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Libels on Washington

WITH

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION

THEREOF

BY

GEORGE H. MOORE, LL.D.

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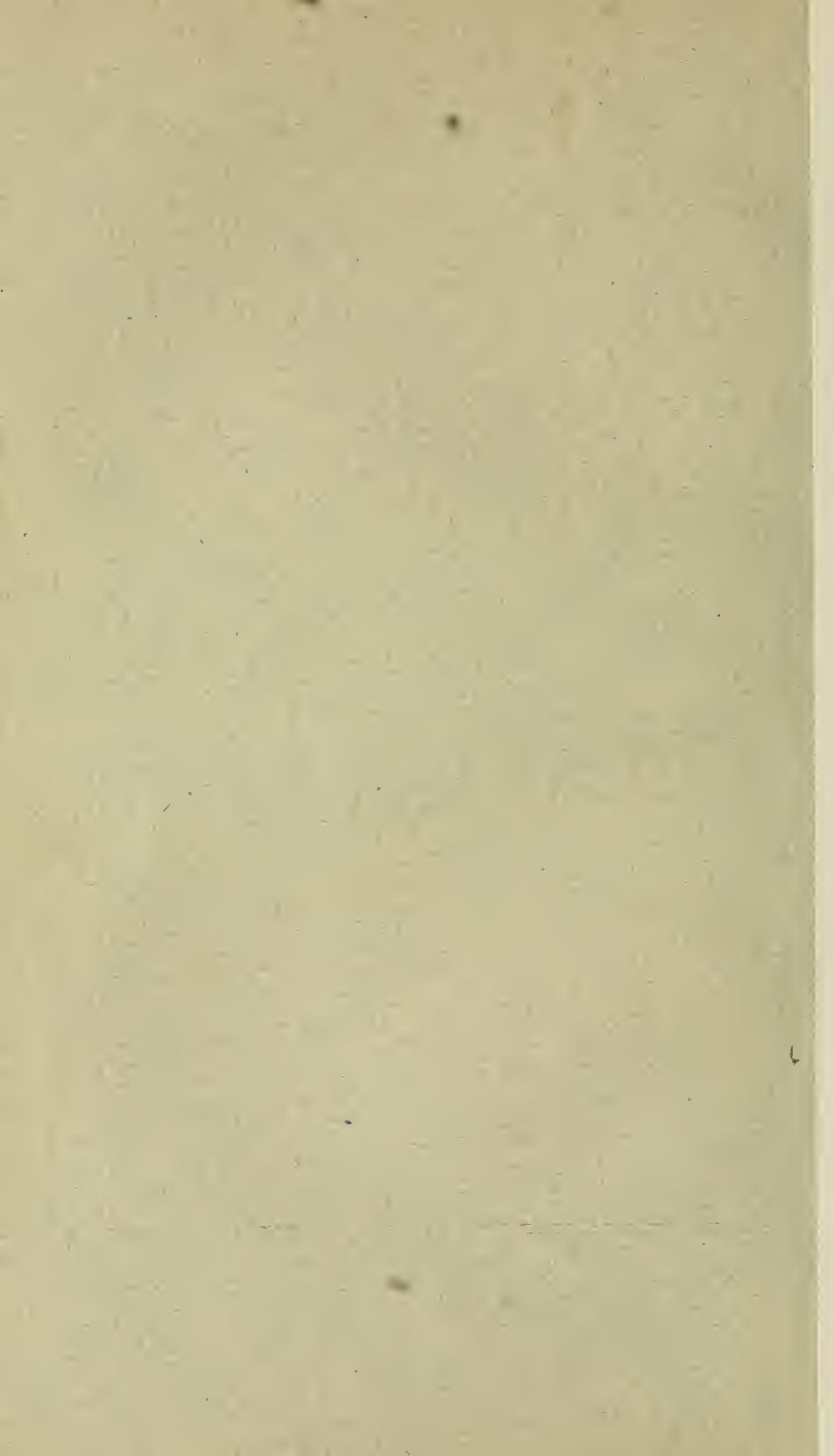
"Let his, great example stand
Colossal, seen of every land."

TENNYSON

NEW YORK

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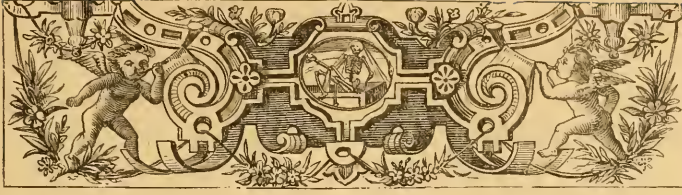


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LIBELS ON WASHINGTON.



HERE is a curious propensity in human nature to recognize with readiness, if not to seek with eager interest, for any possible blot on the fair escutcheon of a virtuous and honorable life and character ; to spy out defects, if not to magnify them ; and thus to reduce the loftier heads more nearly to the average line of elevation. After making every allowance for the unconscious falsity of our judgments respecting those who are our betters in any respect, there is still a great gulf of envy, if not of hatred, malice and all uncharitableness, in human existence, whose fogs darken many, if not most, of our views of life, often obscuring the great light of truth itself. This fact may account for, if it does not excuse, a great part of the personal scandals current in our history ; and illustrate the morbid taste and fondness for the unwholesome traditions which disfigure so many of its pages.

When the name and fame of GEORGE WASHINGTON cease to be honored and cherished among his countrymen, the United States of America will no longer hold an honor-

able place among the nations of the earth. Yet he could not escape calumny in the height of his fame when living; and since his death there have not been wanting those who would fain distinguish themselves as tale-bearers to coming generations by prolonging the echoes of ancient scandal and recording with painful and elaborate care the weak and wicked traditions of contemporary malice or hereditary hate against the man whose place in human history is well defined in Shakespeare's famous prophecy of an English King—

“ Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine
His honour and the greatness of his name
Shall be, and make new nations.”

The libels on his character to which I wish to direct attention at this time were intended to fix and substantiate the charges of a temper so violent as to be ungovernable when roused and gross profanity on various occasions. They have been growing with the advancing years, in the shape of hints, innuendoes, stories which “it would hardly do to repeat,” illustrations of “weaknesses common to all, even the greatest of men,” unnecessary apologies, and all the other forms of insidious depreciation, sometimes rather weak than hostile, but always disgraceful and unworthy, in the estimation of Gratitude, Honor and Justice. Historical criticism can never be better employed than in stamping out these mischievous little fires of malice or folly before they reach and envelope the stately structures which it is a pious duty to preserve.

The two principal scenes of Washington's alleged violence of temper and gross profanity under its influence

were the battlefield of Monmouth in June, 1778, in the third year of his command of the Revolutionary Army, and his own house in Philadelphia in December, 1791, in the third year of his Presidency of the United States. Several years ago, in a paper which I had the honor to read before the New-York Historical Society, I said, with respect to the former occasion :

“ Great excitement and want of dignity culminating in violent threats and even gross cursing and profanity have been ascribed to Washington in his interview with Lee. There is no evidence of any historical value to sustain this disgraceful charge, and the man who repeats it ought always to be challenged to the proof. If there was one common vice against which Washington’s face was set like a flint, from the beginning to the end of his military career, it was this very habit of profane swearing.”

If any proof has been offered to confirm the vulgar stories in vogue concerning the language and demeanor of Washington on that occasion, I have not heard of it ; and it is my firm conviction that nothing of the kind worthy of credit can be discovered ; but that any and all attempts to substantiate the reports referred to may be very easily disposed of by any right-minded and competent historical critic. A few words will suffice for my present purpose.

The scenes and events of that day were the subject of a prolonged and very critical investigation while the actors in them were still within reach and, as it were, fresh from the field. General Lee’s trial by a general court martial, beginning on the 4th of July, six days after the battle, ended on the 12th of August, with his suspension

from any command in the armies of the United States of North America, for the term of twelve months. The statements of General Washington and General Lee in the correspondence which led to the Court Martial, the sworn testimony of the witnesses upon the trial, and the defence of General Lee himself, furnish conclusive evidence of the utter falsehood of these pretended traditions which have gained entrance where they ought never to have been received for a moment.

Let the following General Orders distinctly testify what their author was determined to enforce wherever his authority could reach with reference to this matter. In his earliest important command, when placed at the head of the Virginia forces raised for the defence of the frontier after Braddock's defeat—among the first orders issued upon his arrival at Fort Cumberland was the following :

“Col. Washington has observed, that the men of his regiment are very profane and reprobate. He takes this opportunity to inform them of his great displeasure at such practices, and assures them, that, if they do not leave them off they shall be severely punished. The officers are desired, if they hear any man swear, or make use of an oath or execration, to order the offender twenty-five lashes immediately, without a court-martial. For the second offence, he will be more severely punished.”
Sparks : ii. 167 note, xii. 400.

This was in 1756, when Washington was in his twenty-fifth year. Twenty years later, in the summer of 1776, at New York, when he was at the head of the Army of the Revolution, the following appeared among the General Orders of August 3d :

“The General is sorry to be informed, that the foolish and wicked practice of profane cursing and swearing, a vice heretofore little known in an American army, is growing into fashion; he hopes the officers will, by example as well as influence, endeavour to check it, and that both they and the men will reflect, that we can have little hope of the blessing of Heaven on our arms, if we insult it by our impiety and folly; added to this, it is a vice so mean and low, without any temptation, that every man of sense and character detests and despises it.” *Sparks*: iv. 28; xii. 401.

Is it probable, nay, is it possible, that the author of these orders ever lost or forgot the character and principles of his youth and manhood from which they came, so that in later years he became accustomed to

“unpack *his* heart with words,
And fall a-cursing, like a very drab,”

or emphasize the utterances of excited passion with habitual profanity? I think not!

Of what took place in Philadelphia in the winter of 1791, upon the second occasion to which I have referred, there are two versions, both of which I shall reproduce here in their chronological order of publication—as the readiest way to indicate their want of authority, as materials of history.

In a series of articles contributed to the *Alexandria Gazette*, a Virginia newspaper established in 1800 and still published in that ancient city, Mr. GEORGE WASHINGTON PARKE CUSTIS furnished one which appeared in that

paper on the 12th of July, 1827, containing among others, the following passages :

MR. CUSTIS'S VERSION : 1827.

“ We proceed to something more grave.

“ The president was dining, when an officer arrived from the western army with despatches, his orders requiring that he should deliver them only to the commander-in-chief. The president retired, but soon reappeared, bearing in his hand an open letter. No change was perceptible in his countenance, as addressing the company he observed that the army of St. Clair had been surprised by the Indians, and was cut to pieces. The company soon after retired. The president repaired to his private parlor, attended by Mr. Lear, his principal secretary, and a scene ensued of which our pen can give but a feeble description.

“ The chief paced the room in hurried strides. In his agony, he struck his clenched hands with fearful force against his forehead, and in a paroxysm of anguish exclaimed : ‘ That brave army, so officered—Butler, Ferguson, Kirkwood—such officers are not to be replaced in a day—that brave army cut to pieces. O God ! ’ Then turning to the secretary, who stood amazed at a spectacle so unique, as Washington in all his terrors, he continued : ‘ It was here, sir, in this very room, that I conversed with St. Clair, on the very eve of his departure for the West. I remarked, I shall not interfere, general, with the orders of General Knox, and the war department ; they are sufficiently comprehensive and judicious ; but, as an old soldier, as one whose early life was particularly engaged in Indian warfare, I feel myself competent to counsel ; General St. Clair, in three words, beware of surprise ; trust not the Indian ; leave not your arms for a moment ; and when you halt for the night, be sure to fortify your camp—again and again, general, beware of surprise. And yet that brave army surprised, and cut to pieces, with Butler, and a host of others slain, O God ! ’ Here the struggle ended, as with mighty efforts the hero

chained down the rebellious giant of passion, and Washington became 'himself again.' In a subdued tone of voice, he proceeded: 'But he shall have justice; yes, long, faithful, and meritorious services have their claims. I repeat—he shall have justice.'

"Thus concluded a scene as remarkable as rare. It served to display this great man as nature had made him, with passions fierce and impetuous, which, like the tornado of the tropics, would burst for a while in awful grandeur, and then show, in higher relief, a serene and brilliant sky.

"The first interview of the president with St. Clair, after the fatal fourth of November, was nobly impressive. The unfortunate general, worn down by age, disease and the hardships of a frontier campaign, assailed by the press, and with the current of popular opinion setting hard against him, repaired to his chief, as to a shelter from the fury of so many elements. Washington extended his hand to one who appeared in no new character; for, during the whole of a long life, misfortune seemed 'to have marked him for her own.' Poor old St. Clair hobbled up to his chief, seized the offered hand in both of his, and gave vent to his feelings in an audible manner. He was subsequently tried by a commission of government, and proved to have been *unfortunate*."

Although thus made public in 1827, this story seems to have attracted no considerable attention at the time. More than thirty years later, it was reproduced in a volume of *Recollections*, etc., published in New York. Two years before this reproduction, Mr. RICHARD RUSH published an account of *Washington in Domestic Life*—a work founded chiefly on the correspondence of Washington with Colonel Tobias Lear, who was for many years his private secretary. In this work, Mr. Rush presented the other version of the affair, to which I have referred.

There was nothing in the original publication of Mr.

Custis, nor his *Recollections*, as edited by Mr. Lossing, in which it reappeared, to indicate his authority, but the editor added a note in which, after reproducing the Rush version, he said that Rush's account "corresponds with that of Mr. Custis written thirty years before," adding, "Mr. Custis doubtless also received his information from the lips of Mr. Lear."¹ *Recollections*: 418 note. Mr. Rush's authority is given in his statement, which appeared in the volume to which I have referred, published at Philadelphia early in 1857 and about six months before the death of Mr. Custis.

MR. RUSH'S VERSION: 1857.

"An anecdote I derived from Colonel Lear shortly before his death in 1816, may here be related, showing the height to which his [Washington's] passion would rise yet be controlled. It belongs to his domestic life which I am dealing with, having occurred under his own roof, whilst it marks public feeling the most intense, and points to the moral of his life. I give it in Colonel Lear's words as nearly as I can, having made a note of them at the time.

"Towards the close of a winter's day in 1791, an officer in uniform was seen to dismount in front of the President's in Philadelphia, and, giving the bridle to his servant, knock at the door of his mansion. Learning from the porter that the President was at dinner, he said he was on public business and had dispatches for the President. A servant was sent into the dining-room to give the information to Mr. Lear, who left the table and went into the hall where the officer repeated what he had said. Mr. Lear replied that, as the President's Secretary, he would take charge of the dispatches and deliver them at the proper time. The officer

¹ In response to a letter of inquiry on this subject, Dr. Lossing says that Custis "told me he received the account of the affair from Colonel Lear." *MS. letter, January 4, 1886.*

made answer that he had just arrived from the western army, and his orders were to deliver them with all promptitude, and to the President in person ; but that he would wait his directions. Mr. Lear returned, and in a whisper imparted to the President what had passed. General Washington rose from the table, and went to the officer. He was back in a short time, made a word of apology for his absence, but no allusion to the cause of it. He had company that day. Everything went on as usual. Dinner over, the gentlemen passed to the drawing-room of Mrs. Washington, which was open in the evening. The General spoke courteously to every lady in the room, as was his custom. His hours were early, and by ten o'clock all the company had gone. Mrs. Washington and Mr. Lear remained. Soon Mrs. Washington left the room.

“The General now walked backward and forward slowly for some minutes without speaking. Then he sat down on a sofa by the fire, telling Mr. Lear to sit down. To this moment there had been no change in his manner since his interruption at table. Mr. Lear now perceived emotion. This rising in him, he broke out suddenly, *‘It’s all over—St. Clair’s defeated—routed ; the officers nearly all killed, the men by wholesale ; the rout complete—too shocking to think of—and a surprise into the bargain !’*

“He uttered all this with great vehemence. Then he paused, got up from the sofa and walked about the room several times, agitated but saying nothing. Near the door he stopped short and stood still a few seconds, when his wrath became terrible.

“‘Yes,’ he burst forth, *‘HERE on this very spot, I took leave of him ; I wished him success and honor ; you have your instructions, I said, from the Secretary of War, I had a strict eye to them, and will add but one word—BEWARE OF A SURPRISE. I repeat it, BEWARE OF A SURPRISE—you know how the Indians fight us. He went off with that as my last solemn warning thrown into his ears. And yet !! to suffer that army to be cut to pieces, hack’d, butchered, tomahawk’d, by a surprise—the very thing I guarded him against !! O God, O God, he’s worse*

than a murderer! how can he answer it to his country;—the blood of the slain is upon him—the curse of widows and orphans—the curse of Heaven!'

"This torrent came out in tones appalling. His very frame shook. It was awful, said Mr. Lear. More than once he threw his hands up as he hurled imprecations upon St. Clair. Mr. Lear remained speechless; awed into breathless silence.

"The roused Chief sat down on the sofa once more. He seemed conscious of his passion, and uncomfortable. He was silent. His warmth beginning to subside, he at length said in an altered voice: '*This must not go beyond this room.*' Another pause followed—a longer one—when he said in a tone quite low, '*General St. Clair shall have justice; I looked hastily through the dispatches, saw the whole disaster but not all the particulars; I will receive him without displeasure; I will hear him without prejudice; he shall have full justice.*'

"He was now, said Mr. Lear, perfectly calm. Half an hour had gone by. The storm was over; and no sign of it was afterwards seen in his conduct or heard in his conversation. The result is known. The whole case was investigated by Congress. St. Clair was exculpated and regained the confidence Washington had in him when appointing him to that command. He had put himself into the thickest of the fight and escaped unhurt, though so ill as to be carried on a litter, and unable to mount his horse without help." *Washington in Domestic Life*: pp. 65-69.

This is no sudden outbreak—it is carefully prepared, wilful and deliberately studied rage. There is nothing spontaneous, hearty or genuine about it—it has the tainted flavor of falsehood throughout. It is not improbable that the sudden anguish of sorrow may have elicited from Washington on the first news of the disaster an ejaculation of despairing appeal to heaven, such as many devout hearts have uttered and will utter in extremity. Possibly

some reminiscence of conversations with St. Clair about the well known dangers of Indian warfare might have rushed to his mind and inspired the utterance of a strong regret, in the first excitement of so unexpected a report as the first which reached him through the press and public rumor. It is difficult to believe, however, that the preposterous story related by Rush could grow from so small a grain of seed by any natural or legitimate process. This studied preparation and postponement of the performance until the arrival of the official account, this invincible reserve and self-control until the stage was set and everything was ready for the fulfilment of such a programme—let him who can or will believe it !

“Credat Judæus Apella
Non ego!”

In the first place, the whole affair bears an aspect entirely out of harmony or agreement with anything and everything we know of the personal character of Washington. It fills the mind of the reader with astonishment at its revelations, so utterly are they in contrast with the almost universal estimate of the man. I well remember the feeling with which I read the story myself for the first time. I could not and did not believe it. But as I have noted one by one the channels through which this poisonous stuff has wrought its way into the body of American History, my indignation has risen to the height of determination to fix, if possible, the limits of its further circulation.

In both versions, this extraordinary, not to say marvellous, tale carries the evidences of invention on its face and in its details. Let us examine these : first, as they

stand by themselves, hitherto accepted without challenge or criticism ; and then, in the light of such known and indisputable facts as can be brought to bear on them in the way of critical illustration.

It is not necessary for me to point out the want of agreement, if not contradiction in the details of these two stories or two versions of the same story. However interesting in analysis, it will be seen that these are comparatively of little importance in the present examination, which concerns the integrity of the whole affair.

Of all the stories which have been produced with solemn details of seeming authenticity, concerning alleged outbursts of uncontrollable passion from General Washington, this one, the latest and most elaborate, is, in my judgment, as ridiculous and improbable as any and perhaps the most absurd of them all, although most carefully prepared.

Mr. Rush gravely introduces the history of this performance by the President of the United States and that President George Washington ! as an illustration of " the height to which his passion would rise and yet be controlled ! " It is difficult to imagine what could have followed in any finer frenzy of passion, if Mr. Rush himself had further prolonged the agony of the scene—before dropping the curtain on his highly dramatic version of a secondhand reminiscence of a reminiscence. What was the nature and extent of *control* thus manifested by Washington ? It is alleged that the intelligence or news of disaster had been in his possession for several hours before he began to show " emotion. " He is represented as going through all the formalities of a dinner, at which he had the company of guests, and the parting services and

civilities of an after-dinner reception. Mrs. Washington herself had retired. Nobody remained but the Secretary, Mr. Lear, when this extraordinary private exhibition of himself was indulged in by the President—a series of explosions of violent and wrathful passion in terms unrestrained and in every sense outrageous—for they were accompanied with violent gestures as he “hurled imprecations upon St. Clair.”

The dramatic arrangement of the story is itself suspicious, and invites if it does not challenge critical attention. None of the effects are lost: and the singular rôle which is assigned to Washington is consistent enough throughout all its details although it is felt to be impossible in view of his personal character. I expect to prove it to be untrue by a just array of the real facts in the case. Nowhere is the task of the historical critic more grateful than in the exposure of such errors, whether they result from malice or ignorance, or both combined, or the sheer indifference to truth of the historical story-teller.

Mr. Rush states that his narrative was derived from Colonel Lear in 1816—seventeen years after the death of Washington—and was noted by him at the time. Colonel Lear died on the tenth of October, 1816, in the City of Washington, of which Mr. Rush was at that time a resident, as Attorney-General of the United States.

Mr. Irving has given credit to the story, and even added a touch of embellishment in a remark attributed to Washington on resuming his seat at the dinner table;¹ but as he

¹ “One of the company, however, overheard him, as he took his seat, mutter to himself, with an ejaculation of extreme impatience, ‘I knew it would be so!’” *Irving’s Washington*: v. 107.

furnishes no authority for his variation from Mr. Rush, I have no hesitation in assigning it to the same faculty of vivid imagination which has led Mr. McMaster in his mitigated abridgment of it all, to indulge the courier's horse in a *gallop* through the streets of Philadelphia and his rider with *full* uniform and an *orderly* servant at his crupper.¹ It is difficult to understand the motive of this extraordinary spurt on the home stretch after so long a journey out of the Western wilderness, or the need of such conspicuous haste—all which must be explained in the same way as the alleged necessity of delivery to the President in person, etc. It is perfectly obvious that these details were made up to fit the tale as it was to be told.

It is not my business to explain or account for the origin of this story. Mr. Rush credits it all to Colonel Lear, who would thus be convicted out of his own mouth of violating the solemn injunction of his great chief—"This

¹ EXTRACT from McMaster's *History of the People of the United States* :
ii. 43.

" . . . news of a still more alarming kind came from Ohio. An officer in full uniform was seen one afternoon to gallop through the streets of the city, draw up at the President's door, throw his bridle to an orderly, and hastily ascend the steps. The President, he was told was at dinner and could not see him. But he insisted so firmly that the servant took his message to Mr. Lear, who then acted as private secretary to Washington. The secretary came out, was told by the officer that the letters could be delivered to none but the President, went back and whispered his message in the President's ear. But none of the company who looked on the placid and motionless face of Washington, as he again took his seat among them, saw any sign of the passion that raged within. Not till the meal was ended, and the last guest had departed, did he give way to his feelings and burst forth into a storm of reproaches. For a while, Mr. Lear was at a loss to know what to make of it; nor did he learn, till the fury had spent itself, that General St. Clair had been beaten and put to flight by the savages in the West."

Mr. McMaster's authorities are *Washington in Domestic Life*, by R. Rush; and *Recollections and Private Memoirs*, by G. W. P. Custis, pp. 416-419.

must not go beyond this room.”¹ It strikes me however that a man so intelligent and acute as Mr. Rush might well have found time during the forty years that he kept it to himself to apply a little of his historical sense ; and test this remarkable story by some of the usual methods of just and wholesome criticism before setting it forth to the world in print. Colonel Lear’s failure to maintain his fidelity to the end was certainly not due to the weakness and garrulity of age, for he died in his fifty-fourth year. Mr. Rush is responsible ; for although Mr. Custis’s version appeared in print thirty years before, either Mr. Rush was ignorant of the fact, or he concealed it ; and so his responsibility for the publication remains.² A noticeable feature of this responsibility is the carefully studied typography in which this delectable matter is presented to the eye of the reader. All the resources of the printer for emphasis are taxed to the utmost—dashes, exclamation points, italics, small capitals, and capitals, which are used nowhere else in the volume are here in profuse and staring abundance.

It does not seem to have occurred to Mr. Rush that he was emphasizing his own responsibility : not only for a very

¹ In his notice of one of Washington’s letters to Colonel Lear from Richmond, April 12, 1791, Mr. Rush exhibits a sensitive regard to the obligation of confidence imposed on his correspondent by the writer. He says : “ This is a letter of four closely written pages, mainly, though not exclusively, about his servants and the difficulties with them under the non-slavery laws of Philadelphia ; but as he requests that the knowledge of its contents and the sentiments he expresses may be confined to Mr. Lear and Mrs. Washington, I notice no more of it.” *Washington in Domestic Life* : pp. 36-37. *O si sic omnia !*

² Mr. Rush was familiar with some of the contributions of Mr. Custis to the public press, for he says of them, “ the productions of his patriotic pen have charmed the public by the anecdotes they record in attractive ways of the personal, rural, and other habits of the great Chief.” *Washington in Domestic Life* : 24, note.

gross libel on the memory of Washington—for such it is when justly considered ; but also a very elaborate tissue of falsehoods—for such I will now positively show it to be, beyond any reasonable question !

The facts concerning the receipt of intelligence from the Western Army in Philadelphia in December, 1791, can be clearly and distinctly proved without a shadow of doubt in any respect : and the simplest statement of them will put an end to the marvellous tradition of Mr. Custis and Mr. Rush—so shamefully allowed to appear in the pages of American history, not only without the slightest critical examination, but tricked out in ornamental rhetoric for additional emphasis.

The defeat of St. Clair took place on the 4th of November. The dispatch in which he announced it to his superior officer was written and dated at Fort Washington, 9th November, 1791, and sent to Lexington, Kentucky, to take the chance of the first opportunity that offered, by which it might reach its destination. It was addressed to General Henry Knox, then Secretary of the Department of War, to whom official duty and military etiquette alike required that it should be transmitted. It was so transmitted, and was received by him on Sunday evening, December 11th, 1791, in Philadelphia.

The news however was at Lexington as early as the 11th of November, when a circular letter appeared from Brigadier General Scott, to the different County Lieutenants in Kentucky, announcing the receipt of certain intelligence that the army had been defeated with very great loss. This letter was dated “ Lexington, Nov. 11, 1791,”

and was printed in *The Kentucky Gazette*, one of the earliest newspapers printed west of the Alleghany Mountains.

The news was forwarded by express to Richmond, Virginia, where it appeared in *The Virginia Gazette* of the 2d December. This paper was received in Philadelphia on the 8th and the melancholy intelligence was published in the newspapers there on the following day, December 9th and repeated also on the 10th, two successive days before that in the evening of which the official dispatch first came to hand. There was no doubt of the authenticity of the earliest report of the 8th—an unexpected shock which created great excitement throughout the community.

Philadelphia was then the seat of government, and Congress was at that time in session. On the following day, Friday, the ninth of December, Mr. Sedgwick suggested in the House of Representatives, the necessity of meeting the next day, as they might probably receive some official communications from the President respecting the late accounts from the westward: it was however agreed to adjourn until Monday as usual.

On Sunday, December 11th, in the evening, the first official information arrived, being St. Clair's first express by way of Lexington bringing his letter of the 9th of November to General Knox.

On the day following, Monday, December 12th, President Washington sent in his message of that date to the House of Representatives "Communicating sundry dispatches received yesterday by express from General St. Clair, which were read and ordered to lie on the table." They were printed in the newspapers on the 13th.

All the dispatches from St. Clair were addressed and sent as they should have been to the Secretary of War, General Knox, and were delivered to him by the messengers to whom they had been entrusted. The statement that they had and carried out instructions to deliver any of them to the President in person is not only improbable on its face, but in view of all the facts now determined, obviously false. No dispatches of that sort addressed to President Washington have ever been seen, or heard of, excepting in the tradition of Custis and Rush attributed to Colonel Lear. The contents of the official dispatches had been anticipated, and the intelligence of the disaster in its worst aspect had reached the President and the public no less than three entire days before the arrival of the first of them. The whole dinner table story vanishes in this clear atmosphere of surrounding facts, which can neither be denied nor explained away. There is nothing left of it.

There is one record of discomposure on the part of Washington which carries on its face some color of authenticity. It is that of Mr. Jefferson, who tells his story of a cabinet meeting at the President's House on the 2d of August, 1793. That the *Anas* of this writer are not the best of authority in history has been proved more than once: but on this occasion they furnish what purports to be contemporary evidence by the man himself who more than any other was ultimately responsible for the outrages which elicited the wrath of Washington—to show what was the expression of that wrath. It is certain that Mr. Jefferson could have had no disposition to soften

Washington's language. He set out to make a record that the President was addicted to the indulgence of passion in which he lost all self-control; and it is not probable that he diminished the force of any expression. And what is this record of "the faithful Jefferson," as he is styled by our latest historian, who, as he portrays the character of the Father of his Country, listens to hear his oaths, and stares at the terrible exhibitions of his rage and passion! *McMaster*: ii. 111, 453.

MR. JEFFERSON'S STORY.

At a meeting of the Cabinet at the President's, August 2d, 1793.

“. . . The President was much inflamed; got into one of those passions when he cannot command himself; ran on much on the personal abuse which had been bestowed on him; defied any man on earth to produce one single act of his since he had been in the government, which was not done on the purest motives; that he had never repented but once the having slipped the moment of resigning his office, and that was every moment since; that *by God* he had rather be in his grave than in his present situation; that he had rather be on his farm than to be made *Emperor of the world*; and yet that they were charging him with wanting to be a King. That that *rascal Freneau* sent him three of his papers every day, as if he thought he would become the distributor of his papers; that he could see in this, nothing but an impudent design to insult him: he ended in this high tone." *Jefferson's Anas: Works*: ix. 164.

"Only this, and nothing more." To those who are familiar with the villainous license and unscrupulous mendacity of the partisan press at that period—which has hardly been equalled and never surpassed in our subse-

quent history—the “ high tone ” as well as the vigor and strength of language attributed to the President will not seem inappropriate ; and while some may regret that he called God to witness the anguish of his spirit under these sore trials—certainly all must agree that there is upon the whole no justification whatever for the accusation of ungovernable passion or habitual profanity under its excitement.

If anybody hereafter should be anxious to establish any similar charges, I think I am justified in saying that he must provide better apparatus and authorities than any of those which have been under examination at this time.





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No. 8/99

