

W. B. Reed

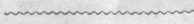
ORATION

DELIVERED AT PHILADELPHIA

BY

WILLIAM B. REED.

FEBRUARY 22, 1849.



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FEBRUARY 22 1840

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Printed and Published by J. B. REED

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FELLOW CITIZENS

You have called me here to a duty of high interest, and to me peculiar pleasure. We are met to commune on memories of days gone by and prospects of the instant future; for an Anniversary like this is a bright clasp that binds the present with the past. What shall the communion be? I put the question to rational American men, whose triumph they boast to be one of principle, and whose highest recompense for what they have done, whose best consolation for what they have suffered, is to see a restoration of the better days of the Republic, the days of statesmanship and good government, the days of true constitutional republicanism—of compliance with the People's will according to the forms and under the restraints of the Constitution. Let us then so commune to-day. Let us, on one of the two holydays of our country, take counsel together as

reasonable freemen should. Not as mercenary politicians who, the moment the victory is won, think only of plundering the camp—but as men from whose hearts, wearied by long solicitude for the public good, a great load is taken, and who are suddenly relieved by rational hopes of better days—who love with faith sincere the Constitution of their country—to use the plain words of him in whom our trust now is, who love it “as it was construed and acted on by our first Presidents.”* Let us take counsel, as Zachary Taylor, could he now enter this Hall and hear every word that is uttered, would wish us as his friends to do. Let us take counsel, if I may imagine it, as George Washington, could his Spirit revisit the land for which his active being and his living memory have done so much, might wish to see his countrymen counselling for the common good.

It is now sixty years since George Washington delivered, in the city of New York, his Inaugural Address as President of the United States. He was

* “If the good people think proper to elevate me to the highest office in their gift, I shall feel bound to serve them, if not from inclination, from a principle of duty, and will do so honestly and faithfully to the best of my ability, in accordance with the principles of the Constitution, as near as I can do so, as it was construed and acted on by our first Presidents.”—*General Taylor's letter to Mr. Ingersoll, August 3, 1847.*

then fifty-seven years of age, in the full vigour of his bodily and mental powers, and with an experience such as few men could boast. It was not altogether—it was not even chiefly, an experience of peace, for from his early boyhood, till within six years of his election, his life had been passed in the adventure of the wilderness or the perils of the camp. A soldier's life had given to him all the high peculiarities of a soldier's mind. There is in every word of that Inaugural Address a high sense of fair self-reliance, such as military habits of life generally inspire; but there is also an unaffected modesty which no one could suspect or question. These are his earnest, truth-telling words: "The magnitude and difficulty of the trust to which the voice of my country calls me, being sufficient to awaken in the wisest and most experienced of her citizens, a distrustful scrutiny of his qualifications, *overwhelm with despondence*, one, who, inheriting inferior endowments from nature, and unpractised in the duties of civil administration, ought to be peculiarly conscious of his own deficiencies." So spoke Washington as he approached the performance of the duty to which late in life the people had called him, and every word he uttered, was said in perfect sincerity and truth. He felt, and well he might, the singular responsibility he was to assume, and that if the experiment of the Constitution—the untried and infant Constitution—failed in his hands, heavy would be the

penalty. To that Constitution, to its defence, to its support, to its fair interpretation, he was pledged by obligations as sacred as those which bind a father to a child. He had been America's soldier in her days of Revolutionary trial, and knew how hard is the soldier's task, when he has no secure government to encourage and support him. He had known the day of dark perplexity when the War was over. He had been one of the august Council which made the Constitution, and his modest Diary tells us that when the Convention had done its work, and the Secretary had brought the Constitution to him, in its engrossed and complete form, he, Washington, retired to his chamber to meditate on the work they had completed.* And he did meditate, and from those meditations sprang that resolute fidelity to the Constitution which never wavered, never was suspected, and seemed to scorn professions. Unlike Chief

* September 17, 1787. "Met in Convention, when the Constitution received the unanimous consent of eleven States, and of Colonel Hamilton from New York, the only Delegate from thence in Convention, and was subscribed by every member present except Gov. Randolph and Colonel Mason of Virginia, and Mr. Gerry from Massachusetts. The business being thus closed, the members adjourned to the City Tavern, dined together, and took a cordial leave of each other. After which I returned to my lodgings, did some business with and received the papers from the Secretary of the Convention, and retired to meditate on the momentous work which had been executed," &c.—*Washington's Writings*, Vol. ix, p. 541.

Magistrates of later days, he did not dream that he was by virtue of his high office, the commentator or the critic of the Constitution, and never, except in the few cases in which, on constitutional grounds, he refused his assent to the legislation of Congress, did he even allude to it. For Washington, to talk of his love and fidelity to the Constitution, would have been as inconsistent with his unpretending, unprofessing habit, as for a good husband or father to be boasting that he is true to his home and his fireside. Reverence for the Constitution was part of his religion. He was loyal to it, with no imaginative, sentimental loyalty, but with the reasonable reverence and affection which a thoughtful, practical mind bestows on that which has done and is doing good. When, in one of the darkest periods of his administration, the standard of insurrection,—actual, armed insurrection, was raised for the first and only time, and the power of the new Executive authority of the country was invoked to suppress it, Washington, in speaking of the gallant army, which at his call rallied around him, thought it was the highest praise, the pre-eminent distinction to say, they were "*the Army of the Constitution.*"* And so throughout it was, without one word of profession, without a word of unnecessary promise, he never for one instant lost sight of the restraints

* These words will be found in Washington's Message to Congress, 19th November, 1794.

of the Constitution. He never strained them. He never eluded them. He was proud to be in spirit and in letter, the President of the Constitution.

Of his Administration in detail, this is not the place to speak. It belongs to history. And yet history has failed to do it justice. History that chronicles with all the fascinations of written eloquence, the wars and revolutions of other days and other climes—revolutions of blood, and of peaceful change. History that now fascinates us to the memories of the unprofitable politics of the old world—or to the horrors of carnage and invasion in the olden time of this hemisphere. History that does all this, has not yet even begun its illustration of the great and leading events of the Washington Administration; the Administration that guarded the cradle of the Union, and guided the first and uncertain steps of the Constitution in its perilous infancy. To one pen, let me say in passing, that duty belongs, the pen of a living man, now at a period of life, when the faculties of a meditative mind are as bright as ever, one who is himself part of the country's history, whose eloquence will live as long as the English language lives, and will even in its recorded form (and eloquence is best that bears recording,) make the American heart beat quick, and American loyalty rise high, so long as the Union and the Constitution stand. It is a duty to which long ago I have had from his own lips, his mind inclines, and that man, who thus should write the narrative of

Washington's Administration, I need hardly say, is—Daniel Webster.*

All matters of ordinary historical illustration I pass by, but seeking a parallel of the past to the immediate future, let me briefly, for I mean not to abuse your patience, point to some matters, not, I hope, uninteresting now.

Washington selected his counsellors from those who solicited nothing at his hand, and whose names the instant they were given to the people inspired confidence and respect. He was himself the oldest man in the Executive Administration—one of his Secretaries was little beyond the confines of what would now be called boyhood, and no one of them had attained the age of fifty.† Yet it was neither mere age nor youth which controlled his choice of public servants, for when an old and tried public man deserved his confidence, he gave it because he was old and tried. “This nomination,” he writes in 1792, to George Clinton, “has been unsolicited by the gentleman, or any friend of his ;

* Mr. Macaulay's remark on Fox and Mackintosh, will here occur to the mind of every one in its strong application to Mr. Webster. “They had one eminent qualification for writing history;—they had spoken history—acted history—lived history.”—*Edinburgh Review*, 1835.

† Mr. Hamilton, the youngest, and Secretary of the Treasury, was but 31 ; and Mr. Jefferson, the oldest, and Secretary of State, 46.

nor have I any evidence that it will be acceptable to him, or of his inclination in the event which is pending. But in adverting to his long and faithful public services, his real sacrifices, and his present, as I am informed, distressful retirement, I found a combination of strong inducements to direct my choice towards him.”*

In this one honest sentence was comprised every principle which guided him, and ought to guide all public men. He sought out those virtuous citizens who were in retirement. He sought those who, or whose friends did not seek him. He sought those who had made sacrifices, and had done hard work in the cause he thought a good one, for, said he, in another letter: “I shall not, while I have the honor to administer the Government, bring a man into any office of consequence, knowingly, whose political principles are adverse to the measures which the general government is pursuing, for that, in my opinion, would be political suicide;” and guided by such principles, how few and pardonable were his mistakes.

The widow of a fellow soldier tried her influence to procure for some friend an office, and the firmness with which, on high public grounds, he refused, and the very words he used, are worth remembering now, when a multitudinous pilgrimage from all parts of the United States is wending its way towards the great source of

* Writings of Washington, Vol. x, p. 221.

patronage and power—to that political California at Washington, where all seem to think the glittering flakes of office are to be had for digging. “Sympathising with you as I do in the great misfortunes which have befallen your family in consequence of the war, my feelings as an individual, would forcibly prompt me to do what you ask. But as a public man, acting only with reference to the public good, I must decide on points of duty, without a private inclination or a wish.” And then he adds: “I only wish, so far as my agency in this business is concerned, that candidates for office would save themselves the trouble and expense of personal attendance.”* So wrote Washington fifty years ago, and times have not altered.

His own nephew, a man who afterwards rose to high eminence, and, appointed by another President, died a member of the Federal Judiciary, modestly asked for office, and was refused because in Washington’s clear judgment he was not qualified by age or experience.† And though thus resolute in refusal, yet when he offered office, how kindly and gracefully was it done. From the elevation on which he stood, he was able to look far and wide over the land, and to see bright gems of as pure ray as now are shining, which lay hidden from the

* Letter to the widow of General Wooster, who had died of his wounds received at Danbury, in 1777.—*Washington*, Vol. x, p. 6.

† Bushrod Washington.—*Washington*, *Id.* p. 24.

common and casual view. Those he was glad and proud to stoop and gather for the coronet of genius and virtue, which he wished to bind round the brow of the young Institutions of his country.

Nowhere in the history of patronage is to be found such an incident as Washington's course reveals, when he writes to two friends, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney and Edward Rutledge, of South Carolina, offering one of the highest honors in his gift—a seat on the bench of the Supreme Court of the United States—leaving them, in their generous friendship, to choose which of the two should take it. And most strange, most wildly romantic, does it seem at this day, when to refuse an office, great or small, is an unapproachable virtue, but still it is the truth—they both declined it.*

He rarely answered letters about office. His reasons are thus summed up, in a letter to Mr. McHenry :

“First, because letters about office are so numerous, that to give them a civil answer would employ too much

* Letter 24th May, 1791. *Washington*, Vol. x, p. 164. In a letter to Mr. Randolph, (id. 34,) offering him the Attorney-Generalship, he thus describes his solicitude as to the Judiciary: “Impressed with a conviction that the due administration of justice is the firmest pillar of good government, I have considered the first arrangement of the judicial department as essential to the happiness of our country, and to the stability of its political system. Hence the selection of the fittest character to expound the laws and dispense justice, has been an invariable object of my anxious concern.”

of my time. Second, because civil answers might be construed to mean more than was intended; and, Thirdly, co-eval with my inauguration, I resolved firmly that no man should ever charge me justly with deception. Abundant reasons I have had to rejoice in this determination; for I have experienced the necessity, in a variety of instances, of hardening my heart against inclination and friendship, and from a combination of causes, as well as mere fitness of character, to depart from first impressions and first intentions with regard to nominations. My maxim is never to commit myself until the moment when the appointment is to be made. Then, from the best information I can obtain, and a full view of circumstances, my judgment is formed.”*

Are not, my fellow citizens, these precedents of simpler and better times worth meditating on now? Are there no resemblances between the present and the past? Whether they are again to be acted on remains to be seen; but whether they be or not, whether the Whig President, whom we have just elected, will be able (willing I am sure he is) to act up to these high models, one thought of Washington uttered when harassed beyond endurance, will, I am very sure, within a month, find an answering sympathy. Writing to General Armstrong, in 1791, he said, in all the bitterness of a perplexed patron's spirit: “Applicants multiply on me with

* Letter 8th April, 1794.—*Washington*, Vol. x, p. 398.

every new office, and all come forward under such fair pretensions and pressing wants, that preference is difficult and painful beyond measure. In a word, to a man who has no ends to serve, nor friends to provide for, nomination to office is the most irksome part of the Executive trust.”*

Yet by a steady adherence to certain clear, fixed principles of public conduct, our first President, even in this, the most delicate and irksome of all his functions, was not misled, but gathered around him for every station, the highest to the lowest, an Executive Administration that was matchless, equal to its duties, worthy of himself. And when he retired from office, he left that which was mere experiment, success. He started the Constitution in its safe career, and left it moving onward steadily and surely. He made the Nation love the Constitution, because he proved it, by beneficent construction, worthy of their love. The bond of Union which was loose and insecure, became so close and certain that no exorbitance, no convulsion, no wild irregularity, has ever or can ever break it.

A half century of varied incident has passed over our country since Washington died, and now on his Anniversary, the Nation over whose infancy he watched, is looking with hope that will not brook disappointment,

* Letter 6th February, 1791.—*Washington*, Vol. x, p. 136.

with confidence which suspects no betrayal—to the dawn of a new Washington Administration.

Here, pausing for a moment, will you permit me to ask myself and you, on what does this bright confidence repose? Who is he that is to give us a Washington Administration, and what are his sureties.

This time last year, in the building not far off, where by and by, you mean to rejoice in victory, a letter was read from General Taylor, in which this sentence occurs:

“Nearly forty years of my life have been passed in the service of my country, in the field, the camp, on our western frontiers, and in the Indian territory.”*

Now, in this unambitious sentence, there is no striking precept—no shining sentiment—nothing at first sight or sound, to call forth applause or active sympathy. Yet it is the statement of a pregnant fact, and simple, unimpressive as it seems, I mean to make it my text to-day.

Forty years in the service of his country! Remember, too, what sort of service—distant, thankless, arduous, self-denying service. Not the service of the popular candidate—the veteran of deliberative conflict, who, however meritorious, plays his part on a theatre whither the world goes to admire and applaud. Not the service of the politician;—I use the word in its highest and best

* Letter to Mr. Ingersoll.

sense, for I have no design to depreciate the statesman's high renown—whose reverses involve no professional discredit, and whose alternations of success and failure have at least excitement to relieve them. Not such were General Taylor's "Forty years of service." It was the conscientious service of doing duty—obeying authority within his sphere of action—recognizing as his sovereign the powers created by the Constitution and the laws. It was, in short, the service of the loyal soldier. And where was this duty done?

Out of the public gaze,—in remote garrisons and the obscurity of frontier settlements, have these forty years been profitably passed, and so secluded had he been that it is no derogation to say that no public man in the Union, five years ago, was less known or thought of by the casual mind, than General Taylor. Most happy is it for the country and his friends that he was thus secluded, thus unobtrusive, for to that is due, under Providence, the victory in which we now rejoice; to that, we owe his election as President of the United States; for certain it is, (and it is said in no unkindness,) that the Executive Government, in the selection of the soldier who was to conduct *its* war, fight *its* battles and gain *its* triumphs, had no intense desire to select an aspiring man. They thought, and well they might, that in calling from his seclusion a man so modest, so unassuming, so little known, they were safe from rivalry; his were to be the perils, theirs the

certain laurels. No one, (such was the calculation of short-sighted politicians,) will ever dream of making a President out of General Taylor.

But alas! for forecast—unhappily for that shrewd sagacity, which, looking very far ahead, often overlooks great perils or obstacles near at hand; the one thing which the politicians did not think of was the great, uncontrollable sentiment of popular gratitude, which, like the swell of the ocean, never, in the greatest tranquillity, entirely dies away. They thought the people had a head, but they forgot it had a heart. They forgot General Washington twice elected by a grateful people—they forgot General Jackson—they forgot General Harrison—and for Presidential availability, they did not dream of General Taylor.

In the disappointment of these calculations, remember, politics had nothing to do. The sentiment which moved the hearts of the people had no affinity to party feeling. No one then knew—no one seemed to care what were General Taylor's political opinions. But in every step of his career, from the moment he was first threatened by actual conflict on the banks of the Colorado, till the final triumph at Buena Vista, the Nation's eye was upon him and his little Army, and the Nation's heart was with them.

And what an interval of heroic action it was! Is there any one within the sound of my voice who has forgotten the intensity of the interest, which all felt,

when finding ourselves unexpectedly at war, after a peace of thirty years, the news came that the whole of the little American Army, for it was nearly all there, was threatened with annihilation, and that an overwhelming Mexican force on the Rio Grande, had thrown itself across General Taylor's path? Who can forget the news of the first victory, its triumph clouded only by the death of America's young soldiers—and then again, fast treading on its heels, that second conflict of the ninth of May, 1846, in which a great territorial question was settled, and by a single blow, for such was the effect of the battle of Resaca, a new boundary was given to the United States?*

From that moment the unknown soldier moved "in the clear sky of fame." Nor will we Pennsylvanians and Philadelphians soon forget the thrill of pride with which, when the General's despatches were received, we learned that at the battle of Resaca, it was a Pennsylvanian and Philadelphian officer who was selected to lead the advance and bring the enemy to action; and that he did his duty well.†

* Since the rout of General Arista and his army, there has not, I believe, been a vestige of Mexican authority on this side of the Rio Grande.

† Colonel (then Captain) George A. McCall, of whom General Taylor in his Official Despatch thus speaks: "The light companies of the 1st Brigade, under Captain C. F. Smith—2d Artillery—and a select detachment of light troops, the whole under the command of Captain McCall, were thrown forward into the chapparal to feel the

If, however, at this early period of the war, the interest and anxiety of the American people were aroused, it was a careless, thoughtless sentiment, in contrast with that which afterwards sprang up. From every point of General Taylor's march from the Rio Grande to Monterey—and thence to Saltillo, we had heard of him or from him—and every thing he did, and every word he wrote, seemed calculated, with a grace beyond the reach of art, to command esteem and win affection. Not a letter was written, not an order given, but told upon the public mind. And when in the midst of the din of battle, with the bloody memories of recent conflict, his wounded and dying and dead around him, after the assault at Monterey, he gave a generous capitulation to the enemy, and when reproached for it, vindicated the measure, "because it spared the lives of women and children," there was not

enemy and ascertain his position." — — — "These corps were employed as skirmishers, to cover the battery and engage the Mexican infantry. Captain McCall's command became at once engaged with the enemy, while the light artillery, though in a very exposed position, did great execution. The enemy had at least eight pieces of artillery, and maintained an incessant fire on our advance" — — — Captain McCall, 4th infantry, rendered distinguished service with the advanced corps under his orders. Its loss in killed and wounded will show how closely it was engaged."—(*Letter to the Adjutant-General, May 17, 1846.*) These tributes to a modest military man are here reprinted from motives of extreme personal regard—the fruit of days of former fellowship.

a heart in this wide land, unless some bosoms are so indurated by party prejudice, that gentle emotions are petrified within them, not a heart of man or woman or child, which did not beat in quick and warm sympathy with a conqueror's generous mercy.

But a period of still deeper solicitude was at hand. Further advancing into a hostile territory, obeying the orders of the Government which urged him onward, doing all and more than he was bid to do, General Taylor found himself suddenly stripped of most of his effective force, and left in the heart of an enemy's country, environed by a population bitterly hostile, with few but raw and inexperienced troops to withstand the almost certain and desperate onset of an enemy, led by expert generals, the best the Mexican service could afford. The spirit of the whole Nation sank when this news came, and when we saw him, whom we began to think a child of victory, around whom our best affections and brightest hopes were clustering, left unsupported and a sacrifice, the War Department withdrawing his regulars, and Congress deliberating on a Lieutenant-General to supersede him.*

* The War Department became, it is true, seriously alarmed after the regulars were withdrawn. General Scott was instructed to send back to General Taylor a portion of the same troops. Such was the tenor of Mr. Marcy's letter to General Scott, of 22d March, 1847. "The information," he says, "which has just reached us in the shape of rumors as to the situation of General Taylor, and the forces under

The recollections of that period of suspense have not yet faded from the public mind. Our history has had its anxieties often before, but none like these. There are living amongst us many who can recollect ancient days of anxiety and suspense, when war was nearer to our doors—when the American army was beleaguered at Detroit—when the news of disaster and reverse came heavily on our spirit—when the flag of the Nation was first and for the only time struck on the bloody deck of an American frigate—when a stripling of nineteen years of age defended Fort Sandusky, and kept a multitude of British and Indians at bay, and when the Nation watched him. Washington is not forgotten with its disgrace. New Orleans is not forgotten with its renown. These were times of suspense and deep solicitude. I can look back to them as they stamped on a child's mind the deep impressions which

his command, has excited the most painful apprehensions for his safety." — — "If the hostile force between the Rio Grande and General Taylor's army is as large as report represents it, our troops now on that river may not be able to re-establish the line; nor will it perhaps be possible to place a force that is sufficient for the purpose in time to prevent disastrous consequences to our army, unless aid can be afforded from the troops under your immediate command." — — "I need not urge upon you the fatal consequences which would result from any serious disaster which might befall the army under General Taylor, nor do I doubt you will do what is in your power to avert such a calamity."

never are effaced. But when in February, 1847, the news came, and the news lingered, that General Taylor's army was in danger—that Santa Anna, with his legions, was advancing across the desert to crush once and forever the little remnant of an army which had been left to guard our recent conquests; when day after day, and night after night, the hurried, anxious, whispering question passed from lip to lip, whether there was any news from Mexico—when one of those dark, mysterious clouds, with which ill omened rumor sometimes heralds calamity, shadowed the public mind, and it was said that General Taylor had retreated, that General Taylor had been cut to pieces, anxiety was wound up to its highest, most agonising point of intensity. Distance, the thousands of miles that separated us, seemed to make it less endurable. The American people could not have been more deeply moved with anxiety for a result, if gathered on the mountains which overhang the bloody field of Buena Vista, they had seen with the eye of flesh the bright banners of Santa Anna's squadrons in all the pomp of gorgeous military array, and heard the wild blast of his trumpets, and the triumphant melodies of his bands as the night wind wafted them to the silent, watching anxious the camp of the American Army.*

* "After the shouting had ceased," says Captain Carleton, "Santa Anna's own magnificent band commenced playing, and as the gentle

And when at last the news did come, that on Washington's birth-day—the 22d of February, 1847—the victory was his, that the American army was not only rescued, but triumphant—that rumor had again been false—that Taylor had not retreated—had not been cut to pieces—that the chain of victories had not been broken, nor the tide of triumph turned back, what

breeze swept down the Pass towards us, each delicious strain seemed to float upon it, mellowed by distance, yet distinct and inexpressibly sweet. For over half an hour it continued to delight our barbarian ears with the exquisitely beautiful airs of the sunny South. When it had finished, and the last faint echo had sunk to rest, silence the most profound fell over the two armies like a spell." No one, noticing the contrast, will forget Shakespeare's eve of Agincourt.

Gower.—Captain Fluellen!

Fluellen.—So in the name of Cheshu Christ, speak lower. It is the greatest admiration in the universal world, when the true and ancient prerogatives and laws of the wars is not kept. if you would take the pains but to examine the wars of Pompey the Great, you shall find, I warrant you, that there is no tiddle taddle nor pibble pabble in Pompey's camp; I warrant, you shall find the ceremonies of wars, and the cares of it, and the forms of it, and the sobriety of it, and the modesty of it, to be otherwise.

Gower.—Why the enemy is loud; you heard him all night.

Fluellen.—If the enemy is an ass, and a fool, and a prating coxcomb, is it meet, think you, that we should also, look you, be an ass, and a fool, and a prating coxcomb; in your own conscience now?

Gower.—I will speak lower."—*Henry V. Act IV, sc. 1.*

tongue can tell—not surely the weak one that now strives to recall these memories—the gratitude and joy which gurgled up from the deep recesses of the nation's heart, spoke from lips and bright eyes—when suddenly the oppressed mind was relieved from all its burthen, and the bonfire, and the illumination, and the salute, brightening and sounding from one end of the continent to the other, showed how proud and grateful a Republic could sometimes be.

The work of gratitude was done in an instant. Manly, generous, unreflecting, because instinctive gratitude, made Zachary Taylor President of the United States. The politicians had very little to do after that.

The battle of Buena Vista is now part of familiar history. Its details, the apocryphal catchwords with which some may think its grandeur is disfigured—its “Rough and Ready”—“its Old Whitey”—and its “Little more Grape, Captain Bragg”—and its “General Taylor never surrenders,” have become part of the current coin of sign-posts and transparencies, and the sides of stage coaches and canal boats, from one end of the country to the other; and it is little worth any one's while to trace them to a source, or to discredit them. But he who meditates on the character and the consequence of that day of conflict, on the illustration of character of soldiers, and leaders too, which it affords, on the quick appreciation that the popular mind had of it, will find truths and principles of vast moment con-

ned with our republican instincts and institutions unfolding themselves, that are worthy of thought. The capability of volunteer soldiers on an emergency, is of itself a rich development. Then was shown, too, the value of professional education even after long disuse; for McKee, and Clay and Davis, the lawyer volunteers, who fought and did effective service, were West Point graduates, who had not forgotten their early training. The personal influence of a commander was shown in inspiring confidence, for he who, in the moment of overwhelming peril, can by his personal presence, by his very repose and quiet self-reliance, without a word of bluster or a word of anger, keep the fluttering hearts steady, and by the magic of a look turn doubt into confidence, is a great man, let the wise and suspicious and disparaging politicians say what they please.

I wish I had time, and were sure of your patience, while we could talk over and think over the events of that Washington's birth-day. There was eloquence in the very *date*. When at the foot of Santa Anna's summons to surrender, the American General read the words "God and Liberty, Camp at Encantada, *February 22, 1847,*" can any man, the least imaginative that has ever been created for the rough uses of this life, suppose that the date—the coincidence—did not make the heart beat quickly and proudly? I don't know whether General Taylor ever

could be made to surrender, but I know he could not have surrendered *then*. That summons to surrender, and its answer, have illustrative significance. They illustrate the men, they illustrate the nations, they illustrate the languages. Often as they have been read, I cannot forbear reading them here. They, the summons and reply, are as unlike each other, as are the monarch's gaudy robe and glittering crown, to the armor and the helmet that encase the warrior. As unlike as was the sumptuous coach, with its harness and accoutrements, in which Santa Anna went in parade to battle, to the raw-boned, vigorous steed, on whose saddle General Taylor is said to have written his letter. Hear them, my friends, for the thousandth time :

HEAD QUARTERS OF THE LIBERATING }
ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC. }

You are surrounded by twenty thousand men, and cannot in any human probability avoid suffering a rout, and being cut to pieces with your troops. But as you deserve from me consideration and particular esteem, I wish to save you from a catastrophe; and for that purpose I give you notice, in order that you may surrender at discretion, under the assurance that you will be treated with the consideration belonging to the Mexican character. To this end, you will be granted an hour's time, to commence from the moment when a flag of truce arrives in your camp. With this view, I assure

you of my particular consideration. God and Liberty.
Camp at Encantada, February 22, 1847.

ANTONIO LOPEZ DE SANTA ANNA.

To this magnificent, sonorous appeal, to whose stateliness a translation does no justice, hear the business like reply.* No other language than our plain mother-tongue could do it justice.

HEAD QUARTERS ARMY OF OCCUPATION, }
Near Buena Vista, Feb. 22, 1847. }

Sir,—In reply to your note of this date, summoning me to surrender my forces at discretion, I beg leave to say that I decline acceding to your request.

With high respect, I am sir,

Your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR,

Major General U. S. Army.

* It is only by contrast with General Taylor's brevity that it so appears—for really Santa Anna's summons has all the dignity of his noble language. It is thus in the original:

“Ejercito Libertador Republicano. General }
en Gefe, Senoria de campaña. }

Está V. S. rodeado de veinte mil hombres, y humanamente no puede escapar de sufrir una derrota y de ser anichilado con los suyos; pero mereciendome V. S. consideracion y particular aprecio, quiero quitarle una catástrofe, y al efecto le hago esta intimacion para que se rinde á

There is nothing on the records of military intercourse more characteristic than this, unless it be the incident of the next day's fight, when Santa Anna, after trying for many hours to drive the American army from its position, sent a flag of truce to General Taylor to *ask him what he wanted*.*

But great as is the temptation to dwell on the doings of those days, I am admonished to pass them briefly by. The battle was fought—the victory was won—the honor of the nation was saved—the proud array of Mexico vanished in the darkness of the night of the 23d of February. All was over, but the duties of humanity to the wounded, of sorrow for the dead. And in these gentle duties, of condolence and sympathy, who appears more attractive, more pitiful, more gentle, than our American hero. We read in foreign story, that after the bloody sun of Waterloo went down, the conqueror of that day, wept over the gallant friends his victory

discrecion, seguro de que sea tratado con la consideracion propia del carácter Mejicano; concediendole al efecto una hora de termino, que corra desde el momento en que se presente un parlamentario en el campo de V. S. Con este motivo protesto á V. S. mi atenta consideracion.

Dios y Libertad! Campo en la Encantada, Febrero 22, 1847.

ANTONIO LOPEZ DE SANTA ANNA."

*Carleton's account of Buena Vista, p. 106.

had cost. The conqueror of our American Waterloo, for between those events there was at least the resemblance, of daring attack on one side, and steady bulldog resistance on the other, we know sincerely mourned the sorrows his triumph brought with them. Hardin, and McKee, and Lincoln, and Yell, and Clay, had the high obsequies of their brave commander's tears; nor is there in the English language, or in any language, for I have sought for a parallel in vain, any thing more graceful, more simply and precisely eloquent, than the letter, which, within a week of the battle, General Taylor wrote to Kentucky to heal (and it must have healed them, and raised in pride the bowed head of the mourner,) a sorrowing father's sorrows.* "Manly and honorable in every impulse," these are the words of simple eloquence of his letter to Mr. Clay, "with no feeling but for the honor of the service and of the country, your son gave every assurance, that in the hour of need I could lean with confidence on his support. Nor was I disappointed. Under the guidance of himself and the lamented McKee, gallantly did the sons of Kentucky—(here was the appeal to console a Kentuckian's sorrows,) gallantly did the sons of Kentucky, in the thickest of the strife, uphold the honors of the State and of the country. A grateful people will do justice to the memory of those who fell on that eventful day.

* See Note A, at end.

But I may be permitted to express the bereavement which I feel in the loss of valued friends. To your son I felt bound by the strongest ties of private regard, and when I miss his familiar face, and those of McKee and Hardin, I can say with truth, that I feel no exultation in our success.—With the expression of my deepest and most heartfelt sympathies, I remain, dear sir, most faithfully and sincerely, your friend.” So wrote General Taylor to Henry Clay, from the fresh grave of his son, and so long as these words of sympathy survive, so long as the memory of sorrow holds its seat, and the recollection of the kind voice of consolation survives, they must and will be, (I am sure they will,) faithfully and sincerely friends.

And here I close the volume of General Taylor’s military renown. It belongs to the high history of our country and our times, and we can do it poor justice here. I have only sought to allude to those prominent and picturesque points, which, on an occasion like this, ought to be commemorated.

On the 22d of February, 1847, the battle of Buena Vista was fought. On the 22d of February, 1849, General Taylor will probably arrive at the capital, the President elect of the United States—all completed within two short years, from the first vague and uncertain nomination—if I mistake not, in this immediate neighborhood, to the final determination of the political canvass by a majority of the people of the Union.

To the character of that political contest, thus resulting, I have neither the time nor inclination to refer, least of all in a tone of asperity or unkindness to those who differed in opinion with us. Never was there a political campaign conducted with more decorum and moderation—with less apparent excitement, with less intolerance. Never was a decision more quietly submitted to.* Contrasted with some canvasses that we

*As this pamphlet is passing through the press, my eye has lighted on the address of the Committee of Congress, announcing to General Taylor his election, presented by Mr. Davis, of Mississippi, from which I am tempted to make the following striking extract:—

“A majority of the Senate of the United States are of the political party which most strove to defeat your election. I accord in political creed with that majority. To select me, under these circumstances, to announce to you your election to the highest office in the United States, will, I trust, be received as a token of their acquiescence, not reluctant admission, but respectful acquiescence in the decisions of the people. I feel, sir, that I can offer you assurance that from them your administration will not encounter factious opposition; that, as far as difference of opinion will permit, they will give that sincere support which our common interest and constitutional obligations might lead you to expect.

The character of your election, the general feeling of admiration and gratitude for your long, arduous, and most brilliant military services; a life of earnest devotion to your country, your whole country, give a high hope and expectation in the public mind, that in taking the Chair first held by Washington, and which is sacred to every American heart, you will be able to hush the winds and still the waves of sectional strife, to pursue the constitution with all its har-

can all remember, it was the temporary difference of friends on matters of opinion rather than the embittered conflict of partizans quarrelling about men and office. Much of this is unquestionably owing to the character of the man whom we had made our candidate. No political adversary could utter a syllable of censure or reproach. The tongue of calumny was still—the whisper of disparagement died on the lips of the least scrupulous. Though he was the candidate of one party,—its faithful, genuine representative,—the other party, as made up of Americans, was proud of him. They knew as well as we, that “forty years of his life had been passed in *their* service,” and they could not in their hearts begrudge the triumph which, with such a candidate, we won. The battle, if that be the word to apply to it, was fairly fought, and the victory is ours—Zachary Taylor is President of the United States, and there is not one man from the farthest verge of our vast territory, from the gold digger in California, to the woodcutter of Maine, who in his heart, if he looks fairly into it, is not satisfied that our Whig President will, as every where heretofore, do the patriot’s part, and be (and no one need ask more,) like Washington, the President, as he has been “the Soldier of the Constitution.”

monizing compromises, to promote the permanent prosperity, and further illustrate the honorable fame of our Union.”

One other word, fellow citizens, and I have done. It is a word of local self-complacency which come naturally to my lips. It is a word of honest pride for Pennsylvania, our own Mother State, whose interests have been time out of mind disregarded, and who has rarely had, because she has rarely claimed, that position in the Nation's councils to which her patriotism, her loyalty, her moderation, her unfailing fidelity to the Union, entitle her. Fanaticism of any kind has never had growth on her soil. And if the late political contest were, as we claim it to be, one of principle, one in which the substantial interests of the Nation, and the true construction of the Constitution, and patriotic administration of the Government were at stake—what State, what Whig State, which of those which swells General Taylor's majority, can claim greater honor than we can? Here in Philadelphia was he nominated. I do not mean by the Convention—but long before, in primary and independent meetings, where the people first spoke their minds. From a Philadelphia pen, this time last year, the pen of one who has with less apparent recompense, done more, worked longer for the Whig party and asked less from it than any man in it, came an exposition of General Taylor's claims and character, which hereabouts did every thing to settle public opinion on the subject.* And when in Octo-

* *Letter of Mr. Sergeant to the Whig Meeting of 22d February 1848, from which I am tempted to make a single impressive extract :*

ber the preliminary contest occurred, and the news went far and wide, cheering the land, that Pennsylvania had chosen for the first time in her history a Whig Governor, did any one doubt what would be the next result. No one doubted then who would be President of the United States. Surely it is no undue self-complacency when Pennsylvania says, a large part of this great result is due to her. Let us not by discord—by mutual disparagement—by the coinage of calumny—by the personal strife which has so often discredited us, make these honorable pretensions worthless.

I have now done. The thoughts which this Anniver-

“It is not to be wondered at, that the hearts of his countrymen were rapidly drawn towards General Taylor. Their affection for him was prompt, but it was not inconsiderate, nor bestowed upon an unworthy man. Wise as he is brave; with a heart full of kindness and humanity, free from affectation and selfishness; sympathizing with the sufferings which his duty obliges him to witness, and to the utmost of his power relieving them; doing generous justice to all without jealousy, or the least sinister apprehension of its lessening the estimation of his own merits; conducting every trust reposed in him to a successful issue, without blame or reproach; always obedient to the Constitution and laws—who can doubt that such a man is fitted for the highest employments, and can safely be trusted with the powers of the Chief Executive Magistracy of the Union?

As far as observation has enabled me to discern, this is the judgment of the whole people. I am willing to follow it, and to be thankful that at such a time so good a man seems to be offered for our relief from the perils which threaten our Institutions.”

sary has prompted, have come from a heart which has been taught from earliest infancy to love the institutions of our country, and their history, with an affection that grows stronger and stronger as each year rolls by. Young as those institutions are, for there are many living now who remember their beginning, and the time when Washington was President, the history of man shows no such prosperity, no such growth, no such internal peace, as are here revealed. In less than sixty years a continent has been spanned by our enterprise, and the arch of American constitutional freedom reaches from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It is progress, of which man's history has no parallel. The past is becoming incredible. On the 25th of April, 1789, Charles Thomson, in a Report to the Senate of the United States, thus describes Washington's journey from Mount Vernon to New York :

“The President set out on Thursday, the 16th. His progress was retarded by the tender and affectionate leave which his neighbors and friends took of him ; by the congratulatory addresses he was obliged to receive by the way ; and by the testimonies of public esteem and joy, to which it was necessary for him to pay attention, in the several States through which he passed ; but that this might occasion as little delay as possible, *he commenced his journey every morning at sunrise, continued it incessantly throughout the day, and supported*

the fatigues of it eight days, successively, till he reached this place."*

One can hardly imagine, in reading this simple record of the career of our first President, his eight days journey from the Potomac to the Hudson, that we are living in the same country. The tender and affectionate farewell which General Taylor's friends and neighbors bade him, was said on a spot, which, in Washington's day, was the centre of a wilderness, tenanted only by the savage and the beast of prey—the testimonies of esteem and joy which have impeded General Taylor's progress from Baton Rouge to the District of Columbia, have come from places where, fifty years ago, there was the solemn silence of an unbroken forest.† The "several States" of

* *State Papers, Vol. I. p. 5.* In the beginning of his Report, Mr. Thomson says: "In pursuance of the orders I received from the Senate, I left New York on Tuesday, 7th April, and though much impeded by tempestuous weather, bad roads, and the many large rivers I had to cross, yet, by unremitting diligence I reached Mount Vernon, the seat of his Excellency, General Washington, on Tuesday, 14th, about 12 o'clock."

† In a letter to Robert Sinclair, in 1792, General Washington said: "I do not imagine that an establishment on the banks of the Mississippi would at this time be a very desirable one; and even the Western parts of the United States, lying on the waters running into the Mississippi, which is perhaps as fertile a country as any in the world, are now disturbed by the hostilities of some of the Indian tribes

Washington's day, which honored him as he passed along, have in ours grown from thirteen to thirty. Yet over all this widening land, over these spreading multitudes, is the same Constitution which Washington aided in forming and first administered. The same Union binds the many as once bound the few. The same loyalty and love of constitutional freedom beat in the Nation's heart now as then. The memory of Washington is a living sentiment yet. And no brighter hope now cheers the American patriot's heart than that we are destined to see a President whose highest pride it is to make Washington his model—that we may look to an Executive administration which, for eight years—for Taylor, earning like Washington the Nation's growing gratitude, like Washington can be re-elected—will give us peace, tranquillity at home and abroad, to industry its due reward, will protect the Union at all hazards, and religiously stand by the obligations, and restraints, and compromises of the Constitution.*

bordering on them, and from that cause are at this moment unfriendly to new settlements. This evil will, I trust, be shortly removed, and settlers may set down there in safety."—*Washington*, Vol. xii., p. 303. This was but fifty-seven years ago!

* The student of our history knows under what circumstances, and from what considerations Washington became a candidate for re-election. They are beautifully stated in a letter of 20th January, 1793, to Henry Lee.—*Washington*, Vol. x. p. 312.

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 to Henry Lee—Washington, Vol. 2, p. 400.

NOTE, A.

MILITARY STYLE.

“The losses I have sustained,” Wellington wrote to one of his friends on the day after Waterloo, “have quite broken me down, and I have no feeling for the advantages we have acquired.”—*Gurwood's Despatches*, Vol. XII, p. 489.

As a matter of mere literary curiosity, I have collated General Taylor's letter of condolence to Mr. Clay, and that of the Duke of Wellington to Lord Aberdeen, with the simple, manly tone of which every reader of military correspondence is familiar. Vigorous and precise as is the letter of the Duke, my judgment inclines to prefer the graceful eloquence of our American soldier. Each is characteristic, and in no particular more so, than in the Duke of Wellington's eminently business-like postscript.

GEN. TAYLOR TO MR. CLAY.

Head Quarters, Agua Nueva.

March 1, 1847.

MY DEAR SIR:

You will, no doubt, have received before this can reach you, the deeply distressing intelligence of the death of your son, in the battle of Buena Vista. It is with no wish of intruding upon the sanctity of paternal sorrow, and with no hope of administering any consolation to your wounded heart, that I have taken the

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON TO
LORD ABERDEEN.

Bruxelles, 19th June, 1815.

MY DEAR LORD:

You will readily give credit to the existence of the extreme grief with which I announce to you the death of your gallant brother, in consequence of a wound received in our great battle of yesterday. He had served me most zealously and usefully for many years, and on many occasions; but he had never rendered himself

liberty of addressing you these few lines; but I have felt it a duty which I owe to the memory of the distinguished dead, to pay a willing tribute to his many excellent qualities: and while my feelings are still fresh, to express the desolation which his untimely loss, and that of kindred spirits, has occasioned. I had but a casual acquaintance with your son, until he became, for a time, a member of my military family; and, I can truly say, that no one ever won more rapidly on my regard, or established a more lasting claim to my respect and esteem. Manly and honorable in every impulse, with no feeling but for the honor of the service and of the country, he gave every assurance, that in the hour of need, I could lean with confidence on his support: Nor was I disappointed. Under the guidance of himself and the lamented McKee, gallantly did the sons of Kentucky, in the thickest of the strife, uphold the honor of the State and of the country. A grateful people will do justice to the memory of those who fell on that eventful day. But, I may be permitted to express the bereavement which I feel in the loss of valued friends. To your son, I felt bound by the strongest ties of private regard, and when I miss his familiar face, and those of McKee and Hardin, I can say with truth, that I feel no exultation in our success.

With the expression of my deepest and most heartfelt sympathies for your irreparable loss, I remain, my dear sir, most faithfully and sincerely, your friend.

Z. TAYLOR.

more useful, and had never distinguished himself more than in our late actions. He received the wound which occasioned his death, when rallying one of the Brunswick battalions, which was shaking a little; and he lived long enough to be informed by myself of the glorious results of our actions, to which he had so much contributed by his active and zealous assistance. I cannot express to you the regret and sorrow with which I look around me and contemplate the loss which I have sustained, particularly in your brother. The glory resulting from such actions, so dearly bought, is no consolation to me, and I cannot suggest it as any to you and his friends; but I hope that it may be expected, that the last one has been so decisive, as that no doubt remains that our exertions, and our individual losses, will be rewarded by the early attainment of our just object. It is then that the glory of the actions in which our friends and relations have fallen, will be some consolation for their loss.

Believe me, &c.

WELLINGTON.

P. S. Your brother had a black horse, given to him by Lord Ashburnham, which I will keep till I hear from you what you wish should be done with it.

There are also letters of condolence from Napoleon to the widows of Admiral Brueys, killed at the battle of the Nile, and of Marshal Bessieres, which are very striking, but not comparable to these in our mother tongue. I have sought in vain for a Washington letter of condolence, during the war. There is an earnest tribute to the memory of Colonel Tilghman, in 1786. (IX *Washington*, p. 168.)

A chapter of curious criticism might be made on the style of military men of different times and nations. Washington's style improved as his pen gained experience, though it never became that of an accomplished writer. General Taylor owes a great deal to the English language, and to his own direct and simple use of it; for the manner, precise and unambitious as it was, in which his military exploits were described to the world, was almost as impressive in its vigorous simplicity, as the exploits themselves. There was none of that vicious Gallican infusion, which, well enough in continental Europe, disfigures the writings of those who take their professional rhetoric from the despatches of Napoleon and his marshals. Nor was there any of the affectation which, in almost as offensive a form, characterizes the papers of some English commanders. There is no cant, no invocation of Heaven, or thanksgiving to God for achievements of blood, such as used to be in fashion. I have somewhere seen the remark that the Duke of Wellington was the first great commander who abandoned this incongruous habit. General Washington, however, had done so long before, and in his official reports of our Revolutionary battles, never thought it necessary to return thanks to the Almighty for the success which, at the expense of human life, his arms attained. He described what had occurred precisely and plainly. Not so some of the greatest commanders of other days and nations. Marlborough and Nelson sinned most grievously against these canons of good taste. The Duke of Marlborough's despatch to Harley, after the battle of Blenheim, begins thus: "The battle lasted with great vigour till sun-

set, when the enemy was obliged to retire, and by the *blessing of God* we obtained a complete victory. *We have cut off great numbers of them, as well in action as in retreat.*" (*Marlborough's Letters*, Vol. IV, p. 251.) "*Le bon Dieu,*" he writes from Ramillies to the Brabant authorities, "*Ayant beni les armes des hauts alliés.*" From Malplaquet, he wrote to the Queen: "*God Almighty* has been pleased to give your Majesty's arms such a victory as may give you quiet for the rest of your life." Nelson was not a whit behind in devout gratitude. His despatch on the battle of the Nile, thus begins: "*Almighty God* has blessed his Majesty's arms, in the late battle, by a great victory over the fleet of the enemy, who (!) I attacked at sunset, on the first of August, off the mouth of the Nile." (*Letter 3d August, 1708.*) To Sir William, the husband of Lady Hamilton, he writes more fervently still: "*Almighty God,*" he says, "has made me the happy instrument in destroying the enemy's fleet, which I hope will be a blessing to Europe." (*Letter 8th August, 1798.*) One would think that such rhetoric would not find countenance now a-days, yet my attention is attracted to a contemporaneous and clever criticism on an eminent British commander, at the very moment I am writing. The London Examiner of 27th January, 1849, has the following notice of one of Lord Gough's recent despatches from India.

"A very dull member of Parliament, having stammered through a marvellously stupid speech, was heard, as he reseated himself, to ejaculate: "*Non nobis, Domine, non nobis sed tuo nomini gloria detar.*" Committing the same sort of mistake, Lord Gough commences an account of his most unsatisfactory operations with an assignment of their mighty success, to the special pleasure of Providence. "It has pleased Almighty God, to vouchsafe to the British arms, the most successful issue to the extensive combinations rendered necessary for the purpose of effecting the passage of the Chenab, the defeat and dispersion of the Sikh force, under the insurgent Rajah, and the numerous Sikh Sindars, who had the temerity to set at defiance the British power."

So solemn and devout an exordium as this, borrowed from Nelson, prepared the public for a victory as decisive as the one the naval Hero attributed to the blessing of Providence; but sad, indeed, is the discrepancy between the swelling introduction, and the upshot of the intelligence, which is simply that the enemy got away unscathed, after mauling our troops grievously in a skirmish, and that the General had crossed the Chenab! So, in Scott's *Old Mortality*, Mause Headrigg exclaims: "By the help of the Lord, I've leapt over the ditch."

How unlike, and how superior to all this mock piety and false taste, is the plain, manly writing of Washington, of Wellington, and of Taylor. General Taylor seems to have a most praiseworthy horror of exaggerating what he has done. In his despatch of 17th May, 1846, to the Government, he calls the battle of Resaca, simply "the *affair* of Resaca." It is only of his determination as to future conduct, that he speaks confidently. His declaration that "if he met the enemy, no matter in what force, he should fight him," was just the thing to inspire confidence and enthusiasm. It was not unlike, though far less cautious than what Wellington wrote before the walls of Paris, to Marshal Beresford. "The French," he says "have fortified St. Denis and Montmartre, very strongly; the canal de l'Ourcq is filled with water, and they have a parapet and batteries on the bank, so that I do not believe we can attack this line. *However, I will see.*" (*Gurwood's Despatches*, Vol. XII, p. 529.)

A friend to whom I have shown this note, has pointed out to me a passage in Lord Mahon's *History of England*, (Vol. I. p. 232,) on this subject of military style, in which the extremes of exaggerated and simple statement, are cleverly contrasted. In 1740, Admiral Vernon wrote from Carthagenia to the ministry: "The wonderful success of this evening and night, is so astonishing, that one cannot but cry out with the Psalmist, 'It is the Lord's doings, and seems wonderful in our eyes.' God make us truly thankful for it." One of his sailors catching the pious spirit of his commander, writes to his wife: "I have

longed, this four years past, to cut off some of the Spaniards' ears, and was in hopes I should have sent you one for a sample now, but our good Admiral, *God bless him*, was too merciful." The next day, Vernon was repulsed with great slaughter. The contrast of extremely business-like simplicity, will be found in Walton's despach, after the battle off Cape Passaro, in 1718: "Sir, we have taken and destroyed all the Spanish ships, which were upon the coast: *the number as per margin.*"