all the means in our power for our defence and security."

It was this man, pure, devoted, and indefatigable in the cause of his country and her liberties, that some shortsighted malcontents, judging his virtue by their own, would now have persuaded to finish the struggle for liberty by becoming a king. The discontent of the officers and soldiers, with the slowness of their pay, had long been a cause of ferment in the army, and gave to the hasty and the selfish an excuse for desiring a change in the form of government. The king's troops had been well fed, well clothed, and well paid, and were sure of half-pay after the war should be finished, while the continentals, suffering real personal destitution, were always in arrear, drawing on their private resources, and with no provision whatever for any permanent pecuniary recompense. As to the half-pay, Washington had long before expressed his opinion of the justice as well as policy of such a provision. "I am ready to declare," he says, "that I do most religiously believe the salvation of the cause depends upon it, and without it your officers will moulder to nothing, or be composed of low and illiterate men, void of capacity for this or any other business. * * * Personally, as an officer, I have no interest in the decision; because I have declared, and

I now repeat it, that I never will receive the smallest benefit from the half-pay establishment." But the deep-seated jealousy of the army, which haunted Congress and the country, like a Banshee, throughout the whole course of the war, was too powerful for even Washington's representations. All that could be effected was an unsatisfactory compromise, and some of the officers saw or affected to see, in the reluctance of the government to provide properly for its defenders, a sign of fatal weakness, which but little recommended the republican form. Under these circumstances, a well written letter was sent to the Commander-in-Chief, proposing to him the establishment of a "mixed government," in which the supreme position was to be given, as of right, to the man who had been the instrument of Providence in saving the country, in "difficulties apparently insurmountable by human power," the dignity to be accompanied with the title of king. Of this daring proposition a colonel of good standing was made the organ. Washington's reply may be well known, but it will bear many repetitions.

Newburgh, 22 May, 1782.

"Sir,

"With a mixture of great surprise and astonishment, I have read with attention the sentiments you submitted to my perusal. Be assured, Sir, no occurrence in the course of the war has given me more painful sensations than your information, of there being such ideas existing in the army as you have expressed, and I must view with abhorrence, and reprehend with severity. For

the present, the communication of them will rest in my own bosom, unless some further agitation of the matter shall make a disclosure necessary.

"I am much at a loss to conceive what part of my conduct could have given encouragement to an address, which, to me, seems big with the greatest mischiefs that can befall my country. If I am not deceived in the knowledge of myself, you could not have found a person to whom your schemes are more disagreeable. At the same time, in justice to my own feelings, I must add that no man possesses a more sincere wish to see ample justice done to the army than I do; and as far as my powers and influence, in a constitutional way, extend, they shall be employed to the utmost of my abilities to effect it, should there be any occasion. Let me conjure you, then, if you have any regard for your country, concern for yourself or posterity, or respect for me, to banish these thoughts from your mind, and never communicate, as from yourself or any one else, a sentiment of the like nature.

"I am, Sir, &c.,
"George Washington."

This letter is extremely characteristic, not only because it declines the glittering bait, for that is hardly worth noticing where Washington is in question, but for the cool and quiet tone of rebuke, in a case in which most other men would have been disposed to be at least dramatically indignant. The perfectly respectful way in which he could show a man that he despised him, is remarkable. He does not even admit that there has been

injustice done to the army, though the fact had cost him such loads of anxious and ingenious remonstrance; but only promises to see to it, "should there be any occasion." It would have been easier for him, at that very moment, at the head of a victorious army, and with the heart of the nation at his feet, to make himself a king, than to induce Congress to do justice to the troops and their brave officers; but identifying himself with his army, he considered that his own private affair, and would accept no offer of partnership, however specious. Happily the name of the "very respectable" colonel has never been disclosed; an instance of mercy not the least noticeable among the features of this remarkable transaction.

During the negotiations for peace which so soon followed the surrender at Yorktown, the discontent of the army reached a height which became alarming. Meetings of officers were called, for the purpose of preparing threatening resolutions, since called "the Newburgh addresses," to be offered to Congress. The alternative proposed was a relinquishment of the service in a body, if the war continued, or remaining under arms, in time of peace, until justice could be obtained from Congress. Washington, having timely notice of this danger, came forward with his usual decision, wisdom, and kindliness, to the rescue of the public interest and peace. While he took occasion, in a general order, to censure the disorderly and anonymous form proposed, he himself called a meeting of officers, taking care to converse in private beforehand with many of them,

acknowledging the justice of their complaints, but inculcating moderation and an honorable mode of obtaining what they desired. It is said that many of the gentlemen were in tears when they left the presence of the Commander-in-Chief. When they assembled, he addressed them in the most impressive manner, imploring them not to tarnish their hard-won laurels, by selfish passion, in a case in which the vital interests of the country were concerned. He insisted on the good faith of Congress, and the certainty that, before the army should be disbanded, all claims would be satisfactorily adjusted.

His remonstrance proved irresistible. The officers, left to themselves, – for the General withdrew after he had given utterance to the advice made so potent by his character and services, – passed resolutions thanking him for his wise interference, and expressing their love and respect for him, and their determination to abide by his counsel. In this emergency Washington may almost have been said to have saved his country a second time, but in his letters written at the time he sinks all mention of his own paramount share in restoring tranquillity, speaking merely of "measures taken to postpone the meeting," and "the good sense of the officers" having terminated the affair "in a manner which reflects the greatest glory on themselves." His own remonstrances with Congress were immediately renewed, setting forth the just claims of those who "had so long, so patiently, and so cheerfully, fought under his direction," so forcibly, that in a very short time all was conceded, and general

harmony and satisfaction established.

His military labors thus finished, – for the adjudication of the army claims by Congress was almost simultaneous with the news of the signing of the treaty at Paris, – Washington might, without impropriety, have given himself up to the private occupations and enjoyments so religiously renounced for eight years, – the proclamation of peace to the army having been made, April 19, 1783, precisely eight years from the day of the first bloodshedding at Lexington. But the feelings of a father were too strong within him, and his solicitudes brooded over the land of his love with that unfailing anxiety for its best good which had characterized him from the beginning. Yet he modestly observes, in a letter on the subject to Col. Hamilton, "How far any further essay by me might be productive of the wished-for end, or appear to arrogate more than belongs to me, depends so much upon popular opinion, and the temper and dispositions of the people, that it is not easy to decide." He wrote a circular letter to the Governors of the several States, full of wisdom, dignity, and kindness, dwelling principally on four great points – an indissoluble union of the States; a sacred regard to public justice; the adoption of a proper military peace establishment; and a pacific and friendly disposition among the people of the States, which should induce them to forget local prejudices, and incline them to mutual concessions. This address is masterly in all respects, and was felt to be particularly well-timed, the calm and honoured voice of Washington being at that moment the only

one which could hope to be heard above the din of party, and amid the confusion natural during the first excitement of joy and triumph.

Congress was not too proud to ask the counsel of its brave and faithful servant, in making arrangements for peace and settling the new affairs of the country. Washington was invited to Princeton, where Congress was then sitting, and introduced into the Chamber, where he was addressed by the President, and congratulated on the success of the war, to which he had so much contributed. Washington replied with his usual self-respect and modesty, and retired. A house had been prepared for him at Rocky Hill, near Princeton, where he resided for some time, holding conference with committees and members, and giving counsel on public affairs; and where he wrote that admirable farewell to his army, perhaps as full of his own peculiar spirit as any of his public papers. His thanks to officers and soldiers for their devotion during the war have no perfunctory coldness in them, but speak the full heart of a brave and noble captain, reviewing a most trying period, and recalling with warm gratitude the co-operation of those on whom he relied. Then, for their future, his cautions and persuasions, the motives he urges, and the virtues he recommends, all form a curious contrast with those of Napoleon's addresses to his troops. "Let it be known and remembered," he says, "that the reputation of the federal armies is established beyond the reach of malevolence; and let a consciousness of their achievements and fame still incite the men

who composed them to honorable actions; under the persuasion that the private virtues of economy, prudence, and industry, will not be less amiable in civil life, than the more splendid qualities of valor, perseverance and enterprise were in the field." Thus consistent to the last he honored all the virtues; showing that while those of the field were not misplaced in the farm, those of the farm might well be counted among the best friends of the field – his own life of planter and soldier forming a glorious commentary on his doctrines.

The evacuation of New-York by the British was a grand affair, General Washington and Governor George Clinton riding in at the head of the American troops that came from the northward to take possession, while Sir Guy Carleton and his legions embarked at the lower end of the city. The immense cavalcade of the victors embraced both military and civil authorities, and was closed by a great throng of citizens. This absolute *finale* of the war brought on the Commander-in-Chief one of those duties at once sweet and painful – taking leave of his companions in arms; partners in toil and triumph, in danger and victory. "I cannot come to each of you to take my leave," he said, as he stood, trembling with emotion, "but I shall be obliged if each of you will come and take me by the hand." General Knox, the warm-hearted, stood forward and received the first embrace; then the rest in succession, silently and with universal tears. Without another word the General walked from the room, passed through lines of soldiery to the barge which awaited him, then,

turning, waved his hat, and bade to friends and comrades a silent, heartfelt adieu, which was responded to in the same solemn spirit. All felt that it was not the hour nor the man for noisy cheers; the spirit of Washington presided there, as ever, where honorable and high-minded men were concerned.

The journey southward was a triumphal march. Addresses, processions, delegations from religious and civil bodies, awaited him at every pause. When he reached Philadelphia he appeared before Congress to resign his commission, and no royal abdication was ever so rich in dignity. All the human life that the house would hold came together to hear him, and the words, few and simple, wise and kind, that fell from the lips of the revered chief, proved worthy to be engraved on every heart. In conclusion he said: – "Having now finished the work assigned me, I retire from the great theatre of action; and, bidding an affectionate farewell to this august body, under whose orders I have so long acted, I here offer my commission, and take my leave of all the employments of public life." He said afterwards to a friend: – "I feel now as I conceive a wearied traveller must do, who, after treading many a step with a heavy burden on his shoulders, is eased of the latter, having reached the haven to which all the former were directed, and from his house-top is looking back, and tracing with an eager eye the meanders by which he escaped the quicksands and mire which lay in his way, and into which none but the all-powerful Guide and Dispenser of human events could have prevented his falling." And to Lafayette, he says: –

"I am not only retired from all public employments, but I am retiring within myself, and shall be able to view the solitary walk, and tread the paths of private life with a heartfelt satisfaction. Envious of none, I am determined to be pleased with all; and this, my dear friend, being the order of my march, I will move gently down the stream of life until I sleep with my fathers."

That the public did not anticipate for him the repose and retirement he so much desired, we may gather from the instructions sent, at the time he resigned his commission, by the State of Pennsylvania, to her representatives in Congress, saying that "his illustrious actions and virtues render his character so splendid and venerable that it is highly probable the world may make his life in a considerable degree public;" and that "his very services to his country may therefore subject him to expenses, unless he permits her gratitude to interpose." "We are perfectly acquainted," says the paper, "with the disinterestedness and generosity of his soul. He thinks himself amply rewarded for all his labors and cares, by the love and prosperity of his fellow-citizens. It is true no rewards they can bestow can be equal to his merits, but they ought not to suffer those merits to be burdensome to him. * * * We are aware of the delicacy with which such a subject must be treated. But, relying in the good sense of Congress, we wish it may engage their early attention."

The delegates, on receipt of these instructions, very wisely bethought themselves of submitting the matter to the person most concerned before they brought it before Congress, and

he, as might have been expected, entirely declined the intended favor, and put an end to the project altogether. If he could have been induced to accept pecuniary compensation, there is no doubt a grateful nation would gladly have made it ample. But Washington, born to be an example in so many respects, had provided against all the dangers and temptations of money, by making himself independent as to his private fortune; having neglected no opportunity of enlarging it by honorable labor or judicious management, while he subjected the expenses of his family to the strictest scrutiny of economy.

His first care, on arriving at Mount Vernon, was to ascertain the condition of his private affairs; his next to make a tour of more than six hundred miles through the western country, with the double purpose of inspecting some lands of his, and of ascertaining the practicability of a communication between the head waters of the great rivers flowing east and west of the Alleghanies. He travelled entirely on horseback, in military style, and kept a minute journal of each day's observations, the result of which he communicated, on his return, in a letter to the Governor of Virginia, which Mr. Sparks declares to be "one of the ablest, most sagacious, and most important productions of his pen," and "the first suggestion of the great system of internal improvements which has since been pursued in the United States." On a previous tour, through the northern part of the State of New-York, he had observed the possibility of a water communication between the Hudson and the Great Lakes,

and appreciated its advantages, thus foreshowing, at that early date, the existence of the Erie Canal. In 1784, Washington had a final visit from Lafayette, from whom he parted at Annapolis, with manifestations of a deeper tenderness than the weak can even know. Arrived at home, he sat down at once to say yet another word to the beloved: "In the moment of our separation, upon the road as I travelled, and every hour since," (mark the specification from this man of exact truth,) "I have felt all that love, respect and attachment for you, with which length of years, close connection, and your merits have inspired me. I often asked myself, as our carriages separated, whether that was the last sight I should ever have of you? And though I wished to say No! my fears answered Yes!" He was right; they never met again, but they loved each other always. Lafayette's letters to Washington are lover-like; they are alone sufficient to show how capable of the softest feeling was the great heart to which they were addressed.

Space fails us for even the baldest enumeration of the instances of care for the public good with which the life of Washington abounded, when he fancied himself "in retirement," for we have unconsciously dwelt, with the reverence of affection, upon the picture of his character during the Revolution, and felt impelled to illustrate it, where we could, by quotations from his own weighty words; weighty, because, to him, words were things indeed, and we feel that he never used one thoughtlessly or untruly. Brevity must now be our chief aim, and we pass, at once, over all the labor and anxiety which attended the settlement

of the Constitution, to mention the election of Washington to the Presidency of the States so newly united, by bonds which, however willingly assumed, were as yet but ill fitted to the wearers. The unaffected reluctance with which he accepted the trust appears in every word and action of the time; and it is evident that, as far as selfish feelings went, he was much more afraid of losing the honor he had gained than of acquiring new. The heart of the nation was with him, however, even more than he knew; and the "mind oppressed with more anxious and painful sensations" than he had words to express at the outset, was soon calmed, not only by the suggestions of duty, but by the marks of unbounded love and confidence lavished on him at every step of his way by a grateful people. The Inaugural Oath was taken, before an immense concourse of people, on the balcony of Federal Hall, New-York, April 30, 1789, and the President afterwards delivered his first Address, in the Senate Chamber of the same building, now no longer standing, but not very satisfactorily replaced by that magnificent Grecian temple wherein the United States Government collects the Customs of New-York.

The house in which the first Presidential levee was held will always be a point of interest, and the consultations between Washington and the great officers of state about the simple ceremonial of these public receptions, are extremely curious, as showing the manners and ideas of the times, and the struggle between the old-country associations natural to gentlemen of

that day, and the recognized necessity of accommodating even court regulations to the feelings of a people to whom the least shadow of aristocratic form was necessarily hateful. We must not condemn the popular scrupulousness of 1789 as puerile and foolish, until we too have perilled life and fortune in the cause of liberty and equality.

A dangerous illness brought Washington near the grave, during his first Presidential summer, and he is said never to have regained his full strength. In August his mother died, venerable for years and wisdom, and always honored by her son in a spirit that would have satisfied a Roman matron. She maintained her simple habits to the last, and is said never to have exhibited surprise or elation, at her son's greatest glory, or the highest honors that could be paid him. Her remains rest under an unfinished monument, near Fredericksburgh, Virginia.

Of the wife of the illustrious Chief, it is often said that little is known, and there is felt almost a spite against her memory because she destroyed before her death every letter of her husband to herself, save only one, written when he accepted the post of Commander-in-Chief. But, to our thinking, one single letter of hers, written to Mrs. Warren, after the President's return from a tour through the eastern States, tells the whole story of her character and tastes, a story by no means discreditable to the choice of the wisest of mankind. Mr. Sparks gives the letter entire, as we would gladly do if it were admissible. We must, however, content ourselves with a few short extracts: —

"You know me well enough to believe that I am fond only of what comes from the heart. Under a conviction that the demonstrations of respect and affection to him originate in that source, I cannot deny that I have taken some interest and pleasure in them. The difficulties which presented themselves to view in his first entering upon the Presidency, seem thus to be in some measure surmounted. * * * I had little thought, when the war was finished, that any circumstances could possibly happen which would call the General into public life again. I had anticipated that from that moment we should be suffered to grow old together, in solitude and tranquillity. That was the first and dearest wish of my heart. I will not, however, contemplate with too much regret, disappointments that were inevitable, though his feelings and my own were in perfect unison with respect to our predilection for private life. Yet I cannot blame him for having acted according to his ideas of duty, in obeying the voice of his country. The consciousness of having attempted to do all the good in his power, and the pleasure of finding his fellow-citizens so well satisfied with the disinterestedness of his conduct, will doubtless be some compensation for the great sacrifice I know he has made. * * * With respect to myself, I sometimes think the arrangement is not quite as it ought to have been, that I, who had much rather be at home, should occupy a place with which a great many younger and gayer women would be extremely pleased. * * * I am still determined to be cheerful and happy, in whatever situation I may be; for I have learned from experience

that the greater part of our happiness or misery depends on our dispositions and not on our circumstances. We carry the seeds of the one or the other about with us, in our minds, wherever we go." The whole letter bespeaks the good, kind, dutiful and devoted wife, the loving mother, – for she represents her grandchildren as her chief joy, – and the sensible, domestic woman. What more can any man ask in the partner of his bosom? She was the best wife possible for Washington, and he thought her such, and loved her entirely and always. The picture by Stuart shows her, even in the decline of life, to have been of a delicate and sprightly beauty.

Another eight years of public duty and public life – two presidential terms – were bravely borne by the pair always longing for Mount Vernon. The reluctance of Washington to the second term of office was even stronger than that which he had expressed to the first, but he was overborne by stress of voices. "The confidence of the whole Union," writes Jefferson, "is centred in you. * * * There is sometimes an eminence of character on which society have such peculiar claims, as to control the predilection of the individual for a particular walk of happiness, and restrain him to that alone arising from the present and future benedictions of mankind. This seems to be your condition, and the law imposed on you by Providence in forming your character, and fashioning the events on which it was to operate." And Hamilton says – "I trust, and I pray God, that you will determine to make a further sacrifice of your tranquillity and happiness to the public good." And such were, throughout,

the sentiments of the first men of the country, without distinction of politics. Thus urged, he yielded once more, even after he had prepared a farewell address to the people on his contemplated resignation.

It was during this second term that Fox spoke of Washington before Parliament, concluding thus: – "It must indeed create astonishment, that, placed in circumstances so critical, and filling for a series of years a station so conspicuous, his character should never once have been called in question. * * * For him it has been reserved to run the race of glory without experiencing the smallest interruption to the brilliancy of his career." And Mr. Erskine, writing to Washington himself, says: – "I have taken the liberty to introduce your august and immortal name in a short sentence which will be found in the book I send you.[1] I have a large acquaintance among the most valuable and exalted classes of men; but you are the only human being for whom I ever felt an awful reverence. I sincerely pray God to grant a long and serene evening to a life so gloriously devoted to the universal happiness of the world."

The evening was indeed serene, but it was not destined to be long. Two years were spent in domestic and social duty and pleasure, the old Virginia hospitality being carried to an enormous extent at Mount Vernon, over which General and Mrs. Washington presided, with all that good sense, dignity, and *bonhommie* united, which seems now to have characterized

[1] On the causes and consequences of the war with France.

their home life. Mrs. Washington, content with the greatness described by the wise king, looked well to her maidens, and so managed the affairs of a large establishment that "the heart of her husband could safely trust in her, so that he had *no need of spoil*." Who knows how much the good management of his household affairs had to do with Washington's superiority to the temptations of gain? The ladies should see to it that they so regulate their habits of expense that their husbands have "no need of spoil." The extravagant tastes of Mrs. Arnold, amiable woman though she was, are known to have heightened her husband's rapacity, and thus added to the incentives which resulted in treason and just ruin. Mrs. Washington, when she was in the highest position in the nation, wore gowns spun under her own roof, and always took care, in her conversation with the ladies about her, to exalt domestic employments, and represent them as belonging to the duty of woman in any station. She was supposed to have written a patriotic paper, published in 1780, called "The Sentiments of American Women," but the authorship has not been ascertained. The energy and consistency of her patriotic feeling was, however, perfectly well understood, and she is said to have borne her part in the conversation of the distinguished company at Mount Vernon, with invariable dignity and sweetness. The General had returned with unction to his rural and agricultural pursuits, keeping up his life-long habit of rising before the sun, and after breakfast making the tour of the plantation on horseback. These employments were somewhat interrupted by the speck of war

which troubled our horizon in 1798, on which occasion all eyes were turned to him, and his friends and the President called upon him once more to give his services to the country. His reply was consistent with the tenor of his life, "In case of actual invasion by a formidable force, I certainly should not intrench myself under the cover of age and retirement, if my services should be required by my country in repelling it." Without waiting for his reply, the Senate had appointed him to the post of Commander-in-Chief, and the Secretary at War was despatched immediately to Mount Vernon with the commission, which was at once accepted. This involved Washington once more in a press of correspondence and many anxious duties; and his letters during this time show that his mind had lost none of its fertility or his judgment of its soundness. He predicted at once that France would not invade the United States, and the event justified his foresight. But another Enemy lay in wait for him, and to this one the hero succumbed, in the same manly spirit in which he had battled with an earthly foe. Great suffering was crowded into the twenty-four hours' illness which served to prostrate that vigorous form, and to still that active brain; but he could look up, at the last, and say – "I am not afraid to die."

December 14, 1799, was the day of his death, and the 18th of the same month saw him laid, by a weeping multitude, in the family vault at Mount Vernon; not the tomb in which his ashes now repose, but the old one, which he had been planning to rebuild, saying "Let that be done first, for perhaps I shall want

it first."

We have thus traced the Father of our Country through all his earthly Homes, to that quiet one by the side of the Potomac, the object of devout pilgrimage to millions yet unborn. One more Home there is for him, even in this changing world – that which he possesses in the hearts of his countrymen, one which we cannot picture or describe, but from which he can never be displaced by the superior merit of mortal man. Other heroes may arise, will arise, as the world shall need them, exponents of their times and incarnations of the highest spirit of the race from which they spring; but America can have but one Washington – one man in whom the peculiar virtues of the *American* character found their embodiment and their triumph. In saying this we may well be proud but not vainglorious. If the great truth it implies be not yet known and read of all men, we should be humbled by the thought that we are so slow to follow our immortal leader. Washington's indomitable spirit of freedom, as evident when at nineteen he withstood the English governor, as when in 1774 he "went to church and fasted all day," in sympathy with the people of Boston, in their resolution against the Port Bill; his self-control, the perfection of which made his fierce passions the sworn servants of virtue; his humanity, which no personal suffering or fatigue could blunt, and no provocation extinguish; his manly temper, never daunted by insolence or turned into arrogance by triumph; the respect for the civil virtues which he carried with him through all the temptations and trials of war;

the faith in God and man which sustained him, and was indeed the secret of his power and his success, – what a legacy are these! All that he accomplished is less to us than what he was. To have left an example that will never need defence or substitution to the end of time; an ideal that will warm the heart and point the aspiration of every true American, when hundreds of millions shall be proud of the name; to stand forth, for ever, as what we, happy citizens of the country in which that great soul was cradled, and to which his heart and life were devoted, think a MAN ought to be – what a destiny for him! It is his reward. God has granted his prayers. Nothing earthly would have satisfied him, as we know by what he rejected. He has received that for which he labored. Who dare imagine the complacency – only less than divine, with which the retrospect of such a life may be fraught! Let us indulge the thought that when in the heat of party, the lust of power, or the still deadlier hunger for wealth, we depart from his spirit, he is permitted to see that the dereliction is but temporary and limited; that his country is true to him if his countrymen sometimes err; that there is for ever imprinted, on the heart and life of the nation, the conviction that in adherence to his precepts and imitation of his character there is safety, happiness, glory; in departure from that standard, deterioration and decay. It must be so, for can we conceive him blest without this?

As if to stamp the American ideal with all perfection, it is remarkable that Washington stood pre-eminent in manly strength

and beauty, and that a taste for athletic exercises kept him, in spite of illnesses brought on by toil, anxiety, and exposure, in firm health during most of his life. His picture at sixty-two, that which he himself thought the best likeness that had been taken of him, exhibits one of the loveliest faces that an old man ever wore. And it is marvellous how any one that ever looked into the clear blue depths of the eye in Stuart's unfinished picture, could be persuaded to believe Washington stern, cold, and unfeeling. Some have even thought it added to his dignity to represent him thus. All the historians in the world could not prove such a contradiction to the stamp of nature. But the picture by Pine – the old man, faded somewhat, and a little fallen in outline, wears the face of an angel; mild, firm, modest, sensitive, aspiring, glorious! It meets your gaze with a tenderness that dims our eye and seems almost to dim its own. Of all the portraits of Washington, this and the half-imaginary one made by Mr. Leutze from a miniature taken when Washington was seventeen, are the most touchingly beautiful, and, as we verily believe, most characteristic of the man.

It is proper, though scarcely necessary, to say that this sketch of Washington's life is drawn from Mr. Sparks' history, since no research can discover a single fact overlooked by that faithful and just chronicler.

FRANKLIN

An English traveller in the United States once expressed his astonishment at nowhere finding a monument of Franklin. He regarded it as a new proof of the ingratitude of republics. But if we have erected no columns, nor statues, to the memory of our first great man, we have manifested our gratitude for the services he rendered us, and the hearty appreciation of his character, which is universal among us, in a better, more affectionate and enduring manner. We name our towns, counties, ships, children, and institutions after him. His name is constantly in our mouth, and his benevolent countenance and lofty brow are as familiar to us as the features of Washington. We have Franklin banks, Franklin insurance companies, Franklin societies, Franklin hotels, Franklin markets, and even Franklin theatres. One of our line of battle ships is called the Franklin, and there will be found a Ben Franklin, the name affectionately abbreviated, on all our western lakes and rivers. The popular heart cherishes his memory more tenderly than that of any of our great men. Washington's heroism and lofty virtues set him above us, so that while we look up to him with veneration and awe, we hardly feel that he was one of us. His impossible grandeur forbids the familiar sympathy which we feel for our own kind. But Franklin's greatness is of that kind which makes the whole world kin. In him we recognize the apotheosis of usefulness. He

was our Good Genius, who took us by the hand in our national infancy, and taught us the great art of making the most of the world. He warmed our houses by the stove which still bears his name, and protected us from the terrifying thunderbolt by his simple rod. He showered upon us lessons of wisdom, all calculated to increase our happiness, and his wise and pithy apothegms have become an important part of our language. Never before was a young nation blessed with so beneficent and generous a counsellor and guide. The influence of Franklin upon the national character is beyond estimate. He taught us alike by precept and example; and, in his autobiography, he laid the corner stone of our literature, bequeathing us a book which will always be fresh, instructive, and charming, while our language endures, or we look to literature for instruction and entertainment.

Franklin was a pure, unadulterated Englishman; he came of that great stock whose mission it is to improve the world. Though we claim him, and justly, as an American, he was born, and lived the better part of his life, a subject of the English crown. There was never a more thorough Englishman, nor one whose whole consistent life more happily illustrated the Anglo-Saxon character, nor one who was better entitled to be called an American, or who showed a more lively and enduring love for his native soil.

Every schoolboy is familiar with the history of Franklin; his autobiography is our national epic; it is more read than

Robinson Crusoe; and our great national museum, the Patent Office, has been filled with the results of ambitious attempts to follow in the path of the inventor of the lightning-rod. One boy reads Robinson Crusoe and runs off to sea, while another reads Franklin's Life and tries for a patent, or begins to save a penny a day, that he may have three hundred pennies at the end of the year. There are writers who have accused Franklin of giving a sordid bias to our national character. But nothing could be more unjust. There is nothing sordid in the teachings of our great philosopher; while the example of his purely beneficent life has, doubtless, been the cause of many of the magnificent acts of private benevolence which have distinguished our countrymen.

Franklin says in his autobiography, in reference to his stove, which has warmed so many generations of his countrymen, and rendered comfortable so many American homes: "Governor Thomas was so pleased with the construction of this stove that he offered to give me a sole patent for the vending of them for a term of years; but I declined it from a principle which has ever weighed with me on such occasions, viz., that as we enjoy great advantages from the inventions of others, we should be glad of an opportunity to serve others by an invention of ours: and this we should do freely and cordially." No, there was no sordidness in the teachings of Franklin.

His immortal biography was commenced at the ripe age of sixty-six, while he was in England, a time of life when most men have lost the power to instruct or amuse with the pen; but it has

the ease, the freshness, and the vigor of youth. It was continued at Passy, in France, and concluded in Philadelphia. He was one of the few instances of a precocious genius maintaining his powers to an advanced period of life. There were no signs of childishness in his almost infantile compositions, or of senility in his latest productions.

Every body knows that the grandfather of Doctor Franklin was the sturdy old puritan, Peter Folger, who wrote the homely verses which Mr. Sparks doubts the propriety of calling poetry, and who dwelt in "Sherborn Town." The house in which he lived, and where the mother of Franklin was born, was still in existence but a few years since, though in a very dilapidated condition. We remember making a pilgrimage to it in our boyish days, after reading the Life of Franklin, and wondering in which of its little rooms the grandfather of the philosopher sat, when he penned the lines which the grandson thought were "written with manly freedom and a pleasing simplicity." The house stood near the water, at the head of a little cove, or creek, and near it was a bubbling spring, from which the mother of the philosopher must have often drank. At that time there were no evidences of the surrounding grounds having been cultivated, and a wretched family inhabited the ruin. There are many descendants of Peter Folger still living, some of whom have been eminent for their learning and talents; but, it is a remarkable circumstance, that, though Franklin's father and grandfather each had five sons, who grew up to man's estate, there is not one male descendant living

of that name.

Franklin was born on the 6th of January, old style, 1706, in a house that stood on the corner of Milk-street, opposite the old South Church, Boston, in which he was christened. The church is still standing, but the house has been demolished, and, in its place, there is a large and handsome granite warehouse, which is made to serve the double purpose of a store and a monument. On the frieze of the cornice is the inscription in bold granitic letters, the birth-place of Franklin.

We cannot help thinking that it is just such a monument as he would have recommended, if his wishes had been consulted. But the house in which our great philosopher spent his earlier years, and to which his father removed soon after the birth of his youngest son, is still standing, very nearly in the same condition in which it was during his youth. It is on the corner of Hanover and Union streets, and the wooden gilt ball of the old soap-boiler is still suspended from an iron crane, with the inscription Josias Franklin, 1698. The ball is the original one, but it must have been many times regilt and relettered. The building is occupied by a shoe dealer in the lower part, but the upper rooms are in the occupancy of an industrial whose art had no existence until near a century after the death of Franklin's father. A daguerrean artist now takes likenesses in the rooms where the boy-philosopher slept, and sat up late at night to read Defoe's Essay on Projects, and Plutarch's Lives, by the glimmering light of one of his father's own dips. It was here too that he read the

Light House Tragedy, after having cut wicks all day; and it was in the cellar of this house, too, that he made that characteristic suggestion to his father, of saying grace over the barrel of beef, which he saw him packing away for the winter's use, to save the trouble of a separate grace over each piece that should be served up for dinner. This anecdote may not be strictly true, but it is perfectly characteristic, and very much like one he tells of himself, when he was the Commander-in-Chief of the military forces of Pennsylvania. The chaplain of his regiment complained to him that the men would not attend prayers, whereupon, says Franklin, "I said to him, 'it is perhaps below the dignity of your profession to act as steward of the rum; but if you were only to distribute it out after prayers you would have them all about you.' He liked the thought, undertook the task, and, with the help of a few hands to measure out the liquor, executed it to satisfaction, and never were prayers more generally and more punctually attended."

This kind of humorous good sense, was one of the marked peculiarities of his character; there was lurking wit and humor in all his acts, and in his gravest essays, of which his epigrammatic letter to his old friend Strahan, the king's printer, is a notable example.

The old house in which Franklin spent his boyhood is now a long distance from the water, and in the midst of a wilderness of brick and granite buildings, but he speaks of it as near the shore, and it was close by that he built the little wharf of stolen stones,

which induced his father to impress upon him the great truth that "that which was not honest could not be truly useful."

Where the young apprentice lived when he was boarded out by his brother, and first "went in" to vegetarianism, we have not been able to ascertain; and, on his flight from Boston, in his seventeenth year, he does not appear to have remained long enough in New-York to have had a home. The first place he slept in, in Philadelphia, was a quaker meeting-house; but his first home in the city which he afterwards rendered famous, from having resided in it, was at a public house in Water-street, known as the Crooked Billet; not a very significant sign to us of the present generation.

Wherever Franklin went, or in whatever new sphere he applied himself to business, he immediately inspired confidence in his ability, and gained friends, as all able men do. The runaway boy of seventeen had hardly begun to put Bradford's printing office in order when he was called upon by Colonel French, and Sir William Keith, governor of the province, who invited him to a tavern, offered him a bottle of Madeira, and proposed to set him up in business; yet he was not of a glib tongue and a prepossessing appearance.

At the age of eighteen he made his first voyage to London, and lived in Little Britain with his friend Ralph at a cost of three shillings and sixpence a week. Franklin worked in Palmer's famous printing house in Bartholomew Close, near a year, and for the first and only time of his life was

improvident and extravagant, spending his earnings at plays and public amusements, and neglecting to write to Miss Read in Philadelphia, with whom he had "exchanged promises." He worked diligently, though, and during that time wrote and published "A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain," This essay gained him the friendship of an author who took him to the Horns, a pale ale-house, introduced him to Dr. Mandeville and promised him a sight of Newton. He afterwards removed to lodgings in Duke-street, and occupied a room up three pairs of stairs, which he rented of a widow, who had an only daughter, with whom he used to sup on half an anchovy, a very small slice of bread and butter, and half a pint of ale between them. He remained eighteen months in England, and returned to Philadelphia with the expectation of entering into mercantile business with his friend Denman.

It was during his voyage from London to Philadelphia that he wrote out the plan for regulating his future conduct, which, he says, he had adhered to through life. The plan has not been preserved, but we have the life which was conformed to it, and can easily conceive what it was.

Fortunately for mankind his friend Denman died soon after the return of Franklin to Philadelphia, whereby his mercantile projects were frustrated, and he was compelled to return to his trade of printing; he was just turned of twenty-one, and not finding employment as a merchant's clerk, he undertook the charge of his former employer's printing office. Here his

inventive genius was taxed, for he had to make both types and ink, as they could not be procured short of London. He also engraved the copper plates, from his own designs, for the paper money of New Jersey, and constructed the first copper plate press that had been seen in the country. He could not long remain in the employment of another, and, before the end of the year, had established himself in business as a printer, in partnership with his friend Meredith. His life now commenced in earnest, he was his own master, and held his fortune in his own hands; he had already discerned "that truth, sincerity, and integrity, were of the utmost importance to the felicity of life;" and day by day his genius ripened and his noble character was developed. In the year 1730, he was married to Miss Read, and laid the foundation of the Pennsylvania Library; the first public library that had been commenced in the country. The two succeeding years of his life were not marked by any striking event, but they were, perhaps, the two most important in his history, as during that time he schooled himself to virtue by a systematic course of conduct, the particulars of which he has given in his biography. At the end of this period he commenced his "Poor Richard's Almanac," the publication of which was continued by him twenty-five years. It was the first successful attempt in authorship on this side of the Atlantic. His first "promotion," as he calls it, meaning his first public employment, was on being chosen Clerk of the General Assembly; and the next year he was appointed Postmaster at Philadelphia. His private business

all the time increased; he founded societies for philosophical purposes; continued to publish his paper; wrote innumerable pamphlets; was elected colonel of a regiment; invented his stove, and engaged in all manner of beneficial projects; he established hospitals and academies, made treaties with the Indians, became Postmaster General, and after devising means for cleaning the streets of Philadelphia, turned his attention to those of London and Westminster.

But, it is with the "Homes" of Franklin that our limited space must be occupied, and not with his life and actions. Although he occupied, at various times, almost as many different houses as there are headquarters of Washington, yet there are few of them now left; living always in cities, the houses he inhabited have been destroyed by the irresistible march of improvement. In his fifty-first year, he was sent to London by the General Assembly to present a petition to the king, and to act as the agent of Pennsylvania in England. He sailed from New-York and arrived in London in July, 1757, and at this point of his life his autobiography ends. From an original letter of his in our possession, written on the eve of his departure from Philadelphia, he directs that letters must be sent to him in London at the Pennsylvania Coffee House, in Birchin Lane, where he doubtless lived on his first arrival, but his permanent home in London, during fifteen years, was at Mrs. Stevenson's in Craven-street. He travelled much in Great Britain and on the continent, was present at the coronation of George III., and returned to America

in 1762, having stopped awhile at Madeira on the voyage. He went to England again in 1764, and after a brilliant and most serviceable career abroad, returned to his native home in season to sign his name to the Declaration of Independence, giving a greater weight of personal character, and a more potent popular influence to the cause than any other of the immortal participators in that glorious act. He died in the year 1790, on the 17th of April, at 11 o'clock at night, in his 85th year, in his house in Market-street, Philadelphia, which he had built for his own residence. His remains lie by the side of his wife's, in the burying ground of Christ Church, covered by a simple marble slab, in conformity with his directions. There is a small granite pyramid in the Granary burying ground in Boston, which the economical citizens make do double duty, as a memorial of the greatest name of which their city can boast, and a monument to his parents.

JEFFERSON

Jefferson would have been a notable man in any country and any age, because he possessed both genius and character. Without the former he could never have succeeded, as he did, in moulding the opinions of his contemporaries and successors, and without the latter, he would not have been, as he was, bitterly hated by his enemies and cordially loved by his friends. His genius, however, was not of that kind which in the ardor of its inspiration intoxicates the judgment; nor was his character, on the other hand, of the sort which moves an admiration so profound, unquestioning and universal, as to disarm the antagonism its very excellence provokes. There was enough error and frailty, therefore, mingled with his eminent qualities both of mind and heart, to involve him in seeming contradictions, and to expose his life to double construction and controversy. At the same time, it has happened to him as it has often happened in human history, that the hostility awakened by his acts during his life, has dwindled with the lapse of time, while his fame has grown brighter and broader with every renewal of the decisions of posterity. No man, we may now safely say, who has figured on the theatre of events in this country, with the single exception of Washington, occupies a larger share of the veneration of Americans.

He was born at Shadwell, in Albemarle county, Virginia, in

1743. His father, dying when he was twelve years of age, left him a large inheritance. He was educated at the College of William and Mary, studied law under the celebrated George Wythe, began the practice of it in 1767, and in 1769 was chosen a member of the provincial legislature, where his first movement – an unsuccessful one – was for the emancipation of the slaves. But a greater question soon engrossed his mind. Already a spirit of opposition had been excited in the colonies to the arbitrary measures of the parliament of Great Britain, – that very legislature was dissolved by the Governor, in consequence of the sympathy displayed by its leading members with the patriotic proceedings of Massachusetts, – it appealed to the constituency, and was triumphantly returned, – and then in 1773, its more active spirits organized, in a room of a tavern at Raleigh, a system of correspondence, designed to inflame the zeal and unite the efforts of the colonists against the encroachments of power. As a result of this activity, a convention was called in Virginia for the purpose of choosing delegates to a more general Congress. Jefferson was a member of it, but not being able, on account of ill-health, to attend, drew up a paper on the Rights of British America, which the convention did not adopt, but which it published; "the leap he proposed," as he says, "being too long for the mass of the citizens," – and which Edmund Burke in England caused to run through several editions. The pamphlet procured him reputation, and the more honorable distinction of having his name placed in a bill of attainder, moved in one of the houses

of Parliament. Thus early was he identified with the champions of liberty in the new world.

In 1775, Jefferson took his seat for the first time in the Continental Congress, whither he carried the same decided and liberal tone which had marked his legislative efforts. He was soon appointed on the most important committees, and especially on that, which, on the motion of the delegates of Virginia, was raised to prepare a Declaration of Independence for the colonies. It was a measure carried only after a strenuous and hot debate, but it was finally carried by a large majority; and to Jefferson was assigned the task, by his associates, of preparing the document destined to inaugurate a new era in the history of mankind. How he executed the duty the world knows; for this paper became the charter of freedom to a whole continent; and annually to this day, millions of people read it with gratitude, reverence, joy, and praise to God. For a second time, then, we behold our Jefferson, a chosen champion of liberty, linking his name, not with a bill of attainder this time; but with the most signal event in the destiny of his country, – and one, second to none in the political fortunes of humanity.

The Declaration proclaimed, Mr. Jefferson retired from his place in the Congress to resume his seat in the legislature of his native State; where, an imperfect Constitution having been adopted, during his absence, he was immediately involved in the most indefatigable labors for its reform. In connection with Wythe, Mason, Pendleton, and Lee, he prepared no less than

136 different acts, from which were derived all the most liberal features of the existing laws of the Commonwealth. They laid the foundation, in fact, of the code of Virginia, – as a mere monument of industry, they were a most extraordinary work, but when we consider the importance of some of the principles of legislation which they introduced, sufficient in themselves to have immortalized the name of any man. Among these principles, were provisions for the abrogation of the laws of entail and primogeniture, for the establishment of religious freedom, for a complete amelioration of the criminal code, including the abolition of capital punishments in all cases, except of treason and murder, for the emancipation, at a certain age, of all slaves born after the passage of the act, for the division of the counties into wards and towns, and the establishment thereby of free municipal institutions, and for the introduction of a system of popular education, providing for schools in each town, academies in each county, and a University for the State. The three first were carried into effect; but the others, in consequence of his personal absence on other duties, failed. But what a different destiny would have been that of Virginia if they had not failed! How intrepid, too, the mind which could conceive and urge such measures at that time! Society in Virginia was then divided into three classes, the land and slave-owners, the yeomanry, and the laboring people. Jefferson was by birth and position of the first class, but his chief associations had been among the second class, while his sympathies were with the third class, or rather with

all classes. Had his suggestions been adopted, these distinctions would have been destroyed, and Virginia raised to the first place among the free nations of the earth. Thus, for a third time, we find Jefferson among the foremost advocates of the liberty and advancement of the people.

In 1779 he was chosen the successor of Patrick Henry, as the Governor of the State; but war having been declared, and a military invasion being at hand, he resigned the position on account of his want of military talents, in favor of General Nelson. He had barely time to escape with his family before the enemy entered his house. Congress twice solicited him to go abroad, first to negotiate a peace, and then a treaty of alliance and commerce with France, but as "the laboring oar," in his own language, "was at home," it was not until the year 1782, when the assurance that a general peace would be concluded, became stronger, that he consented to quit his country. The preliminary articles of a peace, however, were received before the time of his departure, and the objects of his mission being thus accomplished, he was again chosen to Congress in 1783.

The great question then, was the formation of a better government for the colonies, than the weak and ill-jointed confederation of the time had afforded. Jefferson was prepared to enter into its discussion with ardor, bringing to the task that keen sagacity and that stern republican spirit, which were among his chief characteristics, when he was joined to Adams and Franklin in a commission for negotiating treaties of commerce

with foreign nations. He arrived in Paris in June of 1785. His practical insight into affairs, his vast information, and his determined will, made him a valuable acquisition even to the distinguished abilities of his colleagues. His labors were incessant, and yet he found time to participate, as far as his diplomatic functions allowed, in the stirring and brilliant scenes then going forward on the theatre of Europe. The part that he had performed in the great battles for liberty in America, attracted towards him the regards and the confidence of all the prominent actors of the revolutionary drama of France. It was at his house that the patriots most frequently met; it was in his house that the Declaration of Rights which preceded the first French Constitution was drafted; it was at his house that the First Constitution was proposed; it was from him that Lafayette received many of his best and noblest impulses, and to him that the earlier leaders of the struggle looked for sympathy, concurrence, and direction. In after years, in the bitter political contests of the day, it was a topic of reproach that he was under French influence, but the truth was, as some one has sagaciously remarked, that the French had been brought under an American influence. He simply continued to be abroad what he had always been at home, the pioneer and consistent friend of popular rights, – the unflinching supporter of popular liberty.

It was during this interval of absence in Europe, that the controversy in respect to a better constitution of government for the colonies, to which we have just alluded, was brought

to a head. There had always been a substantial union between them, founded upon contiguous geographical position and their common interests, as well as their community of origin, languages, laws and religion, which the common danger of the Revolution had served to strengthen and cement. But as yet their political union was inchoate and fragile. It was a simple improvement upon the classical confederacies of history, such as had prevailed in ancient Greece, on the plains of Etrusca, before Rome was, among the dikes of Holland, or along the declivities of the Swiss Alps, – and such as Montesquieu and the accepted writers praised as the perfection of political arrangement, clear of all defects, and secure from foreign violence and domestic weakness. Yet, in the practice of the New World, it had not justified the praises of the theorists, for a fatal vice, an alarming and radical weakness had been developed in its want of due centripetal force. In other words, it was rather a conglomerate than a united whole, and the difficulty of the new problem which it raised consisted in the proper adjustment of the federal and central with the State and local authority. Parties were, of course, immediately formed on the question of the true solution of it, the one favoring a strong central power, taking the name of Federalist; and the other, disposed to adhere to the separate sovereignty and independence of the States, taking the name of Anti-Federalist. In the end, the Constitution actually adopted, a work only second in importance to the Revolution itself, or more properly the constructive completion of it, was a

compromise between the two, although the original parties still maintained their relative positions, as the friends and foes of a preponderating general government.

Jefferson inclined to the anti-federalists, but not being in the midst of the debate, was scarcely mingled with its more exciting quarrels. It is hard to say, what shape, or whether a different shape at all, would have been given to the instrument of union, had he been at home to take part in its formation. We think it probable, however, that his immense personal influence, combined with his sharp forecast and decentralizing tendency, would have succeeded in modifying its more aristocratic and conservative features, especially in regard to the absorbing power of the Executive and the irresponsible tenure of the Judiciary. Be that as it may, the choice of him by Washington, in 1789, for the post of the first Secretary of State, gave him an opportunity of exercising his talents and manifesting his disposition, in the organization of the new experiment.

There were two antagonisms which he found it necessary at the outset to meet; first, the tendency to federal absorption, and second, the reliance upon law rather than liberty, both embodied in the person of Alexander Hamilton, the Secretary of the Treasury, a man of genius, of energy, of sincere convictions, and the confidant of Washington. The two men were, therefore, speedily self-placed in strong opposition. Hamilton had been educated in a military school, he admired the British Constitution, and, though he was an earnest patriot,

as his efficient services in the war, and his masterly vindications of the Constitution had proved, he cherished a secret distrust of the people. Jefferson, on the other hand, had sympathized all his life with the multitude, approved, or rather had anticipated, the French philosophy, which was then in vogue, disliked the English models of government, and was sanguine of the future. It was inevitable, consequently, that the opposition of such men, both able, both decided, both earnest in their plans, should widen into an almost irreconcilable hostility. In 1793, Jefferson resigned, but not until, by his reports to Congress on the currency, the fisheries, weights and measures, and by his correspondence with foreign ministers, he had placed his department on a level with the Foreign Offices of the older nations. It is to him that we are indebted for our decimal coinage, and through him, as Mr. Webster, a competent and not too friendly judge, has confessed, our diplomatic intercourse was raised to a dignity and strength which will bear comparison with any that other governments can produce.

In 1797 Jefferson was called from his retirement to act as Vice-President of the United States, – a place of not much practical efficiency, but which he illustrated by compiling a manual of Parliamentary Practice, which has ever since been the standard by which the proceedings of legislative bodies in this country are regulated. There was no position, indeed, which he does not appear to have been able to turn to some advantage to his country and his fellow-men.

At the close of his term as Vice-President, he was chosen President, – a choice in which a final blow was given to the doctrines of Federalism, and the democratic republic finally inaugurated. We shall not, however, enter into the contests of that period, nor attempt to detail the measures of his administration. They are subjects for history, not for an outline like this we sketch. Suffice it to say, that the aspirations of the people were not disappointed by the results of his action. He rescued the functions of government from the improper direction which had been given to them, he organized strength through simplicity, he almost doubled the territory of the Union, he caused the vast regions of the west, now the seat of populous empire, to be explored, he gave us character abroad, and maintained tranquillity at home, – and, last of all, against the solicitation of his friends, with a popular prestige that would have carried him in triumph through a third or fourth term of office, even to the close of his days, he consecrated for ever the example of Washington, by resigning, as that great man had done, at the end of eight years.

These are the simple facts of Jefferson's active career, and they need no comment. They present a character obviously too transparent to allow of much mistake. All his life points to a few simple but great objects. By his sanguine temperament, his keen insight, his quick and cherishing sympathies, his strong love of justice, his kindly visions of the future, he was made a democrat; and, under no circumstances could he have been any thing else. He hated tyranny, he loved truth, and he was

not afraid of man; how then could he avoid becoming what he was, the apostle of freedom, author of the Statutes of Virginia and the Declaration of Independence, founder of the republican party, a name of power to future generations which have scarcely yet come up to the greatness and breadth of his enlightened opinions? Errors of conduct he may have committed, for who is perfect? impracticable views he may have enunciated, for who is all-wise? but the glory of his achievements is an imperishable remembrance of his countrymen, illustrating their history to all nations and to all times. "A superior and commanding intellect," it has been eloquently said, "is not a temporary flame burning brightly for a while, and then giving place to returning darkness. It is rather a spark of fervent heat, as well as radiant light, with power to enkindle the common mass of human mind; so that when it glimmers in its own decay, and finally goes out in death, no night follows, but it leaves the world all light, all on fire, from the potent contact of its own spirit."

The retirement of Mr. Jefferson at Monticello was passed in the cultivation of his estate, in the pursuit of letters, in cheerful intercourse with friends, in the duties of a liberal hospitality, and in advancing his favorite project of a University of Virginia. His notes on Virginia, and his contributions to scientific periodicals, together with his extensive correspondence, had brought him to the acquaintance of the most distinguished scientific men of the world, and his eminent political services had made him known to statesmen. His house was, therefore, always

thronged with visitors, who, attracted by his fame, were charmed by his conversation, astonished by his learning, and warmed into love by the unaffected kindliness of his deportment. A beautiful retirement, full of grandeur, of simplicity, of dignity and repose! A patriarch of the nation which he had helped to found, and which he lived to see in a condition of unparalleled advancement, – illustrious in two hemispheres, – his name connected with events that introduced a new era in the history of his race, – surrounded by the grateful admiration of growing millions of people; his old age was passed in the serenest contentment, amid the blandishments of literature and science, the interchanges of friendly offices, and in useful labor in the library or on the farm.

Monticello, which is the name which Mr. Jefferson had given to his home, was built in one of the most enchanting regions of Virginia. "It seemed designed by nature," says a writer, "as the very seat from which, lifted above the world's turmoil, one who has exhausted what it can bestow of eminence, might look down, withdrawn from its personal troubles, but contemplating at leisure the distant animation of the scene. It was a place scarcely less fit for the visionary abode of the philosophic speculatist, than by its far-spread and shifting beauties of landscapes to inspire a poet with perpetual delight." On a spire of the romantic Blue Ridge, whose varying outlines stretch away from it till they are lost to the sight, with a sylvan scene of unsurpassed loveliness in the vale below, the quiet Rivanna meandering through rich

fields on one side, the pleasant village of Charlotteville dotting the other, while the porticoes and domes of the University rise in the distance behind, it overlooked a combination of natural pictures that are rarely found in one spot.

"The country," says the visitor we have just quoted, "is not flat, but a gently waving one; yet, from above and afar, its inequalities of surface vanish into a map-like smoothness, and are traceable only in the light and shade cast by hill and plain. The prospect here has a diameter of near a hundred miles: its scope is therefore such that atmospheric effects are constantly flickering over it, even in the most cloudless days of a climate as bright if not quite so soft as that of Italy; and thus each varying aspect of the weather is reflected, all the while, from the features of the landscape, as the passions are over the face of some capricious beauty, that laughs, and frowns, and weeps almost in the same breath. Near you, perhaps, all is smiling in the sunlight; yonder broods or bursts a storm; while, in a third quarter, darkness and light contend upon the prospect, and chase each other. The sky itself is thus not more shifting than the scene you may have before you. It takes a new aspect at almost every moment, and bewitches you with a perpetual novelty."

The mansion of the philosopher was placed on the top of an eminence commanding this beautiful scene. It was somewhat fantastic in its architecture, owing to the additions and rebuildings that had been constantly going on, to adapt it to the enlarged wants and changing tastes of the occupant, but it was

spacious, richly furnished and commodious. The rarest treasures of literature adorned the library, and indeed every part bore witness to the affluence and cultivated pursuits of the venerable sage. A farm of some fourteen thousand acres lay about among the hills, which was laboriously and carefully husbanded, and which gave employment in various ways to a number of artificers and mechanics, whose dwellings were distributed about the slopes. His estate, in short, was a small and almost independent community in itself, capable of supplying the ordinary needs and even the luxuries of a highly civilized condition of social existence. As a proof of this, we may state by the way, that the carriage of the proprietor, as well as many of the tools and implements in daily use, had been manufactured on the premises. But the wonder of the place was the library, which was not only extensive, but extensively rich in its rare possessions, which the master had seduously collected during his long residence abroad from every nook and corner of Europe. Unfortunately many of these books, afterwards presented to Congress, were burned in the conflagration of the Capitol. Of the man himself, a guest, who was any thing but an admirer, has left this record.

"Dressed, within doors, as I saw him last, no longer in the red breeches, which were once famous as his favorite and rather conspicuous attire; but still vindicating by a sanguine waistcoat his attachment to that Republican color; in gray shorts, small silver kneebuckles, gray woollen stockings, black slippers, a blue body-coat, surmounted by a gray spencer; tall, and though

lithe of person and decidedly graceful and agile of motion and carriage, yet long and ill-limbed, Mr. Jefferson's figure was commanding and striking, though bad, and his face most animated and agreeable, although remarkably ugly. His legs, by no means shunned observation; yet they were scarcely larger at the knee than in the ankle, and had never been conscious of a calf. Still, though without strength, they had always borne him along with vigor and suppleness. These bodily qualities and a health almost unfailing, he preserved, in a singular degree, to the very close of his long life. At the time I speak of, when he was in his eighty-first year, he not only mounted his horse without assistance and rode habitually some ten miles a day, but, dismounting at a fence breast-high, would leap over it, by only placing his hand on the topmost rail. He walked not only well and swiftly, but with a lightness and springiness of tread, such as few young men even have. It was a restless activity of mind, which informed all this unusual mobility of body; and the two, I think, were, in him, greatly alike. For his intellect had, like his person, more size than shape, more adroitness than force, more suppleness than solidity, and affected its ends by continuity of action not mass of power, by manipulation not muscularity. You may batter to pieces with a small hammer that which a cannon-ball would not shiver. He was never idle: nay, hardly a moment still. He rose early and was up late, through his life; and was all day, whenever not on foot or a-horse-back, at study, at work, or in conversation. If his legs and fingers were at rest, his tongue

would sure to be a-going. Indeed, even when seated in his library in a low Spanish chair, he held forth to his visitors in an almost endless flow of fine discourse, his body seemed as impatient of keeping still as his mind, it shifted its position incessantly, and so twisted itself about that you might almost have thought he was attitudinizing. Meantime, his face, expressive as it was ugly, was not much less busy than his limbs, in bearing its part in the conversation, and kept up, all the while, the most speaking by-play, an eloquence of the countenance as great as ugly features could well have. It stood to his conversation like the artful help of well-imagined illustrations to the text of a book: a graphic commentary on every word, that was as convincing to the eyes as was his discourse to the ears. The impression which it conveyed was a strong auxiliary of all he uttered: for it begat in you an almost unavoidable persuasion of his sincerity."

Jefferson's conversation is described as the most agreeable and brilliant of his day; but was it this which gave him his personal power? He was not in other respects a man of any pre-eminent personal qualities; he did not possess commanding military skill; he was no orator, having seldom spoken in public; and though a good writer, he was not particularly distinguished in that line. His conversation, therefore, may have helped him in acquiring a mastery of the minds of men; but the real secret of his success consisted in two things – in his general superiority of intellect, and in his rich, generous, noble intuitions. He saw the truths and spoke the words, which the world wanted to see

and hear, at the right time – a little in advance of his generation, but not too much in advance so as to "dwarf himself by the distance." His sympathetic genius beat responsive to the genius of his age. His instincts were the instincts of the men of his day; more decided and pronounced than theirs, but still recognized as a prophecy of what they felt the deepest and wanted the most. All the talent, all the cunning, all the selfish calculation of the world could not have enabled him to reach the heights which he attained by the simple and consistent utterance of his nature. He conquered, as Emerson says in speaking of the force of character over and above mere force of some special faculty, because his arrival any where altered the face of affairs. "Oh, Iole, how did you know that Hercules was a God?" "Because," answered Iole, "I was content the moment my eyes fell upon him. When I beheld Theseus, I desired that I might see him offer battle, or at least guide his horses in the chariot race; but Hercules did not wait for a contest; he conquered whether he stood or walked, or sat, or whatever thing he did."

Happy in his life, Jefferson was no less happy in his death, for he went peacefully to rest on the fiftieth anniversary of the great day which he had done so much to make great, the Jubilee of our national freedom, – when the shouts of the people, as they ascended from the innumerable vales, to his receding ears, must have sounded as a prelude to the swelling voices of posterity.

HANCOCK

In the mouths of the people of New England, and indeed throughout the United States, the name of John Hancock has become a household word. In the State of Massachusetts, where he was born, lived, and died, and in the affairs of which he took, for five-and-twenty years, so very active and leading a part, he enjoyed a degree and a permanence of popularity never yet obtained by any other man. And yet we may observe and the same thing may be noted in other and more recent instances – a remarkable fact that deserves to be pondered – that his high degree of popularity was not at all dependent upon any peculiar embodiment or manifestation on his part of the more prevailing and characteristic traits of the community about him. Indeed the popular favor which Hancock enjoyed would seem to have been determined, as the attachment of individuals so often is, and as has happened also in other notable instances, rather by the attraction of opposites.

And yet Hancock's line of descent was such as might naturally enough have inspired the expectation of finding in him a good many more marks of the old puritan temper and manners than he ever exhibited. From the days of the first settlement of New England, down to the period of the Revolution and afterwards, the "ministers" constituted a sort of clerical nobility, enjoying a very high degree of influence and consideration; and

it is to forefathers of that order, that a large part of the most distinguished and influential New England families may trace their origin. The elder sons of these ministers, commonly, and the younger ones often, were educated to the profession of their fathers, long regarded in New England as the most certain road to distinction, whether spiritual or temporal. But as the demand for ministers was limited, and as their families were generally pretty large, many of their sons found it necessary to engage in the avocations of civil life, in which they not uncommonly attained to wealth and high social positions. Yet, for the most part, however zealous and successful they might be in the pursuit of temporal objects, they still continued to exhibit pretty evident marks of their clerical descent and breeding in a certain stiff, cold, and austere gravity, if not, indeed, in a certain sanctimonious air even in the very act of concluding the very tightest and sharpest of bargains; – all the attributes, in fact, comprehensively and impressively conveyed to an inhabitant of New England by the title of *Deacon*, which office, as if still clinging to the horns of the altar, they often filled; thus becoming pillars and supports of that church of which their fathers had been the candlesticks.

The grandfather of John Hancock, himself called John, was for more than fifty years, as if by a sort of vaticination of the future, minister of Lexington, near to Concord; thus associating with that of Hancock another name, now to all American ears so familiar as the scene of the first revolutionary bloodshed. We are told by a biographer of this first John Hancock,

that he possessed "a facetious temper," but in the grim old portrait which still hangs on the walls of his grandson's family mansion-house, very small traces of facetiousness appear; and so far as physiognomy goes, we should be rather inclined to look to his grandmother, to whose accompanying portrait the artist has given a fine open countenance, with something of a magnificent and voluptuous style of beauty, for the source of those social qualities and captivating manners by which their famous grandson was distinguished. The minister of Lexington had two sons, both also ministers, one of whom became his father's colleague. The other, the father of our John Hancock, was settled at Braintree, near Boston, in that part of it which now constitutes the town of Quincy; and it was here that in the year 1737 our John Hancock was born, only a short distance from the birth-place of John Adams, who was some two years his senior. The old house in which the future patriot first saw the light was destroyed by an accidental fire previous to the Revolution; and the land on which it had stood coming subsequently into the possession of John Adams, he presented it to the town of Quincy as a site for a future academy.

At the age of six or seven years, the young John Hancock was left without a father; but in his uncle, Thomas Hancock, he found a guardian and protector, who not only loved him, but was able to assist him. Thomas Hancock early in life had been placed as an apprentice to a Boston stationer, and had afterwards set up in that line of business for himself: but subsequently

extending the sphere of his operations, he became one of the most eminent and successful merchants of New England. As he had no children, he adopted, as his own, his young nephew, whose affable and joyous temper had not failed to make him dear to his uncle, as they did to so many others; and having sent him to Harvard College, where he graduated at the early age of seventeen, he took him afterwards into his counting-house to be initiated into the mysteries of merchandise; and in due season admitted him as a partner. It was, perhaps, as well on business as for pleasure, or general improvement, that the young Hancock visited England, whither he went in company with the returning Governor Pownall, whose taste for social enjoyment was similar to his own, and where he saw the funeral of George II. and the coronation of George III., little thinking at that moment how active a part he was himself soon to take in curtailing the limits of the British monarchy, and in snatching from the young king's crown its brightest jewel.

Thomas Hancock, the uncle, died in 1764, leaving behind him a fortune amassed by his judicious and successful mercantile enterprises, of not less than $350,000, one of the largest ever acquired in Boston, up to that time, though small in comparison with several of the present day, when even ten times as much may be produced by combined good fortune, tact, and perseverance. Thomas Hancock bestowed by his will some considerable legacies for charitable purposes, among others a thousand pounds to Harvard College to endow a professorship

of oriental languages, being thus, as the historian of the college assures us, the first native American to endow a professorship in any literary institution; – but the great bulk of his fortune he bequeathed to his favorite nephew, $250,000 at once, and a reversionary interest in $100,000 more, of which his widow was to enjoy the use during her life.

Thus in 1764, at the early age of twenty-seven, and just upon the eve of the commencement of the revolutionary disputes with the mother country, John Hancock came into possession of one of the largest fortunes in the province.

Yet, though this large estate was an instrument and a stepping-stone, without the help of which Hancock would never have attained to that social and political distinction which he coveted and enjoyed so much, yet without his rare personal gifts and accomplishments it would have been wholly unavailing to that end; and so far from qualifying him, would have disqualified him, as it did so many other of the rich men of that time, for playing the conspicuous part he did in political affairs. Though for some time after his uncle's death he continued in business as a merchant, there were others who knew much better than he how to increase estates, already in the popular estimate – especially considering the use made of them – quite too large. Indeed, his business operations do not seem to have had mainly or primarily in view the making of money; for though he started new enterprises, going largely into ship-building, it was rather, at least so Hutchinson insinuates, as a politician than as a capitalist,

looking more to the number of people he employed, and the increase thereby of his influence and popularity, than to the enlargement of his already plentiful fortune. There were others also who knew much better than he how to keep what they had, at least as they thought, men who used no less economy in spending their money than they or their fathers had done in acquiring it. But although the rich man who keeps his capital entire, and even increasing, is, in some sense, certainly a public benefactor, yet the fountain that overflows, sending forth a copious stream which the thirsty passers-by are all free to drink from, or at least to look at, is always more joyfully seen and more pleasingly remembered – even though it does run the risk of some time running dry – than the deep well, whose water is hardly visible, and which, though quite inexhaustible, yet for want of any kind of a bucket that can be made to sink into it, or any rope long enough to draw such a bucket up, is very little available to the parched throats of the fainting wayfarers, who, in the spirit and with the feelings of Tantalus, are thus rather disposed to curse than to bless it.

To be able to make money is, at least in New England, a very common accomplishment, to be able to keep it not a rare one; but very few have understood so well as Hancock did, how to make the most of it in the way of spending it, obtaining from it, as he did, the double gratification of satisfying his own private inclinations, at the same time that he promoted his political views by the hold that he gained on the favor and good-will of his fellow-citizens.

He possessed, indeed, in a degree, those tastes which wealth is best able to gratify, and to the gratification of which it is most essential. In the very face and eyes of the puritanical opinions and the staid and ultra-sober habits of New England, he delighted in splendid furniture, fine clothes, showy equipages, rich wines, good dinners, gay company, cards, dances, music, and all sorts of festivities. Nothing pleased him so much as to have his house full of guests to share with him in these enjoyments, and few were better qualified, by winning manners, graceful and affable address, a ready wit, a full flow of spirits, and a keen enjoyment of the whole thing, to act the part of master of the feast. But while thus luxuriously inclined, he had no disposition for gross debauch: and the presence of ladies at all his entertainments, while it seemed to give to them a new zest, banished from his house that riotous dissipation into which mere male gatherings are so certain to sink; and which in times past, in New England, made the idea of gross dissipation almost inseparable from that of social enjoyment, nor even yet is the distinction between them fully apprehended by every body.

Among other property which Hancock had inherited from his uncle, was a stone mansion-house, still standing, and now in the very centre of the city of Boston, but which then was looked upon as quite retired and almost in the country. This house, which was built about the year that Hancock was born, fronts eastwardly on Boston Common, since so elaborately improved and converted into so beautiful a park, with its gravel walks,

trees, and smooth-shaven lawns, but which was then a *common* in the old English sense of the word, a common pasture for the cows of the neighbors, and a training field for the militia, with very few improvements except a single gravel walk and two or three rows of trees along Tremont-street. This house was situated a little west of the central and highest summit of that triple hill, which had early acquired for the peninsula of Boston the name of Trimountain, – since shortened into Tremont, and preserved in the name of the street above mentioned, which central summit was, from an early period, known as Beacon Hill, a name preserved in that of Beacon-street. This name was derived from the use to which this highest central summit had been put from a very early period – materials being always kept in readiness upon the top of it for kindling a bonfire, as a means of alarming the country round in case of invasion or other danger. After having been a good deal graded down, this summit is now occupied as a site for the State House, which, with its conspicuous dome, crowns and overlooks the whole city.

It was in this mansion-house of his uncle's, which seems as if by a sort of attraction to have drawn the State House to its side, that Hancock continued to live except when absent at Philadelphia in attendance on the Continental Congress; and not content with its original dimensions, to afford more room for his numerous guests, he built at one end of it a wooden addition, since removed, containing a dining-room, dancing-hall, and other like conveniences. It was here Hancock, assisted by

his amiable and accomplished wife, who entered into all his tastes and feelings, and who contributed her full share to give expression and realization to them, presided over so many social dinner parties and gay assemblages, dressed out, both host and guests, in that rich costume which Copley, who was one of Hancock's near neighbors, loved so well to paint, and of which his pencil has transmitted to us so vivid an idea. Nor did he show himself abroad with less display than he exhibited at home, his custom being to ride on public occasions in a splendid carriage drawn by six beautiful bays, and attended by several servants in livery.

While the public attention was thus drawn upon him by a display which at once attracted and gratified the eyes of the multitude, whose envy at that time there was less fear than now of exciting, and by a generous and free hospitality, the more captivating for not being either indigenous or common, the part which Hancock took in the rising disputes with the mother country converted him into that popular idol, which he continued to be for the remainder of his life; and which, to one so greedy as he was of honor and applause, must have been in the highest degree gratifying. It is indeed not uncommon to depreciate the public services of such men as Hancock, by ascribing all to vanity and the love of distinction; as if without the impulse of these motives any great efforts would be made to serve the public! Worthy indeed of all honor are those men in whom these impulses take so honorable a direction; and happy the nation able

to purchase such services at so cheap a rate!

In 1766, two years after his uncle's death, Hancock was chosen, along with James Otis, Samuel Adams, and Thomas Cushing, one of the four representatives from Boston to the General Court. The seizure, two years after, of his sloop Liberty, for alleged violations of the revenue laws, in evading the payment of duties on a cargo of wine imported from Madeira, closely and personally identified him with the resistance then making throughout the colonies to the attempt to collect a revenue in America by parliamentary authority alone. This seizure led to a riot which figures in all the histories of that period, by which the commissioners of the customs were driven from the town, and in consequence of which two or three British regiments were ordered to Boston – the first step on the part of the mother country towards a military enforcement of the authority which she claimed. Hancock felt personally the consequences of this riot, in a number of libels or criminal informations filed against him in the Court of Admiralty, to recover penalties to the amount of three or four hundred thousand dollars, for violations of the revenue laws. "It seemed," writes John Adams in his Diary, and he had ample opportunity to know, for he was retained as Hancock's counsel, "as if the officers of the court were determined to examine the whole town as witnesses." In hopes to fish out some evidence against him; they interrogated many of his near relations and most intimate friends. They even threatened to summon his aged and venerable aunt: nor did those annoyances

cease till the battle of Lexington, the siege of Boston, and the expulsion of the British from that town shut up the Admiralty Court, and brought the prosecution, and British authority along with it, to an end.

At the commencement of the disputes with the mother country, the sentiment against the right of parliament to impose taxes on the colonies had seemed to be almost unanimous. The only exceptions were a few persons holding office under the crown. The rich especially, this being a question that touched the pocket, were very loud in their protests against any such exercise of parliamentary authority. But as the dispute grew more warm and violent, threatening to end in civil commotions, the rich, not doubting that the mother country would triumph in the end, and fearing the loss of their entire property in the attempt to save a part of it, began to draw back; thus making much more conspicuous than ever the position of Hancock as a leader of the popular party. Indeed there was hardly a wealthy man in Boston, he and Bowdoin excepted, both of whom had not accumulated but inherited their property, who did not end with joining the side of the mother country. And the same thing may be observed of Massachusetts, and indeed of New England generally. Of all the larger and better-looking mansion-houses, of eighty years old and upwards, still standing in the vicinity of Boston, of which the number is considerable, there are very few that did not originally belong to some old tory who forfeited his property out of his very anxiety to preserve it. Hancock's acceptance of the command

of the company of cadets or governor's guard, whence the title of colonel by which for some time he was known; his acting with that company as an escort, at the funeral of Lieutenant-Governor Oliver, who was very obnoxious to the patriots; his refusing to go all lengths with Samuel Adams in the controversy with Hutchinson as to the governor's right to call the General Court together, elsewhere than in Boston; and the circumstance that although he had been several times before negatived as a member of the council, Hutchinson had at length allowed his name on the list of counsellors proposed by the General Court; these and perhaps some other circumstances excited indeed some suspicions that Hancock also was growing lukewarm to the popular cause. But these he took care to dissipate by declining to sit as counsellor, by acting as orator at the Anniversary of the Boston Massacre, and by accepting, not long after, an appointment as one of the delegates to the Continental Congress. The oration above alluded to, delivered in March, 1774, and which Hancock's enemies pretended was written for him by Dr. Cooper, was pronounced by John Adams, who heard it, "an eloquent, pathetic, and spirited performance."

"The composition," so he wrote in his diary, "the pronunciation, the action, all exceeded the expectation of every body. [These last were certainly not Cooper's.] They exceeded even mine, which were very considerable. Many of the sentiments came with great propriety from him. His invective, particularly against a preference of riches to virtue, came from

him with a singular dignity and grace." A passage in this oration, which was afterwards printed, on the subject of standing armies, gave great offence to the British officers and soldiers by whom the town continued to be occupied, and not long after Governor Gage dismissed Hancock from his command of the company of cadets; whereupon they disbanded themselves, returning the standard which the governor on his initiation into office had presented to them.

The sensibilities of the British officers and soldiers being again excited by some parts of an oration delivered the next year by Dr. Warren, on the same anniversary, a few weeks before the battle of Lexington, a military mob beset Hancock's house and began to destroy the fences and waste the grounds. Gage sent a military guard to put a stop to their outrages.

But it was no longer safe for Hancock to remain in such close contiguity to the British troops. He was president of the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, which, in consequence of the act of parliament to modify the charter of that province, had lately assumed to themselves the power of the purse and the sword. He was also president of the provincial committee of safety, which, under authority of the Provincial Congress, had begun in good earnest to prepare for taking arms for the vindication of those rights which the men of Massachusetts claimed under the now violated and (so far as parliament had the power) abrogated Charter of the province. Under these circumstances, Hancock abandoned his house, which was

subsequently occupied by Lord Percy as his headquarters; and at the time of the march of the British troops for Concord, he was living at Lexington, in company with Samuel Adams. Indeed it was supposed that one of the objects of this march was to seize the persons of those two patriots, to whom Gage seemed to point as the authors of the collision at Lexington by the issue of a proclamation, in which pardon was offered to all who, giving over their late traitorous proceedings, would furnish proof of their repentance and of their renewed allegiance to their king, by submitting to the authority of his duly appointed governor, and of the late act of parliament: but from this pardon John Hancock and Samuel Adams were excepted, their offences being too flagrant to be passed over without condign punishment.

Before the issue of this proclamation, Hancock had already proceeded to Philadelphia, where the famous Continental Congress of 1775 was already in session, composed, to a great extent, of the same members with its predecessor of the year before, but of which he had been chosen a member in place of Bowdoin. He was a fluent and agreeable speaker, one of those who, by grace of manner, seem to add a double force and weight to all which they say; yet in that illustrious assembly there were quite a number, including John Adams, from his own State, compared with whom he could hardly have claimed rank as an orator. There were also in that assembly several able writers; the state papers emanating from whose pens were compared by Chatham to the ablest productions of the republican ages of

Greece and Rome; but Hancock was not one of those. There were men of business there who undertook, without shrinking, all the Herculean labors of organizing the army and navy, the treasury and the foreign office of the new confederation – but neither in this line does Hancock appear to have been greatly distinguished. And yet it was not long before, by his appointment as president of that body, he rose to a position in Continental affairs, no less conspicuous than that which we have seen him exercising in those of his own province. Circumstances led indeed to this situation, quite apart from Hancock's personal qualifications, and yet had he not possessed those qualifications in a high degree, he would never have had the opportunity of immortalizing himself as he has done by his famous signature at the head of the Declaration of Independence, – a signature well calculated to give a strong impression with those who judge of personal character by handwriting, of the decided temper and whole-hearted energy of the man. Virginia, as the most populous and wealthy of the colonies, had received the compliment of furnishing the President of the Congress of 1774; and Peyton Randolph – a planter and lawyer, an elderly gentleman of the old school, formerly attorney general of that province, and in Governor Dinwiddie's time, sent by the Assembly on a special message to England, to complain of the governor for the fees he exacted on patents of land – had been first selected for that distinguished station. He had again been chosen as President of the new Congress; but being also speaker of the Virginia

House of Burgesses, and that body having been called together by Lord Dunmore, in what proved to be its last meeting, to consider Lord North's conciliatory propositions, it became necessary for Randolph to return home. His place in Congress was filled, in compliance with an arrangement previously made by the House of Burgesses, by no less distinguished a successor than Thomas Jefferson; but in filling up the vacant seat of President of Congress, during what was then regarded as but the temporary absence of Randolph, it was natural enough to look to Massachusetts, the next province to Virginia in population and wealth, no ways behind her in zeal for the cause, and, as the result proved, far her superior in military capabilities. Nor among the delegates present from Massachusetts, was there any one who seemed, on the whole, so well fitted for the station, or likely to be at all so satisfactory to the delegates from the other States, as John Hancock. Had James Bowdoin been present, he would perhaps have been more acceptable to the great body of the members than Hancock, as being less identified than he was with violent measures. But though chosen a delegate to the first Congress, the sickness of Bowdoin's wife had prevented his attendance; and the same cause still operating to keep him at home, John Hancock had been appointed, as we have mentioned, in his place. Of Hancock's four colleagues, all of whom were older men than himself, Samuel Adams certainly, if not John Adams also, might have disputed with him the palm of zeal and activity in the revolutionary cause; but not one of them risked so

much as he did, at least in the judgment of his fellow-members from the middle and southern provinces, who were generally men of property. He alone, of all the New England delegates, had a fortune to lose; and while his wealthy southern colleagues looked with some distrust upon the Adamses, regarding them perhaps a little in the light, if we may be pardoned so coarse an illustration, of the monkey in the fable, who wished to rake his chestnuts out of the fire at the risk and expense of other people's fingers, no such idea could attach to Hancock, who, in point of fortune, had probably as much to lose as any other member, except perhaps John Dickinson – for the wealthy Charles Carrol, of Maryland, had not a seat in the Congress. At the same time Hancock's genial manners and social spirit, seemed to the members from the southern and middle provinces to make him quite one of themselves, an associate in pleasure and social intercourse, as well as in business; while the austere spirit and laborious industry of the Adamses threatened to inflict upon them the double hardship of all work and no play. But while the moderate members found, as they supposed, in the fortune which Hancock had at stake a pledge that he would not hurry matters to any violent extremes; the few also most disposed to press matters to a final breach, were well satisfied to have as president, one who had shown himself in his own province so energetic, prompt, decisive, and thorough.

Yet Hancock's colleagues, and the members generally from New England, never entirely forgave the preference which had

been thus early shown to him; and upon many of the sectional questions and interests which soon sprung up, and by which the Continental Congress was at times so seriously belittled and so greatly distracted, Hancock was often accused of deserting the interests of New England, and of going with the southern party. The internal and secret history of the Continental Congress or rather of the temporary and personal motives by which the conduct of its members, as to a variety of details, was influenced, remains so much in obscurity that it is not easy to ascertain the precise foundation of those charges, reiterated as they are in letters and other memoirs of those times; but on the whole, no reason appears to regard them otherwise than as the natural ebullition of disappointed partisanship against a man, who, in the struggle of contending factions and local interests, strove to hold the balance even, and who did not believe, with Samuel Adams and some others, that political wisdom was limited to New England alone.

The President of Congress, in those times, was regarded as the personal representative of that body and of the sovereignty of the Union; and in that respect filled, to a certain degree, in the eye of the nation and of the world, the place now occupied by the President of the United States, though sharing, in no degree, the vast patronage and substantial power attached to the latter office. In his capacity of personal representative of the nation the President of Congress kept open house and a well-spread table, to which members of Congress, officers of the army, attachés of the

diplomatic corps foreign and domestic, distinguished strangers, every body in fact who thought themselves to be any body – a pretty large class, at least in America – expected invitations; whereby was imposed upon that officer pretty laborious social duties, in addition to his public and political ones, which were by no means trifling. All these duties of both classes, Hancock continued to discharge with great assiduity and to general satisfaction, for upwards of two years and a half, through a period at which the power and respectability of the Continental Congress was at its greatest height, before the downfall of the paper money and the total exhaustion of the credit of the nation at home and abroad had reduced the representative of the sovereignty of the nation to a pitiful dependence on the bounty of France, and upon requisitions on the States, to which very little attention was paid. Feeling all the dignity of his position, Hancock took one of the largest houses in Philadelphia, where he lived in profuse hospitality, and all upon advances made out of his own pocket. After his day, it became necessary for Congress to allow their president a certain annual stipend out of the public treasury to support the expenses of his household. In Hancock's time, this was not thought of; and it was not till near the close of the war, after the precedent had been established in the case of his successors, that he put in any claim for the reimbursement of his expenses.

There is a story, that Hancock, when chosen President of Congress, blushed and modestly hung back, and was drawn into

the chair only by the exertion of some gentle force on the part of the brawny Harrison, a member from Virginia, and afterwards governor of that State. And yet, according to John Adams, Hancock was hardly warm in his seat when he aspired to a much more distinguished position. He expected to have been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the American armies, and displayed in his countenance, so Adams says in his Diary, the greatest vexation and disappointment when Washington was named for that station. It is certain that he had some military aspirations, for he wrote to Washington shortly after his assumption of command, requesting that some place in the army might be kept for him, to which Washington replied with compliments at his zeal, but with apprehension that he had no place at his disposal worthy of Colonel Hancock's acceptance. Not long after his return to Boston, his military ardor revived. He procured himself to be chosen a major-general of the Massachusetts militia, and he marched the next summer (1778) at the head of his division to join the expedition against Newport, in which the French fleet and troops just arrived under D'Estaing, a detachment from Washington's army under Sullivan, Greene, and La Fayette, and the militia from the neighboring States were to co-operate. But D'Estaing suffered himself to be drawn out to sea by the English fleet, which had appeared off Newport for that express purpose, and after a slight running engagement, the fleet, while struggling for the weather gauge, were separated by a violent storm, in which some of D'Estaing's ships were dismasted and

others greatly damaged, so that he judged it necessary to put into Boston to refit. The American army meanwhile had crossed to Rhode Island, and established itself before Newport, but as Count D'Estaing could not be persuaded to return, it became necessary to abandon the island, not without a battle to cover the retreat. With this expedition, Hancock's military career seems to have terminated; but on arriving at Boston, he found ample work on hand better adapted perhaps to his talents than the business of active warfare. Sullivan, of a hot and impetuous temper, and excessively vexed at D'Estaing's conduct, was even imprudent enough to give expression to his feelings in general orders. It was like touching a spark to tinder, and the American army before New-York, which shared the general's feelings, encouraged by his example, "broke out," so Greene wrote to Washington, "in clamorous strains." The same disappointment was bitterly felt also at Boston; for the British occupation of Newport had long been an eyesore to New England, occasioning great expense in keeping up militia to watch the enemy there, and in projects for their expulsion; and the prevailing dissatisfaction at the conduct of the French admiral soon found expression in a serious riot between the populace of the town and the sailors of the French fleet, threatening to revive all those violent prejudices against the French, fostered in the colonies for near a hundred years, and which the recent alliance with France had glossed over indeed, but had not wholly subdued. Upon this occasion, Hancock exerted himself with zeal and success to prevent this

ill-temper, which had broken out between the classes least accustomed to restrain their feelings or the expression of them, from spreading any higher. He opened his house to the French officers, who, delighted at the opportunity of social enjoyment and female society, kept it full from morning till night, and by his "unwearied pains," so La Fayette wrote to Washington, did much to heal the breach which Sullivan's imprudence had so dangerously aggravated. On this occasion, at least, if on no other, Hancock's love of gayety, and of social pleasures, proved very serviceable to his country.

During his absence at Philadelphia, his popularity at home had undergone no diminution, and he soon resumed, as a member of the council, on which since the breach with Gage the executive administration had devolved, a leading influence in the State administration; and when at last, after two trials, a constitution was sanctioned by the people, he was chosen by general consent the first governor under it. This was a station of vastly more consideration then than now. Under the old confederation, at least after the Continental Congress, by the exhaustion of its credit and the repudiation of its bills, had no longer money at command, the States were sovereign in fact as well as in words; while all that reverence which under the old system had attached to the royal governors, had been transferred to their first republican successors. Since that period the State governments have sunk into mere municipalities for the administration of local affairs, and all eyes being constantly turned towards Washington,

the executive offices of the States, even the station of governor, are no longer regarded except as stepping-stones to something higher.

Hancock discharged his office as governor to good acceptance for five years, when he voluntarily retired, making way for James Bowdoin, who might be regarded in some respects as his rival, the head of a party, perhaps more intelligent, and certainly far more select, than that great body of the population by whom Hancock was supported; but whom, so at least his opponents said, he rather studied to follow than aspired to lead. During Bowdoin's administration, occurred Shays' insurrection, one of the most interesting and instructive incidents in the history of Massachusetts, but into the particulars of which we have not space here to enter. This insurrection, of which the great object was the cancelling of debts, an object which the States now practically accomplish by means of insolvent laws, was thought to involve, either as participators more or less active, or at least as favorers and sympathizers, not less than a third part of the population of the State. The active measures taken at Bowdoin's suggestion for putting down the insurgents by an armed force, and the political disabilities and other punishments inflicted upon them after their defeat, did not at all tend to increase Bowdoin's popularity with this large portion of the people. Though Hancock's health had not allowed him to take his seat in the Continental Congress, to which he had again been chosen a delegate, and by which he had, in his absence, been

again selected as their president – yet, weary of retirement, he suffered himself to be brought forward as a candidate, and to be elected as governor over Bowdoin's head – a procedure never forgiven by what may be called the party of property, against which the insurrection of Shays had been aimed, whose members thenceforth did not cease, in private at least, to stigmatize Hancock as a mere demagogue, if not indeed almost a Shaysite himself. Nor indeed is it impossible, that the governor, with all his property, had some personal sympathies with that party. He, like them, was harassed with debts, which, as we have seen in the case of the college, he was not much inclined, and probably not very able, to bring to a settlement. He still had large possessions in lands and houses in Boston, but at this moment his property was unsalable, and to a considerable extent unproductive; and a stop law might have suited his convenience not less than that of the embarrassed farmers in the interior, who had assembled under the leadership of Shays to shut up the courts and put a stop to suits. This scheme, however, had been effectually put down prior to Hancock's accession to office, and it only remained for him to moderate, by executive clemency, the penalties inflicted on the suppressed insurgents – a policy which the state of the times and the circumstances of the case very loudly demanded, however little it might be to the taste of the more imperious leaders of the party by which those penalties had been inflicted. But even this same party might acknowledge a great obligation to Hancock for the assistance which they soon after obtained from

him in securing the ratification by Massachusetts of that federal constitution under which we now so happily live. Still governor of the State, he was chosen a delegate from Boston to the State convention, called to consider the proposed constitution: and though incapacitated by sickness from taking his seat till near the close of the session, he was named its president. The federal constitution had been already ratified by five States, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, and Connecticut. But Virginia, New York, and North Carolina, were known to be strongly against it, and its rejection by Massachusetts would, in all probability, prevent its acceptance by the number of States required to give it effect. The convention was very equally divided, and the result hung long in doubt. At last Hancock came upon the floor and proposed some amendments, principally in the nature of a bill of rights, agreed to probably by concert out of doors, to be suggested for the approval of Congress and adoption by the States under the provision for amendments contained in the constitution, and most of which were afterwards adopted. Thus sweetened, the constitution was fairly forced down the reluctant throat of the convention; and unlike the typical book of St. John, though so bitter in the mouth, it has fortunately proved sweet enough and very nourishing in the digestion.

On the occasion of Washington's visit to Boston, subsequently to his inauguration as President, a curious struggle took place between him and Hancock, or perhaps we ought rather to say, between the Governor of Massachusetts and the President of the

United States, on a question of etiquette. Hancock, as Governor of Massachusetts, insisted upon the first call, a precedence which Washington, as President of the United States, refused to yield. Finding himself obliged to succumb, Hancock's gout and other complicated diseases served him for once in good stead; for in the note which he finally sent, announcing his intention to wait upon Washington, they answered as a convenient excuse for not having fulfilled that duty before.

Some two or three years after, we find Governor Hancock, out of deference to the puritanical opinions and laws of the State, involved in another noticeable controversy, but one into which he could not have entered with any great heart. Shortly after the adoption of the federal constitution, a company of stage-players had made their appearance in Boston, and though the laws still prohibited theatrical exhibitions, encouraged by the countenance of the gayer part of the population, they commenced the performance of plays, which they advertised in the newspapers as "Moral Lectures." Some of their friends among the townsfolks had even built a temporary theatre for their accommodation, a trampling under foot of the laws, which seemed the more reprehensible as the legislature, though applied to for that purpose, had twice refused to repeal that prohibitory statute. "To the legislature which met shortly after," we quote from the fourth volume of Hildreth's History of the United States, "Governor Hancock gave information that 'a number of aliens and foreigners had entered the State, and in the metropolis

of the government, under advertisements insulting to the habits and education of the citizens, had been pleased to invite them to, and to exhibit before such as attended, stage-plays, interludes, and theatrical entertainments, under the style and appellation of Moral Lectures.' All which, as he complained, had been suffered to go on without any steps taken to punish a most open breach of the laws, and a most contemptuous insult to the powers of government. Shortly after this denunciation by the governor, suddenly one night, in the midst of the performance of 'The School for Scandal,' the sheriff of the county appeared on the stage, arrested the actors, and broke up the performances. When the examination came on, having procured able counsel (one of whom, if we mistake not, was the then young Harrison Gray Otis), the actors were discharged on the ground that the arrest was illegal, the warrant not having been sworn to. This error was soon corrected, and a second arrest brought the performances to a close. But the legislature, finding that the sentiment of the town of Boston was strong against the law, and that a new and permanent theatre was in the course of erection, repealed the prohibitory act a few months after."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.