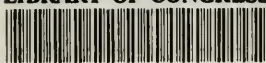


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George Washington



AN ADDRESS

— by —

Rev. William E. Barton, D. D., LL. D.

Minister of the First Church of Oak Park

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By the Rev. William E. Barton, D. D., LL. D.

Democracy is more than a form of government: it is a philosophy of life. Governments and forms of government are not ends in themselves, but means to an end. That end, as defined in our Declaration of Independence, is the promotion of the inalienable rights of mankind, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. If any government fails to promote that end it is the right of the people to abrogate it; if any form of government proves to be subversive of that end, it is the right of the people to change it. Whether our form of government is inherently superior to other forms is to be determined, not on the basis of any theoretical advantage, but by the tests of human experience. As a method of conducting public business, a democratic form of government may be more efficient, safe and economical than another, and to that extent superior; but there are two questions still to be answered before we are assured that that particular form is best. The first relates to the welfare of the whole people. Are they more prosperous, more intelligent, more efficient, more righteous under a democratic—or, if you prefer the name, a republican form of government—than under a monarchy, limited or autocratic? And the other question is: Does this republican form of government produce a higher type of manhood than is produced under other systems of government?

With the first of these questions we are not now dealing directly; but we are to seek some basis for an answer to the second of them in the lives of certain characteristic types of American manhood. A republican form of government, to justify itself, must do more than to prove that it provides a convenient and efficient method of transacting public business. It must show the fruits of its superiority by the production and the recognition of great leaders. A republic can never be safe, no matter how wise and prosperous its people are, if its leaders are weak men or designing demagogues. Just now, when autocracy has been driven from the throne, it belongs to America, which stands before the world as the harbinger of a world-wide democracy, to prove the worth of its system of government in the nobility of its leadership. That is why we are devoting three Sunday evenings to the contemplation of three successive types of American character. They are three very different men, but men with these two elements in common—first that each of them became the President of the United States, and at the close of his term of office was re-elected. The other is that each of these three men came, by no fiat of superior

authority, but by common consent of the people, to stand, each in his own generation, as typical, and in many respects as the typical American, the foremost exponent in his generation of American life and character.

I present to you, therefore, three men, before whose uncrowned manhood kings have come to bow reverently, and in whom the world has successively discovered the genius and prophecy of the American ideal—George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt.

Perspective For a Dispassionate View of Washington

It is more than a hundred and twenty years since George Washington died. The last of his companions at arms has been mustered out. The last of the goodly company of those who knew him in life and whose later years were devoted to recalling memories and industriously inventing myths about him has entered into rest. I cannot recall within the last dozen years a newspaper account of the death of any of his body servants. We are beyond the point where anyone can rise up out of the void and trouble our souls with new facts about the career of Washington. The evidence is all in.

We are able to pass a discriminating judgment upon the character of Washington as his early biographers could not possibly have done, and to do this about as dispassionately as will be possible to future generations. This is well for us. Great men are often lost to view amid the foothills of their own contemporaries. I once sailed up the Columbia River until it was impossible to discern the top of Mount Hood; but at a distance of twenty miles the wedge of its glistening summit cleaves the blue heaven at an altitude which sinks all lower hills into insignificance. One requires distance and perspective if he would judge of the altitude of anything much above his own height.

There was a time, covering perhaps the first half century after the death of Washington, when excessive adulation characterized the ordinary estimate of his life. It is hard for us to read with patience the panegyrics of that period. They move us as little as Canova's statue of Washington in the toga of a Roman senator. It is good sculpture, but we have lost the man; and have gained instead a barren and unsatisfying substitute created by the eulogists. To this epoch of apotheosis in popular thought there succeeded another and reactionary epoch. I very well remember hearing Albion W. Tourgee in a lecture speak with something hardly less than scorn both of the generalship and the statesmanship of Washington. He ridiculed the vanity of Washington in having his horses' hoofs blacked and not forgetting to charge the government with the dollar that it cost him, and demanded to know how Washington might have handled an army like that of General Grant.

We have succeeded to a third and more happy period than either. Washington to us is not the demigod, but a very human

man with limitations and weaknesses which we freely acknowledge. But, on the other hand, he has ceased to be a commonplace hero. We are still living in the lingering smoke of the world-war, but we are far enough from our Civil War with its galaxy of strong and able soldiers to see them also in perspective, and to estimate Washington somewhat more dispassionately than was possible thirty or forty years ago. We have had generals enough and Presidents enough and statesmen enough to afford us ample comparisons, and to enable us to pass upon the name and character of our first great general and President and statesman as was not possible to any earlier generation.

The Real George Washington

It might, indeed, be said that there is one characteristic of the time in which we live unfavorable to the proper estimate of a character like Washington. There is prevalent at the present time a passion for turning men's reputations inside out. We have a flood of books on the real George Washington and the real Benjamin Franklin. It has come to be popular to prove that Aaron Burr and Benedict Arnold were the real patriots, and to overturn any hero-worshipping assumption that any good man was as good as has been thought, or any great man unqualifiedly great. It takes real courage to speak on George Washington without producing any evidence that militates against his true greatness. Painful as it is, I am compelled to confess that the George Washington of whom I am to speak is the Washington already familiar to you. I have no new and startling facts to disclose. So far as I know it was Washington and not John Hancock who drove the British from Boston, and it was Benedict Arnold and not Washington who betrayed West Point. If there is any real George Washington I have been able to discover him only in the Washington familiar to us from our childhood; and I believe that estimate of his life and character which exists in the popular mind is essentially the true estimate; far more true than that of a petty school of historians who exhibit amazing ability in discerning a knot-hole in a barn door without ever finding the barn.

It is wholly unjust to an historical character to demand that he be judged by any other standard than that of the age in which he lived. We have no moral right to ask how Washington would have handled Grant's army at Lookout Mountain, or that of Foch at the Battle of the Marne, or how he would have dealt with the diplomatic questions that beset John Hay in protecting the integrity of China, or Woodrow Wilson in dealing with the League of Nations. We do not know, and it is idle to ask, unless we also ask with what different preparation and experience and equipment Washington would probably have approached these hypothetical situations. The real question to ask is: How did George Washington face the problems of his own age? How did he handle the forces that rallied about him when he unsheathed his sword under the Cambridge elm? How did he behave in the battles which he actually fought? How did he address himself to the political situa-

tions attending the organization of a new republic? Washington at Lookout Mountain or at Chateau Thierry would have been an historic absurdity, but Washington at Dorchester Heights, at Trenton, at Princeton, was very far from being absurd. He was indeed a close approach to the sublime. Washington facing the problems of Grant or of Roosevelt or Wilson would have been an anachronism, but Washington presiding over the Continental Congress, bringing order out of chaos in a new and untried government, holding together the discordant elements in a strong but heterogeneous cabinet, and creating out of raw material a nation, that Washington was no anachronism. He was a Saul among his contemporaries—standing head and shoulders above them. He was the man for the time and the place—the man called of God to create a nation, and bequeath to posterity a new and noble ideal of national heroism and national character.

An Outline of His Life

George Washington was born in Westmoreland County, Virginia, February 22 (O. S. 11), 1732, son of Augustine and Mary (Ball) Washington. His early education was defective. He acquired a dignified and correct English style in writing, and he accumulated books in moderate numbers, but was never a great reader. He had a taste for the sea, and at one time in his boyhood had agreed to go as a sailor, but gave up the plan in deference to the desire of his mother. He studied surveying, and was fond of military pursuits. In October, 1753, he made a journey to Ohio as the messenger of Governor Dinwiddie, and on his return was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of a Virginia regiment. In 1754 he defeated a force of French and Indians at Great Meadows, and in 1755 was with Braddock when that officer's army was defeated and its general killed at Fort Duquesne, there acquitting himself with valor. On his return he was made commander of the Virginia forces, being then but twenty-three years of age.

In January, 1759, he married Martha Dandridge, widow of Daniel Parke Custis, whose own wealth, added to that which he had inherited, made him one of the richest men in the colonies. For fifteen years his life was that of the prosperous Virginia planter. He was a large slave owner, was greatly interested in the various operations of his farm, and was a consistent member and vestryman in the Episcopal Church. He was for years a member of the House of Burgesses, but as the business transacted was mostly of a local nature, there is little record of his political activity, beyond the tradition that he seldom spoke, but when he rose was always certain to speak wisely and to the point.

On the outbreak of the Revolution he was made Commander-in-Chief, and served till the end of the war, refusing all compensation except his expenses.

In 1787 he was chairman of the Constitutional Convention, and it was largely to his wisdom and tact that that body was able to complete its work successfully and to form that "more perfect union" which expressed the chief purpose of that instrument.

He was the first President of the United States, the office being made to fit the man. He served for two terms of four years each, and declining re-election, retired to his farm at Mount Vernon, where he spent his remaining years quietly and with honor. He died December 14, 1799, lamented by a grateful people; and the century that has passed since then has increased each year the esteem in which he is held by the whole world.

He was six feet and three inches tall, and weighed more than two hundred pounds, which weight he carried lightly. He was a man of dignity and probity, of courage and of high public spirit, a patriot, a Christian, a high-minded American.

Whatever the world believed about the character of the government which he fought to establish, and labored successfully to perpetuate, it saw and still sees in him the incarnation of the American ideal. For sixty-five years after his death there was no other name to stand beside his. To all questions concerning our military prowess, our statesmanship, our national character, we had one answer, and that a sufficient answer, the name and personality of George Washington.

The Beginning of the Celebration of Washington's Birthday

The birthday of Washington had begun to be celebrated while he was alive and in command of the armies. As early as 1781 the custom began. We find scarcely any reference to it in Washington's own voluminous correspondence, but gather the information entirely from other sources. At first the celebration was on the 11th of February, observing the old style date. Accordingly, on February 12, 1781, Count Rochambeau, writing to General Washington from Newport says: "Yesterday was the anniversary of your Excellency's birth. We have to celebrate that birthday today by reason of the Lord's day, and we will celebrate it with the sole regret that your Excellency be not a witness of the effusion and gladness of our hearts." Washington, who was then at New Windsor, N. Y., in winter quarters, watching his opportunity to strike the final blow which later he dealt at Yorktown, briefly acknowledged the "flattering distinction," and spoke of it as "an honor for which I dare not attempt to express my gratitude."

After the British had departed, and the war had closed, a great celebration of the day occurred in 1784. In New York City, which was still in ashes as the result of the great fire of 1776, church bells rang, flags decorated the houses, a salute of thirteen guns was fired, and the day was celebrated, as the old records run, "with hilarity and manly decorum." The number thirteen was prominent in all the early celebrations. Thirteen guns were fired, and thirteen toasts were drunk. On the 22nd of February, 1800, was celebrated the memorial of Washington by an act of Congress, for Washington had died just before the old year went out, and for several years something of sadness tinged the anniversaries. Even now, every Potomac River steamer passing Mount Vernon tolls its bell in sorrow that so great and good a man could die. But the funereal

character of the day soon passed, and now uninterruptedly for more than 100 years this day has been celebrated as a festival of patriotism. No anniversary of the birth of Washington should pass without the reverent mention of his name.

The Youth of Washington

Let us remember the lesson of Washington's youth. I hold no brief for the biography of the Rev. Mason Weems. From the standpoint of critical scholarship it has nothing to commend it, and in some respects it deserves the mirthful scorn with which it has come to be regarded. Yet before it is wholly laughed out of court, let it be remembered that it was published within a few months of Washington's death, by a minister who had known him well, and it met with apparent approval from Washington's relatives and close friends. Concerning even the "little hatchet story," which has been the subject of more jokes than any other incident in American history, this deserves to be remembered, that the story is neither unworthy nor inherently improbable. Even if Mr. Weems colored it—as he probably did—it may well have had a substantial basis of fact. But if that incident itself were wholly false (and there is no reason why we should think so) it was a story which could not have gained currency in the neighborhood where Washington had lived unless it had been believed by those who knew him that from his boyhood he had borne a reputation for truthfulness.

Those precise and perhaps somewhat priggish rules which Washington laboriously copied in his youth were certainly not original with him, and he never pretended that they were; but he made them his own, and they are worthy principles for the guidance of aspiring youth.

We do not know very much about Washington's boyhood, but what we know is all worthy.

Attempts to Deify Washington

When we come to the manhood of Washington we meet the embarrassment of his excessive adulation at the hands of the generation immediately following his decease. Something of their feeling toward him we discover in Greenough's marble statue of Washington in classic nudity. It appeals to nothing that is normal in American life, and it wakens an irreverent, and I think not unwholesome, mirth. Greenough seems to have said in his heart: "It would be blasphemous for us to think that so great a man as Washington should ever have worn so commonplace a garment as breeches," but the average American, seeing the nearly naked Father of His Country exposed to our uncertain climate, as Greenough's heroic statue displays him, has no natural emotion of reverent admiration; on the contrary, he sees in imagination George Washington emerging from the bathroom and yelling to Martha to bring him his clothes.

Great Men As Products and Prophets of Their Times

The attempts to make Washington a deity have enlarged the material for American humor, and that is one evidence of the es-

sential sanity of the American mind. But we must be on our guard lest we permit that healthful reaction against excessive adulation to carry us to the more dangerous extreme of denying to Washington the elements of real greatness, or of assuming that he was only the natural and inevitable product of his time.

"I am well aware," said Thomas Carlyle, "that in these days hero-worship—the thing I call hero-worship—professes to have gone out, and finally ceased. This, for reasons which it will be worth while some time to inquire into, is an age that, as it were, denies the existence of great men; denies the desirableness of great men. Show our critics a great man, a Luther for example, they begin to what they call 'account' for him; not to worship him, but to take the dimensions of him, and bring him out to be a little kind of man! He was the 'creature of the time,' they say; the time did everything, he nothing—but what we, the little critic, could have done too! This seems to me but melancholy work. The time call forth? Alas, we have known the times call loudly enough for their great man; but could not find him when they called! He was not there. Providence had not sent him. The time, calling its loudest, had to go down to confusion and wreck because he could not come forth when called.

"For, if we think of it, no time need have gone to ruin, could it have found a man great enough, a man wise and good enough, with wisdom to discern truly what the time wanted—valor—to lead it on the right road thither. These are the salvation of any time. But I liken common, languid times with their unbelief, distress, perplexity, with their languid doubting characters and embarrassed circumstances, impotently crumbling down into ever worse distress toward final ruin—all this I liken to dry, dead fuel, waiting for the lightning out of Heaven that shall kindle it. The great man, with his free force direct out of God's hand, is the lightning. * * * Those are critics of small vision, I think, who cry, 'See, is it not the sticks that made the fire?' No sadder proof can be given by a man of his own littleness than his disbelief in great men. There is no sadder symptom of a generation than such general blindness to the spiritual lightning, with faith only in the heap of barren, dead fuel. It is the last consummation of unbelief. In all epochs of the world's history we shall find the Great Man to have been the indispensable saviour of his epoch—the lightning, without which the fuel never would have burnt. The history of the world, I said already, was the biography of great men."—Heroes and Hero Worship, Chapter I.

Washington As a Soldier

Let us remind ourselves of Washington's greatness as a soldier. When he unsheathed his sword in defense of American liberty under the old elm on Cambridge Common on the 3rd day of July, 1775, he had twenty-seven barrels of gunpowder with which to begin war against the greatest military and naval power upon the face of the earth. He gathered an army nominally of 14,000 men. Rarely were half of them fit for service at any one time. They were raw from their homes, restive under the restraints of camp life and fearful of the issue. The Declaration of Independence was a year ahead; as yet the soldiers were only rebels, if even they deserved the dignity of that opprobrious term. It was not yet acknowledged among them that they were fighting for independence. The issue had not been defined. They were citizens of Great Britain in rebellion against their own government. They had no flag save that which they were seeking to haul down. They had no country save that against which they had taken arms. They

had Congress and they had courage—though how they could have had both at once appears most wonderful—they had a moderate amount of trust in God and a small quantity of powder to keep dry—and they had Washington. They had few serviceable guns, and almost no bayonets. There were no sufficient provisions to feed them; there was no adequate commissary department to clothe them; there was no power that had the right to coin money. There was only the smarting sense of injustice and a hot determination to resist.

There was no sufficient power on the part of Congress in those days and no disposition to use wisely such powers as Congress possessed. The colonies were jealous of each other and jealous of any tendency toward centralization. After the first gush of enthusiasm and a realization of the full meaning of war the colonies were little inclined to tax themselves to the limit of their ability. Congress would call for troops and apportion the number to be supplied by each state. Six months later it would be found that not one of the thirteen had filled more than one-eighth of its quota. And the men at the front, hatless, shoeless, weaponless, sometimes went into action unarmed, waiting to supply themselves with guns, from their comrades who should fall.

It was nothing less than military genius which wrought that rabble into an army. If Washington was not a great general when he took command of the colonial troops in Cambridge on the 3rd day of July, 1775, he certainly had become a great general by the 17th of March following. This is what he had accomplished: He had made an army out of a mob. He had invested Boston so closely that the British troops within it were in danger of starving. He had extended his lines to the side of the city opposite Bunker Hill, and there on an eminence opposite to the scene of that earlier battle he had erected a fort by night, from which he could command the site of the harbor, and from this redoubt he compelled the evacuation of Boston. He saved his own powder and he more than doubled his supplies, by those which he captured from the British. He added to the number of his cannon; for even those from which the British had broken the trunnions were repaired by Paul Revere. He thus brought to a successful close the first year of the war, and had by this time an army of twenty-one thousand men, of whom only two thousand were sick, and from whom he had lost less than twenty men in a campaign that resulted in the capture of the most important American city with all its forts and armament. It was a great day for George Washington and for America when he marched his victorious force, no longer a mob but an army, over Boston Neck and along the street that since has borne his name. It was a great day for America; a day of solemn and religious rejoicing, and when on the following Sabbath George Washington attended divine worship it was to hear a sermon from the text

Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, the stakes whereof shall never be plucked up, neither shall any of the cords thereof

be broken. But there the Lord will be with us in majesty, a place of broad rivers and streams (wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby). For the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us.—Isaiah 33:20-22.

I have not time to follow George Washington through the long eight years from the day when first he took command at Cambridge to that on which he bade his army farewell, and some of those experiences I have hardly the heart to recall. In the early summer of 1775 Howe came back and his army with him. Washington met defeat at Long Island and in the battles about New York. Retiring across the Hudson River, Washington is said to have shed tears—and well he may have done so—as he saw that portion of the army still on the eastern bank falling before the British bayonets. Then came the retreat through the Jerseys with an army footsore, starving and depleted, with winter coming on and hope almost dead. Then came the horrors of Valley Forge and of the winters in Morris County. Those were the days when desertions were many and enlistments were few, when Washington dared not give open battle and there was hardly left to him a place for retreat. Then came the Conway conspiracy, and the ambition of Gates, and the cowardice of Lee and the treason of Arnold, and a series of persecutions so petty, so bitter, so malignant, that it is amazing how Washington survived them. Then, too, came defeats like that at Brandywine, and battles of uncertain meaning like that at Monmouth. But, too, there were victories like that at Trenton, when he crossed the river amid the floating ice and fell upon the enemy and captured a thousand men; there were splendid achievements in strategy as at Princeton, where, slipping out of the trap that Cornwallis had set for him, he fell upon the British rear and won a brilliant battle over a superior foe.

It is easy for us as we read these events in the light of the issue to keep up our courage and understand the triumph that finally came, but it was a very different thing for Washington. Congress was weak, meddlesome, and vacillating. The soldiers were raw, undisciplined and sometimes mutinous. There were jealousies and libels and forgeries and slanders almost beyond our present ability to believe. As one reads the records of those days and learns the seamy side of the revolutionary struggle, he sometimes finds the question forcing itself upon him whether the colonies were fit for freedom. When I recall Washington's calmness in the midst of exasperating annoyances, his unselfish loyalty when surrounded by cupidity and jealousy and hatred, his faith that put courage into the hearts of men who marched hungry and left bloody footprints in the snow; when I remember how after eight years of this and more he emerged victorious, as calm in victory as he had been serene in defeat, I do not wonder that Frederick the Great is said to have pronounced George Washington's campaign in the Jerseys

the most brilliant in military annals, or that he is alleged to have sent him a sword inscribed "From the oldest general in Europe to the greatest general in the world."⁽¹⁾

Washington as a Statesman

George Washington was no orator. In the House of Burgesses in Virginia he rarely spoke except to give his opinion, and sometimes very briefly his reasons for it. But he was regarded by Patrick Henry and others as the sanest and broadest man in the house. As chairman of the Convention called to frame the Constitution, he discharged that peculiarly difficult duty in a manner as creditable to himself as it has proved perpetually profitable to the nation. When it was decided that the new nation should have a President the office was cut out to fit the man. There was only one man to be thought of; toward him already the half mutinous soldiers had turned, requesting that he become a king. With grief and indignation he had refused this offer, but he accepted the presidency at the invitation of the whole people. "By this time," says one historian, "his canonization had fairly begun." But his position was now, if possible, more difficult than in the army. "We are one nation today and thirteen tomorrow," said Washington sadly. Political parties were forming; personal jealousies and animosities were rife. Jefferson in his belief in the simplest possible democracy, had over against him Hamilton, the brilliant and versatile, with his vision of the states in empire. There was an empty treasury; there was no certain source of income; there was a great war debt; there was an unpaid army. The states distrusted each other and distrusted Congress yet more. England was threatening us because of boundary disputes. France was demanding that we take up the sword again because she was at war with England. In all this there was only one platform on which the nation could unite, and that was Washington. The people trusted his calm judgment; believed in his sagacity and his integrity. His personality and stability held the nation together and brought us into a large place. We are today the nation that we are because George Washington was the man that he was.

The Problems of a Practical Democracy

The framers of the Constitution of the United States were rich men. To them government was desirable in large measure for the sake of the protection of property. They had property and they desired that it be protected.

They did not want the maximum of government but the minimum. They sought to discover the excellencies of their own system in its carefully planned inefficiency. They feared too much government more than they feared too little. They sought in government a limitation of power rather than a grant of power. They established a government of checks and balances so that it should not be too fatally easy for government to function. To them the police power of the State was small and the Bill of Rights was

(1) There is good reason to doubt the historic truthfulness of this legend, whose true story appears to have been told by M. D. Conway in the Century Magazine for 1891, p. p. 945-948, but it is quite possible that Frederick expressed the sentiment.

large. The political power of the State, which has grown by leaps and bounds, they saw established not in a growing army of blue-coated officers, nor in khaki-robed troops, but in the homespun-clad people organized as an efficient militia. They did not want what we understand by an efficient government; they wanted a government which would provide for the common defense and express the public will in the simplest and most inexpensive and most unostentatious way possible, and otherwise let them alone.

Many years ago Winthrop Mackworth Praed wrote his satirical verses entitled "Epitaph of the Late King of the Sandwich Islands," in which he eulogized that imaginary sovereign for his military prowess and his domestic status and his political conservatism:

He warred with half a score of foes,
And shone by proxy in the quarrel;
Enjoyed hard fights, and soft repose,
And deathless debt and deathless laurel:
His enemies were scalped and flayed,
Whene'er his soldiers were victorious;
And widows wept and paupers paid,
To make their Sovereign Ruler glorious.

And days were set apart for thanks,
And prayers were said by pious readers;
And land was lavished on the ranks,
And land was lavished on their leaders.
Events are writ by History's pen,
And causes are too much to care for;
Fame talks about the where and when,
While Folly asks the why and wherefore.

The people in his happy reign
Were blest beyond all other nations;
Unharm'd by foreign axe or chain,
Unhealed by civil innovations,
They served the usual logs and stones
With all the usual rites and terrors,
And swallowed all their fathers' bones,
And swallowed all their fathers' errors.

No wonder the poet lauded such an enlightened monarch! Virtues such as these have never failed to evoke the high praises of royally appointed poets laureate! But these are not the reasons why the head of a republican government can hope for immortal fame.

Which is first, government or people? Government, said the advocates of the old system; and government, still say all those who speak the language of autocracy. Government is from above; it is formulated in heaven and handed down through divinely chosen representatives of the divine will. In the Church there must be a pope, and under him the several stages of sacerdotalism, down to a governed body of people, the laity. In the State there is the king, ruling by divine right, and intermediate between him and the people are such representative bodies as the people choose and the crown permits, and such bodies also as are essential to the enforcement of the decrees of the throne.

But that is not the answer of America. The people are first, and they make government. Indeed, before the People is the Man. Humanity consists of individuals who have their personal rights, to life, liberty and property, or, as our Declaration of Independence says, to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It is to secure these rights, individual rights and in consequence social rights, that governments are instituted among men, and these governments derive all powers which they justly possess from the consent of the governed.

This is commonplace doctrine to us: it was not new in theory in 1776; but it was new as a part of the fundamental law of a nation. First is Man; then, by the determination of their common interests, are the People; and out of the will of the people is organized Government.

In all these matters Washington stood in his day, not without the limitations of his generation and his rank, but always as the exponent of popular rights, and the champion of a government based not on birth or wealth or privilege, but on the common well-being and the common will.

Washington As a Patriot

Washington was an incorruptible patriot. He was one of the few rich men who was not a Tory. A very large proportion of men of large means sided with the British crown; nor must we too hastily condemn them. But Washington, who had more to lose than almost any other man in the thirteen colonies, was not blinded by vested interests, nor bound to conservative action by his wealth or station.

For the sake of the country which he loved he suffered innumerable hardships, was stung by ingratitude and hurt by slander, but he stood firm in his loyalty to the cause he had espoused, and was faithful to the end.

An instance of the high quality of his patriotism in his later life is afforded by his correspondence with John Adams in 1798. Adams was then President, and Washington had gone into his final retirement at Mount Vernon, when France began what was virtually a war upon our shipping. Adams offered to Washington the chief command of an army to be raised to fight the French—an offer as magnanimous in Adams as its acceptance was noble in Washington. I have often thought that Washington's letter to Adams might have been written by Theodore Roosevelt to Woodrow Wilson had Wilson graciously offered to Roosevelt a commission in the war against Germany:

"Satisfied, therefore, that you have sincerely wished and endeavored to avert war, and exhausted to the last drop the cup of reconciliation, we can with pure hearts appeal to Heaven for the justice of our cause, and may confidently trust the final result to that kind Providence, who has heretofore so signally favored the people of these United States."—Letter to John Adams, July 13, 1798.

Washington As a Friend of Education

Washington was the firm friend of American education. His contemporaries of wealth and culture were largely educated in England. They came back, as he observed, undemocratic and out of sympathy with American life. Washington left a bequest for the founding of an American university. He had not grown up in New England with its Harvard College established to furnish an educated ministry. His own interest in the problem grew out of the need which he observed of home institutions informed with the genius of American life and character.

Washington As An American and a World Citizen

It is one of the qualities of great men that they seem to belong not to their own time alone but to all ages. Few characters surpass that of Washington in this regard. The symmetry of his life was remarkable. He was a man of his own age but he exhibited rare foresight and had a broad outlook for the future. He was a Southerner, but his interests were national. He lived close to tidewater on the Atlantic seaboard, but he was a prophetic believer in the whole great country. He was a slave holder, yet an Abolitionist and a friend of freedom. He was born in the East and lived and died near his birthplace; but no man in his generation realized more fully the prophecy of the great West, or cherished more highly the vision of a country stretching far beyond the mountains toward the sunset.

Steadily through the years the international fame of Washington has been increasing, until now he is almost as much revered in Great Britain as in America. Notable Englishmen, among them Frederick Harrison and James Bruce, have come across the sea and uttered in praise of Washington such words as any American is proud to hear. In these recent days that have magnified the common interests of Britain and America, Washington has been appropriated as a British hero. Our British visitors have been swift to remind us that the war for American independence was only one part of a war which free-minded men of British blood were fighting on both sides of the sea. Indeed, I have heard such men say, and with much of truth, "George Washington was an English gentleman who fought nobly for the freedom of the British race against a bigoted German—George III.—then sitting on the throne of England!"

It is well that we honor the father of our country. No other modern nation begins its history with such a character, so commanding, so symmetrical, so fit to belong to the ages. "The weakness of our American republic," as Bruce has said in his great book, "is the danger of forgetting the individual in the mass, or of overlooking the significance of personal character." It is well to remind ourselves of the life of him who fought neither for pay nor for renown; who headed an army, but established a country free

from all suspicion of military despotism; who might have been a king, but having served his country freely in her hours of peril, resigned his abundant honors for the life of the private citizen.

Washington and His Possible Rivals

Washington had many notable companions, but it does not disparage any of these to say that he only among them could have occupied the place which history has accorded him. Political and military exigencies sometimes give to nations a heritage of names which they must receive and own but cannot claim with pride. It requires but a feeble historic imagination to think of General Charles Lee as the leader of the American army. If the fortunes of war had raised him to this position we could not honor him as we do Washington, even had he proved as great as the Continental army at one time believed him. He who reads the literary history of the American Revolution can but wonder that Thomas Paine had so little to do with the organization of the republic whose independence he helped secure. Thomas Paine is a much maligned man and has deserved better treatment at the hands of the historians than his memory has sometimes received. Stranger things have happened in history than that Thomas Paine should have become the first President of the United States, for there was a time when the colonists believed him far more a statesman than Washington, and they were accustomed to say that the sword of Washington and the pen of Thomas Paine wrought equally for American freedom. But had Thomas Paine been as great a man as the colonies at one time believed him, and had any political combination in that time of doubt and uncertainty made him our first President we could not honor him as we honor Washington. No man among all the generals that fought with Washington on the battlefield; no man in that group of earnest statesmen who wrestled with him over the problems of our own republic could have filled the place which he filled even in that day; much less could any one of them have taken the hold which his personality has secured upon the imagination of succeeding generations.

The National and International Washington

A nation changes its ideal of a great man as its horizon widens. It might easily be possible for a man to be esteemed great by the representatives of thirteen little colonies with a population less than that of Ohio or Illinois, but the same man might have seemed an adventurer or a commonplace and mediocre man, when judged later by a nation continental in its proportions with a population fast approaching a hundred millions. Our country is large and growing larger. It extends from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound, or possibly from Porto Rico to the Philippines, and the time may come, according to the prophecy of Benjamin Butler, when it shall extend north far enough to permit us in that latitude to adopt the aurora borealis for our flag and south to where we can fence it across the Isthmus. To a nation as large as ours is now, a man might seem quite mediocre and insignificant who passed for a great

man on a Virginia plantation or in the little provincial towns of Philadelphia and Boston as they were a hundred and forty years ago. But as our country has grown to the westward till now it watches the sunset from the Pacific shores, the name and character of Washington have proved adequate to the national ideal.

There are countries in which men worship their ancestors. America is not one of them. We have a little recrudescence of fondness for genealogy and have most of us become Sons or Daughters of something or other, but this may be only a passing fad. This is a young man's country; it is becoming a young man's world. There was a time when youth that mocked at age was eaten by the she bear, but age now climbs panting to a place of safety on the curb out of the track of youth, who is bustling by in his automobile on his way to see the bears in the menagerie. We cannot afford to forget the past nor to renounce our heritage of great names. Least of all among our American heroes can we afford to forget him of whom an eminent British statesman (Lord Brougham) has said, "Until time shall be no more will a test of the progress which our race has made in wisdom and virtue be derived from the veneration paid to the immortal name of Washington."

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