

Chapter Two

MASON LOCKE WEEMS

(1759–1825)

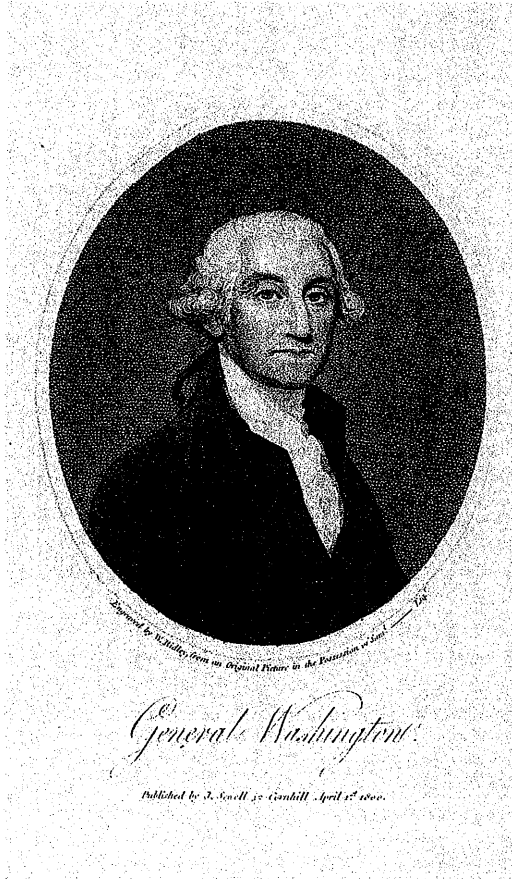
Mason Locke Weems was arguably one of early America's most important traveling book salesmen. He was also an Episcopal priest and spent much of his life moralizing in either spoken or written forms. Ordained in 1784, Weems spent little of his life as a traditional rector. He left the parish ministry in 1792 and began his long affiliation with America's nascent book trade. He began by reprinting books, trying his own hand at writing, and in 1794 joined forces with Philadelphia publisher Mathew Carey. For nearly three decades, Weems traveled up and down the East Coast selling books, sometimes Carey's, sometimes the works of other publishers, and sometimes his own.



In 1800, Weems wrote the first of the many semifactual biographies he would produce, *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits of General George Washington*. He wrote this book knowing full well that he could capitalize on the outpouring of grief over Washington's recent death on December 14, 1799. Weems's knowledge of the American book-buying public proved sound; the slender volume sold extremely well. Weems revised his book on Washington several times, substantially enlarging it in 1808, when he renamed the work *The Life of Washington; with Curious Anecdotes, Equally Honourable to Himself and Exemplary to His Young Countrymen*. As this change in title indicates, his life of Washington was a moral tale. Weems did not only tell his readers Washington's story, but he made that story a kind of sermon, full of information on what made Washington a saint and how others might attain the same sort of moral perfection.

Weems's moralizing biography of Washington highlights a tension found throughout nineteenth-century popular literature. While edification was clearly a value, Weems's years of bookselling experience told him that for edifying tales to sell, they also needed to entertain. Consequently, in his writing he blurred the lines between fact and fiction, didacticism and diversion.

THE LIFE OF WASHINGTON;
WITH CURIOUS ANECDOTES,
EQUALLY HONORABLE TO HIMSELF
AND EXEMPLARY TO HIS YOUNG
COUNTRYMEN



Frontispiece portrait of George Washington from a second improved edition of the biography reprinted for Weems by the Philadelphia printer John Bioren in 1800 (Courtesy Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN).

Mason Locke Weems, *The Life of Washington: with Curious Anecdotes, Equally Honorable to Himself and Exemplary to His Young Countrymen*, 9th edition. Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1809.

Chapter I

Oh! as along the stream of time thy name
Expanded flies, and gathers all its fame;
May then these lines to future days descend,
And prove thy country's good thine *only end!*

"Ah, gentlemen!"—exclaimed Bonaparte¹—'twas just as he was about to embark for Egypt ... some young Americans happening at Toulon, and anxious to see the mighty Corsican, had obtained the honour of an introduction to him. Scarcely were past the customary salutations, when he eagerly asked, "*how fares your countryman, the great WASHINGTON?*" "He was very well," replied the youths, brightening at the thought that they were the countrymen of Washington; "he was very well, general, when we left America."—"Ah, gentlemen!" rejoined he, "*Washington can never be otherwise than well.—The measure of his fame is full—Posterity shall talk of him with reverence as the founder of a great empire, when my name shall be lost in the vortex of Revolutions!*"

Who then that has a spark of virtuous curiosity, but must wish to know the history of him whose name could thus awaken the sigh even of Bonaparte? But is not his history *already* known? Have not a thousand orators spread his fame abroad, bright as his own Potomac, when he reflects the morning sun, and flames like a sea of liquid gold, the wonder and delight of all the neighbouring shores? Yes, they have indeed spread his fame abroad ... his fame as Generalissimo of the armies, and first President of the councils of his nation. But this is not *half his fame*... True, he is there seen in *greatness*, but it is only the greatness of public character, which is no evidence of *true greatness*; for a public character is often an artificial one. At the head of an army or nation, where gold and glory are at stake, and where a man feels himself the *burning focus* of unnumbered eyes; he must be a paltry fellow indeed, who does not play his part pretty handsomely ... even the common passions of pride, avarice, or ambition, will put him up to his metal, and call forth his best and bravest doings. But let all this heat and blaze of public situation and incitement be withdrawn; let him be thrust back into the shade of private life, and you shall see how soon, like a forced plant robbed of its hot-bed, he will drop his false foliage and fruit, and stand forth confessed in native stickweed sterility and worthlessness... There was Benedict Arnold²—while strutting a brigadier general on the public stage, he could play you the *great man*, on a handsome scale ... he out-marched Hannibal,³ and outfought Burgoyne⁴ ... he chaced the British like curlews, or cooped them up like chickens! and yet in the *private walks of life*, in Philadelphia, he could swindle rum from the commissary's stores, and, with the aid of loose women, retail

¹ Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) became ruler of France soon after the French Revolution. He kept Europe in an almost constant state of war for more than a decade, and he was a student of the military tactics George Washington used during the American Revolution. In 1798, Napoleon invaded Egypt to threaten England's trade route with India.

² Benedict Arnold (1741–1801) was a brilliant American general who shifted his allegiance to the British in the middle of the American Revolution.

³ Hannibal (247–183 BCE) was one of the most successful Carthaginian generals during the Punic Wars. One of his many amazing military feats was crossing the Alps with elephants to march on Rome.

⁴ A British general, John Burgoyne (1722–1792) became famous when he captured Fort Ticonderoga during the American Revolution.

it by the gill!! ... And there was the great duke of Marlborough⁵ too—his public character, a thunderbolt in war! Britain's boast, and terror of the French! But his private character, what? Why a *swindler* to whom not *Arnold's* self could hold a candle; a perfect nondescript of baseness; a shaver of farthings from the poor sixpenny pay of his own brave soldiers!!!

It is not then in the glare of *public*, but in the shade of *private life*, that we are to look for the man. Private life is always *real* life. Behind the curtain, where the eyes of the million are not upon him, and where a man can have no motive but *inclination*, no excitement but *honest nature*, there he will always be sure to act *himself*; consequently, if he act greatly, he must be great indeed. Hence it has been justly said, that, "our *private deeds*, if *noble*, are noblest of our lives."

Of these private deeds of Washington very little has been said. In most of the elegant orations pronounced to his praise, you see nothing of Washington below *the clouds*—nothing of Washington the *dutiful son*—the affectionate brother—the cheerful schoolboy—the diligent surveyor—the neat draftsman—the laborious farmer—and widow's husband—the orphan's father—the poor man's friend. No! this is not the Washington you see; 'tis only Washington the HERO, and the Demigod.... Washington the *sun beam* in council, or the *storm* in war.

And in all the ensigns of character, amidst which he is generally drawn, you see none that represent him what he really was, "*the Jupiter Conservator*,"⁶ *the friend and benefactor of men*. Where's his bright ploughshare that he loved—or his wheat-crowned fields, waving in yellow ridges before the wanton breeze—or his hills whitened over with flocks—or his clover-covered pastures spread with innumerable herds—or his neat-clad servants, with songs rolling the heavy harvest before them? Such were the scenes of *peace, plenty, and happiness*, in which Washington delighted. But his eulogists have denied him *these*, the only scenes which belong to man the great, and have trick'd him up in the vile drapery of man the *little*. See! there he stands! with the port of Mars "*the destroyer*,"⁷ dark frowning over the fields of war ... the lightning of Potter's blade is by his side—the deep-mouthed cannon is before him, disgorging its flesh-mangling balls—his war-horse paws with impatience to bear him, a speedy thunderbolt, against the pale and bleeding ranks of Britain!—These are the drawings usually given of Washington; drawings masterly no doubt, and perhaps justly descriptive of him in some scenes of his life; but scenes they were, which I am sure his soul *abhorred*, and in which at any rate, you see nothing of his *private virtues*. These old-fashioned commodities are generally thrown into the back ground of the picture, and treated, as the grandees at the London and Paris routs, treat their good old *aunts* and *grandmothers*, huddling them together into the *back rooms*, there to wheeze and cough by themselves, and not depress the fine laudanum-raised spirits of the *young sparklers*. And yet it was to those *old-fashioned virtues* that our hero owed every thing. For they in fact were the food of the great actions of him, whom men call Washington. It was they that enabled him, first to triumph over *himself*, then over the *British*, and uniformly to set such bright examples of *human perfectibility* and *true greatness*, that compared therewith, the history of his capturing Cornwallis and Tarleton,⁷ with

5 The Duke of Marlborough (1650–1722), one of Britain's greatest generals, led successful British campaigns against the French.

6 Jupiter was the most powerful and highest-ranking Roman god. He used thunderbolts as his weapon and was also known as the "Light-Bringer." Jupiter was especially interested in upholding oaths and served as the chief divine protector of the Roman Republic.

7 Charles Cornwallis (1738–1805) and Banastre Tarleton (1754–1833) were both high-ranking British officers who were defeated in Revolutionary War battles. Ironically, Cornwallis was one

their buccaneering legions, sounds almost as *small* as the story of old General Putnam's⁸ catching his wolf and her lamb-killing whelps.

Since then it is the private virtues that lay the foundation of all human excellence—since it was these that exalted Washington to be "*Columbia's*⁹ *first and greatest Son*," be it our first care to present these, in all their lustre, before the admiring eyes of our *children*. To *them* his private character is *every thing*; his public, hardly *any thing*. For how glorious soever it may have been in Washington to have undertaken the emancipation of his country; to have stemmed the long tide of adversity; to have baffled every effort of a wealthy and warlike nation; to have obtained for his countrymen the completest victory, and for himself the most unbounded power; and then to have returned that power, accompanied with all the weight of his own great character and advice to establish a government that should immortalize the blessings of liberty ... however glorious, I say, all this may have been to himself, or instructive to future generals and presidents, yet does it but *little* concern our *children*. For who among us can hope that his son shall ever be called, like Washington, to direct the storm of war, or to ravish the ears of deeply listening Senates? To be constantly placing him then, before our children, in this high character, what is it but like springing in the clouds a golden Phoenix,¹⁰ which no mortal calibre can ever hope to reach? Or like setting pictures of the Mammoth before the *mice* whom "not all the manna of Heaven" can ever raise to equality? Oh no! give us his *private virtues*! In *these*, every youth is interested, because in these every youth may become a Washington—a Washington in piety and patriotism,—in industry and honour—and consequently a Washington, in what alone deserves the name, SELF ESTEEM and UNIVERSAL RESPECT.

Chapter II

Birth and Education

Children like tender osiers take the bow;
And as they first are form'd for ever grow.

To this day numbers of good Christians can hardly find faith to believe that Washington was, bona fide, a *Virginian*! "*What! a buckskin!*" say they with a smile, "*George Washington a buckskin! pshaw! impossible! he was certainly an European: So great a man could never have been born in America.*"

So *great a man could never have been born in America!*—Why that's the very *prince of reasons* why he should have been born here! Nature, we know, is fond of *harmonies*; and *paria paribus*, that is, *great things to great*, is the rule she delights to work by. Where, for example, do we look for the *whale* "the biggest born of nature?" not, I trow, in a *millpond*, but in the main ocean; "*there go the great ships*," and there are the spoutings of whales amidst their boiling foam.

of the best British generals of the war, yet in 1781 he suffered a major defeat at Yorktown, Virginia, deciding the war in America's favor.

8 Rufus Putnam (1738–1824), a general during the American Revolution, later used his name and resources to help settle the vast frontier regions of Ohio.

9 Columbia is another name for the United States.

10 The phoenix is a legendary bird known for its remarkable beauty and ability to cheat death by rising from the funeral pyre that supposedly had consumed it.

By the same rule, where shall we look for Washington, the greatest among men, but in *America*? That greatest Continent, which, rising from beneath the frozen pole, stretches far and wide to the south, running almost "*whole the length of this vast terrene,*" and sustaining on her ample sides the roaring shock of half the watery globe. And equal to its size, is the furniture of this vast continent, where the Almighty has reared his cloud-capt mountains, and spread his sea-like lakes, and poured his mighty rivers, and hurled down his thundering cataracts in a style of the *sublime*, so far superior to any thing of the kind in the other continents, that we may fairly conclude that great men and great deeds are designed for America.

This seems to be the verdict of honest analogy; and accordingly we find America the honoured cradle of Washington, who was born on Pope's creek, in Westmoreland county, Virginia, the 22d of February, 1732. His father, whose name was Augustin Washington, was also a Virginian, but his grandfather (John) was an Englishman, who came over and settled in Virginia in 1657.

His father fully persuaded that a marriage of virtuous love comes nearest to angelic life, early stepped up to the *altar* with glowing cheeks and joy sparkling eyes, while by his side, with soft warm hand, sweetly trembling in his, stood the angel form of the lovely Miss Dandridge.

After several years of great domestic happiness, Mr. Washington was separated, by death, from this excellent woman, who left him and two children to lament her early fate.

Fully persuaded still, that "*it is not good for man to be alone,*" he renewed, for the second time, the chaste delights of matrimonial love. His consort was Miss Mary Ball, a young lady of fortune, and descended from one of the best families in Virginia.

From his intermarriage with this charming girl, it would appear that our Hero's father must have possessed either a very pleasing person, or highly polished manners, or perhaps *both*; for, from what I can learn, he was at that time at least 40 years old! while she, on the other hand, was universally toasted as the belle of the Northern Neck, and in the full bloom and freshness of love-inspiring sixteen. This I have from one who tells me that he has carried down many a sett dance with her; I mean that amiable and pleasant old gentleman, John Fitzhugh, Esq. of Stafford, *who* was, all his life, a neighbour and intimate of the Washington family. By his first wife, Mr. Washington had two children, both sons—Lawrence and Augustin. By his second wife, he had five children, four sons and a daughter—George, Samuel, John, Charles, and Elizabeth. Those *over delicate* ones, who are ready to faint at thought of a second marriage, might do well to remember, that the greatest man that ever lived was the son of this second marriage!

Little George had scarcely attained his fifth year, when his father left Pope's creek, and came up to a plantation which he had in Stafford, opposite to Fredericksburg. The house in which he lived is still to be seen. It lifts its low and modest front of faded red, over the turbid waters of Rappahannock; whither, to this day, numbers of people repair, and, with emotions unutterable, looking at the weatherbeaten mansion, exclaim, "*Here's the house where the Great Washington was born!*"

But it is all a mistake; for he was born, as I said, at Pope's creek, in Westmoreland county, near the margin of his own roaring Potomac.

The first place of education to which George was ever sent, was a little "*old field school,*" kept by one of his father's tenants, named Hobby; an honest, poor old man, who acted in the double character of sexton and schoolmaster. On his skill as a gravedigger, tradition is silent; but for a teacher of youth, his qualifications were certainly of the humbler sort;

making what is generally called an A. B. C. schoolmaster. Such was the preceptor who first taught Washington the knowledge of letters! Hobby lived to see his young pupil in all his glory, and rejoiced exceedingly. In his cups—for, though a *sexton*, he would sometimes drink, particularly on the General's birth-days—he used to boast, that "*'twas he, who, between his knees, had laid the foundation of George Washington's greatness.*"

But though George was early sent to a schoolmaster, yet he was not on that account neglected by his father. Deeply sensible of the *loveliness* and *worth* of which human nature is capable, through the *virtues* and *graces* early implanted in the heart, he never for a moment, lost sight of George in those all-important respects.

To assist his son to overcome that selfish spirit which too often leads children to fret and fight about trifles, was a notable care of Mr. Washington. For this purpose, of all the presents, such as cakes, fruit, &c. he received, he was always desired to give a liberal part to his play-mates. To enable him to do this with more alacrity, his father would remind him of the love which he would hereby gain, and the frequent presents which would in return be made to *him*; and also would tell of that great and good God, who delights above all things to see children love one another, and will assuredly reward them for acting so amiable a part.

Some idea of Mr. Washington's plan of education in this respect, may be collected from the following anecdote, related to me twenty years ago by an aged lady, who was a distant relative, and when a girl spent much of her time in the family.

"*On a fine morning,*" said she, "*in the fall of 1737, Mr. Washington, having little George by the hand, came to the door and asked my cousin Washington and myself to walk with him to the orchard, promising he would show us a fine sight. On arriving at the orchard, we were presented with a fine sight indeed. The whole earth, as far as we could see, was strewed with fruit: and yet the trees were bending under the weight of apples, which hung in clusters like grapes, and vainly strove to hide their blushing cheeks behind the green leaves. Now, George, said his father, look here, my son! don't you remember when this good cousin of yours brought you that fine large apple last spring, how hardly I could prevail on you to divide with your brothers and sisters; though I promised you that if you would but do it, God Almighty would give you plenty of apples this fall. Poor George could not say a word; but hanging down his head, looked quite confused, while with his little naked toes he scratched in the soft ground. Now look up, my son, continued his father, look up, George! and see there how richly the blessed God has made good my promise to you. Wherever you turn your eyes, you see the trees loaded with fine fruit; many of them indeed breaking down, while the ground is covered with mellow apples more than you could ever eat, my son, in all your life time.*"

George looked in silence on the wide wilderness of fruit; he marked the busy humming bees, and heard the gay notes of birds, then lifting his eyes filled with shining moisture, to his father, he softly said, "*Well, Pa, only forgive me this time; see if I ever be so stingy any more.*"

Some, when they look up to the oak whose giant arms throw a darkening shade over distant acres, or whose single trunk lays the keel of a man of war, cannot bear to hear of the time when this mighty plant was but an acorn, which a pig could have demolished: but others, who know their value, like to learn the soil and situation which best produces such noble trees. Thus, parents that are *wise* will listen well pleased, while I relate how moved the steps of the youthful Washington, whose single worth far outweighs all the oaks of Bashan and the red spicy cedars of Lebanon. Yes, they will listen delighted while I tell of their Washington in the days of his youth, when his little feet were swift towards the nests of birds; or when, wearied in the chace of the butterfly, he laid him down on his grassy couch and slept, while ministering spirits, with their roseate wings, fanned his glowing cheeks, and kissed his lips of innocence with that fervent love which makes *the Heaven!*

Never did the wise Ulysses¹¹ take more pains with his beloved Telemachus, than did Mr. Washington with George, to inspire him with an *early love of truth*. "Truth, George," (said he) "is the loveliest quality of youth. I would ride fifty miles, my son, to see the little boy whose heart is so *honest*, and his lips so *pure*, that we may depend on every word he says. O how lovely does such a child appear in the eyes of every body! His parents dote on him; his relations glory in him; they are constantly praising him to their children, whom they beg to imitate him. They are often sending for him, to visit them; and receive him, when he comes, with as much joy as if he were a little angel, come to set pretty examples to their children.

"But, Oh! how different, George, is the case with the boy who is so given to lying, that nobody can believe a word he says! He is looked at with aversion wherever he goes, and parents dread to see him come among their children. Oh, George! my son! rather than see you come to this pass, dear as you are to my heart, gladly would I assist to nail you up in your little coffin, and follow you to your grave. Hard, indeed, would it be to me to give up my son, whose little feet are always so ready to run about with me, and whose fondly looking eyes and sweet prattle make so large a part of my happiness: but still I would give him up, rather than see him a common liar.

"Pa, (said George very seriously) do I ever tell lies?"

"No, George, I *thank God* you do not, my son; and I rejoice in the hope you never will. At least, you shall never, from me, have cause to be guilty of so shameful a thing. Many parents, indeed, even compel their children to this vile practice, by barbarously beating them for every little fault; hence, on the next offence, the little terrified creature slips out a *lie!* just to escape the rod. But as to yourself, George, you know I have *always* told you, and now tell you again, that, whenever by accident you do any thing wrong, which must often be the case, as you are but a poor little boy yet, without *experience* or *knowledge*, never tell a falsehood to conceal it; but come *bravely* up, my son, like a *little man*, and tell me of it: and instead of beating you, George, I will but the more honour and love you for it, my dear."

This, you'll say, was sowing good seed!—Yes, it was: and the crop, thank God, was, as I believe it ever will be, where a man acts the true parent, that is, the *Guardian Angel*, by his child.

The following anecdote is a *case in point*. It is too valuable to be lost, and too true to be doubted; for it was communicated to me by the same excellent lady to whom I am indebted for the last.

"When George," said she, "was about six years old, he was made the wealthy master of a *hatchet!* of which, like most little boys, he was immoderately fond, and was constantly going about chopping every thing that came in his way. One day, in the garden, where he often amused himself hacking his mother's pea-sticks, he unluckily tried the edge of his hatchet on the body of a beautiful young English cherry-tree, which he barked so terribly, that I don't believe the tree ever got the better of it. The next morning the old gentleman finding out what had befallen his tree, which, by the by, was a great favourite, came into the house, and with much warmth asked for the mischievous author, declaring at the same time, that he would not have taken five guineas for his tree. Nobody could tell him any thing about it. Presently George and his hatchet made their appearance. *George*, said his father, *do you know who killed that beautiful little cherry-tree yonder in the garden?* This was a *tough question*; and George staggered under it for a moment; but quickly recovered himself: and looking at his father, with the sweet face of youth brightened with the inexpressible charm

¹¹ Ulysses, hero of Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*, had a son named Telemachus.

of all-conquering truth, he bravely cried out, "*I can't tell a lie, Pa; you know I can't tell a lie. I did cut it with my hatchet.*"—*Run to my arms, you dearest boy*, cried his father in transports, *run to my arms; glad am I, George, that you killed my tree; for you have paid me for it a thousand fold. Such an act of heroism in my son, is more worth than a thousand trees, though blossomed with silver, and their fruits of purest gold.*

It was in this way, by interesting at once both his *heart* and *head*, that Mr. Washington conducted George with great ease and pleasure along the happy paths of virtue. But well knowing that his beloved charge, soon to be a man, would be left exposed to numberless temptations, both from himself and from others, his heart throbbed with the tenderest anxiety to make him acquainted with that great being, whom to know and love, is to possess the surest defence against vice, and the best of all motives to virtue and happiness. To startle George into a lively sense of his Maker, he fell upon the following very curious but impressive expedient:

One day he went into the garden, and prepared a little bed of finely pulverized earth, on which he wrote George's name at full, in large letters—then strewing in plenty of cabbage seed, he covered them up and smoothed all over nicely with the roller. This bed he purposely prepared close along side of a gooseberry walk, which happening at this time to be well hung with ripe fruit, he knew would be honoured with George's visits pretty regularly every day. Not many mornings had passed away before in came George, with eyes wild rolling, and his little cheeks ready to burst with *great news*.

"O Pa! come here! come here!"

"What's the matter, my son, what's the matter?"

"O come here, I tell you, Pa, come here! and I'll show you such a sight as you never saw in all your life time."

The old gentleman suspecting what George would be at, gave him his hand, which he seized with great eagerness, and tugging him along through the garden, led him up point blank to the bed whereon was inscribed, in large letters, and in all the freshness of newly sprung plants, the full name of

GEORGE WASHINGTON

"There, Pa!" said George, quite in an ecstasy of astonishment, "did you ever see such a sight in all your life time?"

"Why it seems like a curious affair, sure enough, George!"

"But, Pa, who did make it there, who did make it there?"

"It grew there by *chance*, I suppose my son."

"By *chance*, Pa! O no! no! it never did grow there by *chance*, Pa; indeed that it never did!"

"High! why not, my son?"

"Why, Pa, did you ever see any body's name in a plant bed before?"

"Well, but George, such a thing might happen, though you never saw it before!"

"Yes, Pa, but I did never see the little plants grow up so as to make *one single* letter of my name before. Now, how could they grow up so as to make *all* the letters of my name! and then standing one after another, to spell *my name so exactly!*—and all so neat and even too, at top and bottom!! O Pa, you must not say *chance* did all this. Indeed *somebody* did it; and I dare say now, Pa, you did do it just to scare *me*, because I am your little boy."

His father smiled, and said, "Well George, you have guessed right—I indeed *did* it; but not to *scare* you, my son; but to learn you a great thing which I wish you to understand. I want, my son, to introduce you to your *true* Father."

"High, Pa, an't *you* my *true* father, that has loved me, and been so good to me always?"

"Yes, George, I am your father as the world calls it: and I love you very dearly too. But yet with all my love for you, George, I am but a poor good-for-nothing sort of a father in comparison of one you have."

"Aye! I know, well enough whom you mean, Pa. You mean God Almighty, don't you?"

"Yes, my son, I mean him indeed. *He* is your *true* Father, George."

"But, Pa, where is God Almighty? I did never *see* him yet."

"True, my son; but though you never *saw* him, yet he is always with you. You did not see me when ten days ago I made this little plant bed, where you see your name in such beautiful green letters; but though you did not *see* me here, yet you know I was here!"

"Yes, Pa, that I do—I know you was here."

"Well then, and as my son could not believe that *chance* had made and put together so exactly the *letters* of his name, (though only sixteen) then how can he believe that *chance* could have made and put together all those millions and millions of things that are now so exactly fitted to his good? That my son may look at every thing around him, see! what fine eyes he has got! and a little pug nose to smell the sweet flowers! and pretty ears to hear sweet sound! and a lovely mouth for his bread and butter! and O, the little ivory teeth to cut it for him! and the dear little tongue to prattle with his father! and precious little hands and fingers to hold his playthings! and beautiful little feet for him to run about upon! and when my little rogue of a son is tired with running about, then the still night comes for him to lie down, and his mother sings, and the little crickets chirp him to sleep! and as soon as he has slept enough, and jumps up fresh and strong as a little buck, there the sweet golden light is ready for him! When he looks down into the water, there he sees the beautiful silver fishes for him! and up in the *trees* there are the apples, and peaches, and *thousands* of sweet fruits for him! and *all, all* around him, wherever my dear boy looks, he sees every thing just to his *wants and wishes*;—the bubbling springs with cool sweet water for him to drink! and the wood to make him sparkling fires when he is cold! and beautiful horses for him to ride! and strong oxen to work for him! and the *good* cows to give him milk! and bees to make sweet honey for his sweeter mouth! and the little lambs, with snowy wool, for beautiful clothes for him! Now, these and all the *ten thousand thousand other good things* more than my son can ever think of, and all so exactly fitted to his use and *delight*... Now how could chance ever have done all this for my little son? Oh George! ..."

He would have gone on, but George, who had hung upon his father's words with looks and eyes of all-devouring attention, here broke out—

"Oh Pa, that's enough! that's enough! It can't be chance, indeed, it can't be chance, that made and gave me all these things."

"What was it then, do you think, my son?"

"Indeed, Pa, I don't know, unless it was *God Almighty!*"

"Yes, George, he it was, my son, and nobody else."

"Well, but Pa, (continued George) does God Almighty give me *every thing*? Don't you give me *some things*, Pa?"

"I give *you* something, indeed! Oh! how can I give you any thing, George! I, who have nothing on earth that I can call my own, no, not even the breath I draw!"

"High, Pa! isn't that great big house your house, and this garden, and the horses yonder, and oxen, and sheep, and trees, and every thing, isn't all yours, Pa?"

"Oh no! my son! no! Why you make me shrink into nothing, George, when you talk of all these belonging to *me*, who can't even make a *grain of sand*! Oh, how could I, my son,

have given life to those great oxen and horses, when I can't give life even to a fly?—no! for if the poorest fly were killed, it is not your father, George, nor all the men in the world, that could ever make him alive again!"

At this, George fell into a profound silence, while his pensive looks showed that his youthful soul was labouring with some idea never felt before. Perhaps it was at that moment, that the good Spirit of God ingrafted on his heart that germ of *piety*, which filled his after life with so many of the precious fruits of *morality*.

Chapter III

George's father dies—his education continued by his mother—his behaviour under school-master Williams

Thus pleasantly, on wings of down, passed away the few short years of little George's and his father's *earthly* acquaintance. Sweetly ruled by the sceptre of REASON, George almost adored his father; and thus sweetly *obeyed* with all the cheerfulness of Love, his father doted on George... And though very different in their years, yet parental and filial love rendered them so mutually dear, that the old gentleman was often heard to regret, that *the school took his little companion so much from him*—while George, on the other hand, would often quit his playmates to run home and converse with his more beloved father.

But George was not long to enjoy the pleasure or the profit of such a companion; for scarcely had he attained his tenth year, before his father was seized with the gout in the stomach, which carried him off in a few days. George was not at home when his father was taken ill. He was on a visit to some of his cousins in Chotank, about twenty miles off; and his father, unwilling to interrupt his pleasures, for it was but seldom that he visited, would not at first allow him to be sent for. But finding that he was going very fast, he begged that they would send for him in all haste ... he often asked if he was come, and said how happy he should be, once more to see his little son, and give him his blessing before he died. But alas! he never enjoyed that last mournful pleasure; for George did not reach home until a few hours before his father's death, and then he was speechless! The moment he alighted, he ran into the chamber where he lay. But oh! what were his feelings when he saw the sad change that had passed upon him! when he beheld those eyes, late so *bright* and *fond*, now reft of all their lustre, faintly looking on him from their hollow sockets, and through swelling tears, in mute but melting language, bidding him a LAST, LAST FAREWELL! ... Rushing with sobs and cries, he fell upon his father's neck ... he kissed him a thousand and a thousand times, and bathed his clay-cold face with scalding tears.

O happiest youth! Happiest in that love, which thus, to its enamoured soul strained an aged an[d] expiring sire. O! worthiest to be the founder of a JUST and EQUAL GOVERNMENT, lasting as thy own deathless name! And O! happiest old man! thus luxuriously expiring in the arms of such a child! O! well requited for teaching him that LOVE OF HIS GOD (*the only fountain of every virtuous love*) in return for which he gave thee ('twas all he had) *himself—his fondest company—his sweetest looks and prattle*. He now gives thee his little strong embraces, with artless sighs and tears; faithful to thee still, his feet will follow thee to thy grave: and when thy beloved corse is let down to the stones of the pit, with streaming eyes he will rush to the brink, to take *one more* look, while his bursting heart will give thee its last trembling cry... *O my father! my father!*

But, though he had lost his best of friends, yet he never lost those divine sentiments which that friend had so carefully inculcated. On the contrary, interwoven with the fibres of his heart, they seemed to "grow with his growth, and to strengthen with his strength." The memory of his father, often bathed with a tear—the memory of his father now sleeping in his grave, was felt to impose a more sacred obligation to do what, 'twas known, would rejoice his departed shade. This was very happily displayed, in every part of his deportment, from the moment of his earliest intercourse with mankind.

Soon after the death of his father, his mother sent him down to Westmoreland, the place of his nativity, where he lived with his half-brother Augustin, and went to school to a Mr. Williams, an excellent teacher in that neighbourhood. He carried with him his virtues, his zeal for unblemished character, his love of truth, and detestation of whatever was false and base. A gilt chariot with richest robes and liveried servants, could not half so substantially have befriended him; for in a very short time, so completely had his virtues secured the love and confidence of the boys, his word was just as current among them as a law. A very aged gentleman, formerly a school-mate of his, has often assured me, (while pleasing recollection brightened his furrowed cheeks,) that nothing was more common, when the boys were in high dispute about a question of fact, than for some little shaver among the mimic heroes, to call out "well boys! George Washington was there; George Washington was there; he knows all about it; and if he don't say it was so, then we will give it up,"—"done," said the adverse party. Then away they would trot to hunt for George. Soon as his verdict was heard, the party favoured would begin to crow, and then all hands would return to play again.

About five years after the death of his father, he quitted school for ever, leaving the boys in tears for his departure: for he had ever lived among them, in the spirit of a brother. He was never guilty of so brutish a practice as that of fighting them himself, nor would he, when able to prevent it, allow them to fight one another. If he could not disarm their savage passions by his arguments, he would instantly go to the master, and inform him of their barbarous intentions.

"The boys," said the same good old gentleman, "were often angry with George for this"—But he used to say, "angry or not angry, you shall never, boys, have my consent to a practice so shocking! shocking even in slaves and dogs; then how utterly scandalous in little boys at school, who ought to look on one another as brothers. And what must be the feelings of our tender parents, when, instead of seeing us come home smiling and lovely, as the JOYS OF THEIR HEARTS! they see us creeping in like young blackguards, with our heads bound up, black eyes, and bloody clothes! And what is all this for? Why, that we may get praise!! But the truth is, a quarrelsome boy was never sincerely praised! Big boys, of the vulgar sort, indeed may praise him; but it is only as they would a silly game cock, that fights for their pastime—and the little boys are sure to praise him, but it is only as they would a bull dog—to keep him from tearing them!!"

Some of his historians have said, and many believe, that Washington was a *Latin scholar!* But 'tis an error. He never learned a syllable of Latin. His second and last teacher, Mr. Williams, was indeed a capital hand—but not at Latin; for of that he understood perhaps as little as Balaam's ass¹²—but at reading, spelling, English grammar, arithmetic, surveying, book-keeping and geography, he was indeed famous. And in these useful arts, 'tis said, he often boasted that he had made young George Washington as great a scholar as himself.

12 Balaam was an Old Testament prophet (Num. 22–24) whose donkey, although it was only a beast of burden, recognized an angel of the Lord.

Born to be a soldier, Washington early discovered symptoms of nature's intentions towards him. In his 11th year, while at school under old Mr. Hobby, he used to divide his play-mates into two parties, or armies. One of these, for distinction sake, was called *French*, the other *American*. A big boy at the school, named William Bustle, commanded the former, George commanded the latter. And every day, at play-time, with corn-stalks for muskets, and calabashes for drums, the two armies would turn out, and march, and counter-march, and file off or fight their mimic battles, with great fury. This was fine sport for George, whose passion for active exercise was so strong, that at play-time no weather could keep him within doors. His fair cousins, who visited at his mother's, used to complain, that "George was not fond of their company, like other boys; but soon as he had got his task, would run out to play." But such trifling play as marbles and tops he could never abide. They did not afford him exercise enough. His delight was in that of the manliest sort, which, by stringing the limbs and swelling the muscles, promotes the kindest flow of blood and spirits. At jumping with a long pole, or heaving heavy weights, for his years he hardly had an equal. And as to running, the swift-footed Achilles could scarcely have matched his speed.

"Egad! he ran wonderfully," said my amiable and aged friend, John Fitzhugh, esq. who knew him well. "We had nobody hereabouts, that could come near him. There was young Langhom Dade, of Westmoreland, a confounded clean made, tight young fellow, and a mighty swift runner too ... but then he was no match for George: Langy, indeed, did not like to give it up; and would brag that he had sometimes brought George to a tie. But I believe he was mistaken: for I have seen them run together many a time; and George always beat him easy enough."

Col. Lewis Willis, his play-mate and kinsman, has been heard to say, that he has often seen him throw a stone across Rappahannock, at the lower ferry of Fredericksburg. It would be no easy matter to find a man, now-a-days, who could do it.

Indeed, his father before him was a man of extraordinary strength. His gun, which to this day is called *Washington's fowling-piece*, and now the property of Mr. Harry Fitzhugh, of Chotank, is of such enormous weight, that not one man in a hundred can fire it without a rest. And yet throughout that country it is said, that he made nothing of holding it off at arms length, and blazing away at the swans on Potomac; of which he has been known to kill *rank and file*, seven or eight at a shot.

But to return to George... It appears that from the start he was a boy of an uncommonly warm and noble heart; insomuch that Lawrence, though but his *half-brother*, took such a liking to him, even above his own brother Augustin, that he would always have George with him when he could get him; and often pressed him to come and live with him. But, as if led by some secret impulse, George declined the offer, and went up, as we have seen; to work, in the back-woods, as Lord Fairfax's surveyor! However, when Lawrence was taken with the consumption, and advised by his physicians to make a trip to Bermuda, George could not resist any longer, but hastened down to his brother at Mount Vernon, and went with him to Bermuda. It was at Bermuda that George took the small-pox, which marked him rather agreeably than otherwise. Lawrence never recovered, but returned to Virginia, where he died just after his brother George had fought his hard battle against the French and Indians, at Fort Necessity, as the reader will presently learn.

Lawrence did not live to see George after that; but he lived to hear of his fame; for as the French and Indians were at that time a great public terror, the people could not help being very loud in their praise of a youth, who with so slender a force had dared to meet them in their own country, and had given them such a check.

And when Lawrence heard of his favourite young brother, that he had fought so gallantly for his country, and that the whole land was filled with his praise, he wept for joy. And

such is the victory of love over nature, that though fast sinking under the fever and cough of a consumption in its extreme stage, he did not seem to mind it, but spent his last moments in fondly talking of his brother George, who, he said, "he had always believed, would one day or other be a great man!"

On opening his will, it was found that George had lost nothing by his dutiful and affectionate behaviour to his brother Lawrence. For having now no issue, (his only child, a little daughter, lately dying) he left to George all his rich lands in Berkley, together with his great estate on Potomac, called MOUNT VERNON,¹³ in honour of old Admiral Vernon, by whom he had been treated with great politeness, while a volunteer with him at the unfortunate siege of Carthage, in 1741.

Chapter XIII

Character of Washington

Let the poor witling argue all he can,
It is Religion still that makes the man.

When the children of the years to come, hearing his great name re-echoed from every lip, shall say to their fathers, "what was it that raised Washington to such height of glory?" let them be told that it was HIS GREAT TALENTS, CONSTANTLY GUIDED AND GUARDED BY RELIGION. For how shall man, *frail man*, prone to inglorious ease and pleasure, ever ascend the arduous steps of virtue, unless animated by the *mighty hopes* of religion? Or what shall stop him in his swift descent to infamy and vice, if unawed by that dread power which proclaims to the guilty that their secret crimes are seen, and shall not go unpunished? Hence the wise, in all ages, have pronounced, that "there never was a truly great man without religion."

There have, indeed, been *courageous generals*, and *cunning statesmen*, without religion, but mere courage or cunning, however paramount, never yet made a man great.

Admit that this can conquer, that can cheat!
'Tis phrase absurd to call a villain *great!*
Who wickedly is wise, or madly brave,
Is but the more a fool, the more a knave.

No! To be truly great, a man must have not only great talents, but those talents must be constantly exerted on great, i.e. good actions—and *perseveringly* too—for if he should turn aside to vice—farewell to his heroism. Hence, when Epaminondas was asked which was the greatest man, himself or Pelopidas?¹⁴ he replied, "wait till we are dead: [""] meaning that the all of heroism depends on *perseverance* in great good actions. But, sensual and grovelling as man is, what can incline and elevate him to those things like religion, that divine power, to

13 George Washington inherited this 5,000-acre estate (in Virginia) from his elder half brother, Lawrence. It was named for Admiral Edward Vernon, with whom Lawrence had served in the Caribbean. After his father's death, George spent part of his youth at Mount Vernon with Lawrence.

14 The Theban leaders Epaminondas and Pelopidas worked together to break the military dominance of Sparta and raise Thebes to become the central power in ancient Greece for a short period (371–62 BCE).

whom alone it belongs to present those vast and eternal *goods* and *ills* which best alarm our fears, enrapture our hopes, inflame the worthiest loves, rouse the truest avarice, and in short touch every spring and passion of our souls in favour of virtue and noble actions.

Did SHAME restrain Alcibiades from a base action in the presence of Socrates?¹⁵ "Behold," says religion, "a greater than Socrates is here!"

Did LOVE embolden Jacob¹⁶ to brave fourteen years of slavery for an earthly beauty? Religion springs that eternal love, for whose sake good men can even glory in laborious duties.

Did the ambition of a civic crown animate Scipio¹⁷ to heroic deeds? Religion holds a crown, at the sight of which the laurels of a Caesar¹⁸ droop to weeds.

Did avarice urge Cortez¹⁹ through a thousand toils and dangers for wealth? Religion points to those treasures in heaven, compared to which all diamond beds and mines of massy gold are but trash.

Did good Aurelius²⁰ study the happiness of his subjects for this world's glory? Religion displays that world of glory, where those who have laboured to make others happy, shall "shine like stars for ever and ever."

Does the fear of death deter man from horrid crimes? Religion adds infinite horrors to that fear—it warns them of a death both of soul and body in hell.

In short, what motives under heaven can restrain men from vices and crimes, and urge them on, full stretch, after individual and national happiness, like those of religion? For lack of these motives, alas! how many who once dazzled the world with the glare of their exploits, are now eclipsed and set to rise no more!

There was Arnold, who, in courage and military talents, glittered in the same firmament with Washington, and, for a while, his face shone like the star of the morning; but alas! for lack of Washington's religion, he soon fell, like Lucifer, from a heaven of glory, into an abyss of never-ending infamy.

And there was general Charles Lee,²¹ too, confessedly a great wit, a great scholar, a great soldier, but, after all, not a great man. For, through lack of that magnanimous benevolence which religion inspires, he fell into the vile state of *envy*, and, on the plains of Monmouth, rather than fight to immortalize Washington, he chose to retreat and disgrace himself.

There was the gallant general Hamilton²² also—a gigantic genius—a *statesman* fit to rule the mightiest monarchy—a *soldier* "fit to stand by Washington, and give command." But alas! for

15 Alcibiades (450–404 BCE) was an early student and ally of the great Greek philosopher Socrates (470–399 BCE), but later abandoned Socrates's teachings for political power and its rewards.

16 Jacob waited 14 years to marry Rachel (Gen. 29).

17 Name of two Roman generals, both renowned for their brilliant strategies in the wars between Rome and Carthage.

18 Julius Caesar (100–44 BCE) was a great Roman general and politician who played a pivotal role in turning the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire. His military exploits often were rewarded with the much-coveted victory crown of laurel leaves.

19 Hernán Cortés (1485–1547) was an early explorer of Central America who was driven by a thirst for the riches and fame that accompanied the conquest of new lands for Spain.

20 Marcus Aurelius (121–180) was both a Roman emperor and a distinguished stoic philosopher who wrote extensively on how to best pursue contentment amid life's tribulations.

21 At the Revolutionary War battle of Monmouth in 1778, Charles Lee ordered a retreat that cost General Washington a victory. He was later court-martialed for this act.

22 Not known for his commitment to religion, Alexander Hamilton (1755–1804) was an immensely pragmatic and gifted leader, both during and after the Revolution. His career was cut short when he was killed in a duel by Aaron Burr.

lack of religion, see how all was lost! preferring the praise of man to that praise "*which cometh from God,*" and pursuing the phantom honour up to the pistol's mouth, he is cut off at once from life and greatness, and leaves his family and country to mourn his hapless fate.

And there was the fascinating colonel Burr.²³ A man born to be *great*—brave as Caesar, polished as Chesterfield,²⁴ eloquent as Cicero,²⁵ and, lifted by the strong arm of his country, he rose fast, and bade fair soon to fill the place where Washington had sat. But, alas! lacking religion, he could not wait the spontaneous fall of the rich honours ripening over his head, but in evil hour stretched forth his hand to the forbidden fruit, and by that fatal act was cast out from the Eden of our republic, and amerced of greatness for ever.

But why should I summon the Arnolds and Lees, the Hamiltons and Burrs of the earth to give sad evidence, that no valour, no genius alone can make men great? do we not daily meet with instances, of youth amiable and promising as their fond parents' wishes, who yet, merely for lack of religion, soon make shipwreck of every precious hope, sacrificing their gold to gamblers, their health to harlots, and their glory to grog—making conscience their curse, this life a purgatory, and the next a hell!! In fact, a young man, though of the finest talents and education, without religion, is but like a gorgeous ship without ballast. Highly painted and with flowing canvas, she launches out on the deep; and, during a smooth sea and gentle breeze, she moves along stately as the pride of ocean; but, as soon as the stormy winds descend, and the blackening billows begin to roll, suddenly she is overset, and disappears for ever. But who is this coming, thus gloriously along, with masts towering to heaven, and his sails white, looming like the mountain of snows? Who is it but "*Columbia's first and greatest son!*" whose talents, like the sails of a mighty ship spread far and wide, catching the gales of heaven, while his capacious soul, stored with the rich ballast of religion, remains firm and unshaken as the ponderous rock. The warm zephyrs of prosperity breathe meltingly upon him—the rough storms of adversity descend—the big billows of affliction dash, but nothing can move him; his eye is fixed on God! the *present joys* of an approving conscience, and the hope of that glory which fadeth not away; these comfort and support him.

"*There exists,*" says Washington, "*in the economy of nature, an inseparable connexion between duty and advantage.*"—The whole life of this great man bears glorious witness to the truth of this his favourite aphorism. At the giddy age of fourteen, when the spirits of youth are all on tiptoe for freedom and adventures, he felt a strong desire to go to sea; but, very opposite to his wishes, his mother declared that she could not bear to part with him. His trial must have been very severe; for I have been told that a midshipman's commission was actually in his pocket—his trunk of clothes on board the ship—his honour in some sort pledged—his young companions importunate with him to go—and his whole soul panting for the promised pleasures of the voyage; but religion whispered "*honour thy mother, and grieve not the spirit of her who bore thee.*"

23 Aaron Burr (1756–1836) attained important posts, including vice president under Thomas Jefferson, but is remembered chiefly for the duel in which he killed Alexander Hamilton. His reputation and career never fully recovered after Hamilton's death.

24 Philip Dromer Stanhope (1694–1773), the 4th Earl of Chesterfield, was a famous British statesman and diplomat. His *Letters to His Son* and *Letters to His Godson* became tremendously popular guides on manners.

25 Along with the Athenian, Demosthenes (384–322 BCE), the Roman, Marcus Tullius Cicero, (106–43 BCE) was widely considered one of the two greatest orators of the ancient Western world.

Instantly the glorious boy sacrificed inclination to duty—dropt all thoughts of the voyage, and gave tears of joy to his widowed mother, in clasping to her bosom a dear child who could deny himself to make her happy.

'Tis said, that, when he saw the last boat going on board, with several of his youthful friends in it—when he saw the flash and heard the report of the signal gun for sailing, and the ship in all her pride of canvas rounding off for sea, he could not bear it, but turned away, and, half choaked with grief, went into the room where his mother sat. "*George, my dear!*" said she, "*have you already repented that you made your mother so happy just now?*" Upon this, falling on her bosom, with his arms round her neck, and a gush of tears, he said, "*my dear mother, I must not deny that I am sorry; but, indeed, I feel that I should be much more sorry, were I on board the ship, and knew that you were unhappy.*"

"Well," replied she embracing him tenderly, "*God, I hope, will reward my dear boy for this, some day or other.*" Now see here, young reader, and learn that he who prescribes our duty, is able to reward it. Had George left his fond mother to a broken heart, and gone off to sea, 'tis next to certain that he would never have taken that active part in the French and Indian war, which, by securing to him the hearts of his countrymen, paved the way for all his future greatness.

Now for another instance of the wonderful effect of religion on Washington's fortune. Shortly after returning from the war of Cuba, Lawrence (his *half* brother) was taken with the consumption, which made him so excessively fretful, that his *own* brother, Augustin, would seldom come near him. But George, whose heart was early under the softening and sweetening influences of religion, felt such a tenderness for his poor sick brother, that he not only put up with his peevishness, but seemed, from what I have been told, never so happy as when he was with him. He accompanied him to the island of Bermuda, in quest of health—and, after their return to Mount Vernon, often as his duty to lord Fairfax permitted, he would come down from the back woods to see him. And while with him he was always contriving or doing something to cheer and comfort his brother. Sometimes with his gun he would go out in quest of partridges and snipes, and other fine flavoured game, to tempt his brother's sickly appetite, and gain him strength. At other times he would sit for hours and read to him some entertaining book—and, when his cough came on, he would support his drooping head, and wipe the cold dew from his forehead, or the phlegm from his lips, and give him his medicine, or smooth his pillow; and all with such alacrity and artless tenderness as proved the sweetest cordial to his brother's spirits. For he was often heard to say to the Fairfax family, into which he married, that "*he should think nothing of his sickness, if he could but always have his brother George with him.*" Well, what was the consequence? Why, when Lawrence came to die, he left almost the whole of his large estate to George, which served as another noble step to his future greatness.

For further proof of "*the inseparable connexion between duty and advantage,*" let us look at Washington's conduct through the French and Indian war.²⁶ To a man of his uncommon military mind, and skill in the arts of Indian warfare, the pride and precipitance of general Braddock²⁷ must have been excessively disgusting and disheartening. But we hear nothing of his *threatening* either to leave or supplant Braddock. On the contrary, he nobly brooked

26 The French and Indian War was a nine-year conflict (1754–63) in which Britain defeated France for control of North America.

27 Edward Braddock (1695–1755), best known as an unsuccessful British commander in the French and Indian War, died of wounds sustained in battle.

his rude manners, gallantly obeyed his rash orders, and, as far as in him lay, endeavoured to correct their fatal tendencies.

And, after the death of Braddock, and the desertion of Dunbar,²⁸ that weak old man, governor Dinwiddie,²⁹ added infinitely to his hardships and hazards, by appointing him to the defence of the frontiers, and yet withholding the necessary forces and supplies. But though by that means, the western country was continually overrun by the enemy, and cruelly deluged in blood—though much wearied in body by marchings and watchings, and worse tortured in soul, by the murders and desolations of the inhabitants, he shrinks not from *duty*—still seeking the smiles of conscience as his greatest good; and as the sorest evil, dreading its frowns, he bravely maintained his ground, and, after three years of unequalled dangers and difficulties, succeeded.

Well, what was the consequence? why it drew upon him, from his admiring countrymen, such an unbounded confidence in his principles and patriotism, as secured to him the command of the *American armies*, in the revolutionary war!

And there again the connexion between "*duty and advantage*" was as gloriously displayed. For though congress was, in legal and political knowledge an enlightened body, and for patriotism equal to the senators of Republican Rome, yet certainly in military matters they were no more to be compared to him, than those others were to Hannibal. But still, though they were constantly thwarting his counsels, and in place of good soldiers sending him raw militia, thus compelling inactivity, or ensuring defeat—dragging out the war—dispiriting the nation—and disgracing him, yet we hear from him no gusts of passion; no dark intrigues to supplant congress, and, with the help of an idolizing nation and army, to snatch the power from their hands, and make himself king. On the contrary, he continues to treat congress as a virtuous son his respected parents. He points out wiser measures, but in defect of their adoption, makes the best use of those they give him, and at length, through the mighty blessing of God, established the independence of his country, and then went back to his plough.

Well, what was the consequence? why, these noble acts so completely filled up the measure of his country's love for him, as to give him that first of all felicities, the felicity to be the guardian angel of his country, and able by the magic of his name, to scatter every cloud of danger that gathered over her head.

For example, at the close of the war, when the army, about to be disbanded without their wages, was wrought up to such a pitch of discontent and rage, as seriously to threaten *civil war*, see the wonderful influence which their love for him gave him over themselves! In the height of their passion, and that a very natural passion too, he but makes a short speech to them, and the storm is laid! the tumult subsides! and the soldiers, after all their hardships, consent to ground their arms, and return home without a penny in their pockets!!!

28 Thomas Dunbar (? -1767) served alongside Washington under Braddock during the French and Indian War. After Braddock was killed along with many of his troops, Dunbar withdrew with his command to the safety of Philadelphia, leaving much of Virginia unprotected from the French and Indians.

29 Robert Dinwiddie (1690? -1770) was governor of Virginia during the French and Indian War. After Braddock's death, he made Washington responsible for defending the Virginia frontier. Washington constantly sought more supplies and troops from Dinwiddie, who was slow to provide them.

Also, in that very alarming dispute between Vermont and Pennsylvania, where the furious parties, in spite of all the efforts of congress and their governors, had actually shouldered their guns, and were dragging on their cannon for a bloody fight—Washington only dropt them a few lines of his advice, and instantly they faced about for their homes, and laying by their weapons, seized their ploughs again, like dutiful children, on whose kindling passions a beloved father had shaken his hoary locks!!

And, in the western counties of Pennsylvania, where certain blind patriots, affecting to strain at the gnat of a small excise, but ready enough to swallow the hellish camel of rebellion, had kindled the flames of civil war,³⁰ and thrown the whole nation into a tremor, Washington had just to send around a circular to the people of the union, stating the infinite importance of maintaining the SACRED REIGN OF THE LAWS, and instantly twenty thousand well-armed volunteers dashed out among the insurgents, and without shedding a drop of blood, extinguished the insurrection!

In short, it were endless to enumerate the many horrid insurrections and bloody wars which were saved to this country by Washington, and all through the divine force of *early religion!* for it was this that enabled him inflexibly to do his duty, by imitating God in his glorious works of wisdom and benevolence; and all the rest followed as naturally as light follows the sun.

We have seen at page 15 of this little work,³¹ with what pleasure the youthful Washington hung upon his father's lips, while descanting on the adorable wisdom and benevolent designs of God in all parts of this beautiful and harmonious creation. By such lessons in the book of nature, this virtuous youth was easily prepared for the far higher and surer lectures of revelation, I mean that blessed gospel which contains the MORAL philosophy of heaven. There he learnt, that "*God is love*"—and that all that he desires, with respect to men, is to glorify himself in their happiness—and since virtue is indispensable to that happiness, the infinite and eternal weight of God's attributes must be for virtue, and against vice; and consequently that God will sooner or later gloriously reward the one and punish the other. This was the creed of Washington. And looking on it as the only basis of human virtue and happiness, he very cordially embraced it himself, and wished for nothing so much as to see all others embrace it.

I have often been told by colonel Ben Temple, (of King William county, Virginia), who was one of his aids in the French and Indian war, that he has frequently known Washington, on the sabbath, read the scriptures and pray with his regiment, in the absence of the chaplain; and also that, on sudden and unexpected visits into his marquee, he has, more than once, found him on his knees at his devotions.

The Reverend Mr. Lee Massey, long a rector of Washington's parish, and from early life his intimate, has assured me a thousand times, that "he never knew so constant a churchman as Washington. And his behaviour in the house of God," added my reverend friend, "was so deeply reverential, that it produced the happiest effects on my congregation, and greatly assisted me in my moralizing labours. No company ever kept him from church. I have been many a time at Mount Vernon on the sabbath morning, when his

30. In the years immediately following the American Revolution, the United States was threatened by civil war. Everything from state borders to taxation was in dispute, with no central power to adjudicate matters. Washington attempted to defuse these problems by working to establish a strong, centralized federal government.

31. See p. 74 of this anthology.

breakfast table was filled with guests. But to him they furnished no pretext for neglecting his God, and losing the satisfaction of setting a good example. For instead of staying at home out of a false complaisance to them, he used constantly to invite them to accompany him."

His secretary, judge Harrison, has frequently been heard to say, that, "whenever the general would be spared from camp on the sabbath, he never failed riding out to some neighbouring church, to join those who were publicly worshipping the Great Creator."

And while he resided at Philadelphia, as president of the United States, his constant and cheerful attendance on divine service was such as to convince every reflecting mind that he deemed no levee so honourable as that of his Almighty Maker; no pleasures equal to those of devotion; and no business a sufficient excuse for neglecting his supreme benefactor.

In the winter of '77, while Washington, with the American army lay encamped at Valley Forge, a certain good old friend, of the respectable family and name of Potts, if I mistake not, had occasion to pass through the woods near head-quarters. Treading his way along the venerable grove, suddenly he heard the sound of a human voice, which as he advanced increased on his ear, and at length became like the voice of one speaking much in earnest. As he approached the spot with a cautious step, whom should he behold, in a dark natural bower of ancient oaks, but the commander in chief of the American armies on his knees at prayer! Motionless with surprise, friend Potts continued on the place till the general, having ended his devotions, arose, and, with a countenance of angel serenity, retired to head-quarters: friend Potts then went home, and on entering his parlour called out to his wife, "Sarah, my dear! Sarah! All's well! all's well! George Washington will yet prevail!"

"What's the matter, Isaac?" replied she; "thee seems moved."

"Well, if I seem moved, 'tis no more than what I am. I have this day seen what I never expected. Thee knows that I always thought the sword and the gospel utterly inconsistent; and that no man could be a soldier and a christian at the same time. But George Washington has this day convinced me of my mistake."

He then related what he had seen, and concluded with this prophetic remark—"If George Washington be not a man of God, I am greatly deceived—and still more shall I be deceived if God do not, through him, work out a great salvation for America."

When he was told that the British troops at Lexington, on the memorable 19th of April, 1775, had fired on and killed several of the Americans, he replied, "I grieve for the death of my countrymen, but rejoice that the British are still so determined to keep God on our side," alluding to that noble sentiment which he has since so happily expressed; viz. "*The smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained.*"

When called by his country in 1775, to lead her free-born sons against the arms of Britain, what charming modesty, what noble self-distrust, what pious confidence in Heaven, appeared in all his answers. "*My diffidence in my own abilities, says he, was superseded by a confidence in the rectitude of our cause and the patronage of Heaven.*"

And when called to the presidency by the unanimous voice of the nation, thanking him for his great services past, with anticipations of equally great to come, his answer deserves approbation.

"*When I contemplate the interposition of providence, as it was visibly manifested in guiding us through the revolution, in preparing us for the reception of a general government, and in conciliating the good will of the people of America towards one another after its adoption; I feel myself oppressed and almost overwhelmed with a sense of the divine munificence. I feel that nothing is due to my personal agency in all those complicated and wonderful events, except what can simply be attributed to the exertions of an honest zeal for the good of my country.*"

And when he presented himself for the first time before that august body, the congress of the U. States, April 30th, 1789—when he saw before him the pride of Columbia in her chosen sons, assembled to consult how best to strengthen the chain of love between the states—to preserve friendship and harmony with foreign powers—to secure the blessings of civil and religious liberty—and to build up our young republic a great and happy people among the nations of the earth—never patriot entered on such important business with fairer hopes, whether we consider the unanimity and confidence of the citizens, or his own and the abilities and virtues of his fellow-counsellors.

But all this would not do; nothing short of the *divine friendship* could satisfy Washington. Feeling the magnitude, difficulty, and danger of managing such an assemblage of communities and interests; dreading the machinations of bad men, and well knowing the insufficiency of all second causes, even the *best*; he piously reminds congress of the wisdom of imploring the benediction of the *great first Cause*, without which he knew that his beloved country could never prosper.

"It would," says he, "be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe; who presides in the councils of nations; and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that his benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States, a government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes, and may enable every instrument employed in its administration to execute with success the functions allotted to his charge. In tendering this homage to the great Author of every public and private good, I assure myself that it expresses your sentiments not less than my own; nor those of my fellow-citizens at large less than either. No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of men, more than the people of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency. These reflections, arising out of the present crisis, have forced themselves too strongly on my mind to be suppressed. You will join with me, I trust, in thinking, that there are none, under the influence of which the proceedings of a new and free government can more auspiciously commence."

And after having come near to the close of this the most sensible and virtuous speech ever made to a sensible and virtuous representation of a free people, he adds—"I shall take my present leave: but not without resorting *once more* to the benign Parent of the human race in humble supplication, that, since he has been pleased to favour the American people with opportunities for deliberating with perfect tranquillity, and dispositions for deciding with unparalleled unanimity, on a form of government for the security of their union, and the advancement of their happiness; so his divine blessings may be equally conspicuous in the enlarged views, the temperate consultations, and the wise measures, on which the success of this government must depend."

In this constant disposition to look for national happiness only in national morals, flowing from the *sublime* affections and blessed hopes of religion, Washington agreed with those great legislators of nations, Moses, Lycurgus, and Numa.³² "*I ask not gold for Spartans,*" said Lycurgus. "*Virtue is better than all gold.*" The event showed his wisdom. The Spartans were invincible all the days of their own virtue, even 500 years.

"I ask not wealth for Israel," cried Moses.—"But O that they were wise!—that they did but fear God and keep his commandments! the Lord himself would be their sun and

³² All famous lawmakers of the ancient world: Moses for the Israelites, Lycurgus for the Spartans and Numa for the Romans.

shield." The event proved Moses a true prophet. For while they were religious they were unconquerable. "United as brothers, swift as eagles, stronger than lions, one could chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight."

"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to the prosperity of a nation," says Washington, "religion is the indispensable support. Volumes could not trace all its connexions with private and public happiness. Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life itself, if there be no fear of God on the minds of those who give their oaths in courts of justice!"

But some will tell us, that *human laws* are sufficient for the purpose!

Human laws!—Human nonsense! For how often, even where the cries and screams of the wretched called aloud for lightning-speeded vengeance, have we not seen the sword of human law loiter in its coward scabbard, afraid of angry royalty? Did not that vile queen Jezebel,³³ having a mind to compliment her husband with a vineyard belonging to poor Naboth, suborn a couple of villains to take a false oath against him, and then cause him to be dragged out with his little motherless, crying babes, and barbarously stoned to death?

Great God! what bloody tragedies have been acted on the poor ones of the earth, by kings and great men, who were *above* the laws, and had no sense of religion to keep them in awe! And if men be not above the laws, yet what horrid crimes! what ruinous robberies! what wide-wasting flames! what cruel murders may they not commit in *secret*, if they be not withheld by the sacred arm of religion! "In vain, therefore," says Washington, "would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should do any thing to discountenance religion and morality, those great pillars of human happiness, those firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them."

But others have said, and with a serious face too, that a *sense of honour*, is sufficient to preserve men from base actions! O blasphemy to sense! Do we not daily hear of *men of honour*, by dice and cards, draining their fellow-citizens of the last cent, reducing them to a dung-hill, or driving them to a pistol? Do we not daily hear of *men of honour* corrupting their neighbours' wives and daughters, and then murdering their husbands and brothers in duels? Bind such selfish, such inhuman beings, by a sense of honour!! Why not bind roaring lions with cobwebs? "No," exclaims Washington, "whatever a sense of honour may do on men of refined education, and on minds of a peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail, in exclusion of religious principles."

And truly Washington had abundant reason, from his own *happy experience*, to recommend religion so heartily to others.

For besides all those inestimable favours which he received from her at the hands of her celestial daughters, the *Virtues*; she threw over him her own magic mantle of *Character*. And it was this that immortalized Washington. By inspiring his countrymen with the profoundest veneration for him as the *best of men*, it naturally smoothed his way to supreme command; so that when War, that monster of hell, came on roaring against America, with all his death's heads and garments rolled in blood, the nation unanimously placed Washington at the head of their armies, from a natural persuasion that so good a man must be the peculiar favourite of Heaven, and the fastest friend of his country. How far this precious instinct in favour of goodness was corrected, or how far Washington's conduct was honourable to religion and glorious to himself and country, bright ages to come, and happy millions yet unborn, will, we hope, declare.

³³ Jezebel was King Ahab's queen in the Old Testament (1 Kings 17–21). She has become synonymous with the wicked, treacherous woman who stops at nothing to get her way.