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Mr. Cooper's
ARTILLERY-ELECTION
S E R M O N.

JUNE 3. 1751.



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S E R M O N

Preached to the Ancient and Honourable
ARTILLERY COMPANY,

I N
BOSTON, NEW-ENGLAND,

June 3. 1751.

Being the Anniversary of their
ELECTION of OFFICERS.

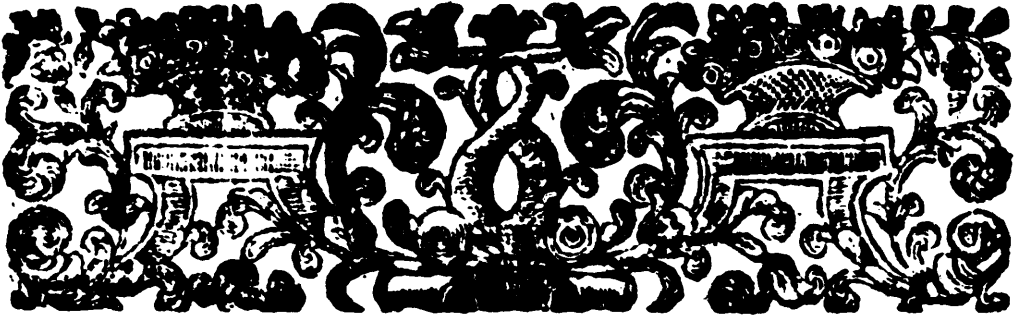
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Pastor of a Church in *Boston.*

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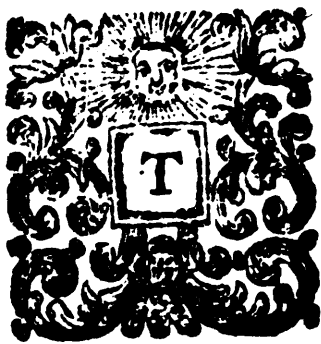
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*From Mr. W^m Blair Townshend
of Boston*



2 KINGS, Chap. V. Ver. 1st.

Now Naaman, Captain of the Host of the King of Syria, was a great Man with his Master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given Deliverance unto Syria ; he was also a mighty Man in Valor.---



THE Story of *Naaman*, as it is transmitted to us in the sacred Pages, affords a Variety of Instructions, suited to the several Circumstances and Conditions of human Life. Altho' he was a *Pagan*, the Holy Ghost himself has been pleased to mention him with singular Respect ; and to represent his Character, not altogether unworthy the Imitation of those, who are favored with superior religious Advantages. This *Syrian* Commander appears

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to have been a great Man in himself, as well as by the Favor of his Prince. His Honors were well supported by his intrinsic Worth : He filled with Dignity the high and important Station to which he was advanced. And besides the advantageous Figure which he bears in the Writings of the Old Testament, our Lord has taken Occasion to speak of him in the New, * as one for whose Person God had a particular Regard, and for whose Welfare He was peculiarly concerned.

Human Nature, we know, has been much the same in all Ages. Presently after the Fall those Lusts of Men began to *conceive and bring forth, from whence come Wars and Fightings*. The untimely Death of *Abel* was a shocking Proof of this, who fell a Sacrifice to the Envy and Rage of his unnatural Brother. Such Lusts as these *warring in the Members* of single Persons, influenced also the Communities which these Individuals composed ; and States and Kingdoms as they rose in the World, soon began to look upon one another with a jealous Eye ; and to discover an unreasonable Fondness of enlarging their own Bounds, and flourishing upon the Ruins of their Neighbors. So that after all that has been said of the Innocence and Simplicity of former Times, by

* Luke iv. 27.

those who have rather considered what Mankind ought to be, than what in Fact they have been : It is certain, that War was as unavoidable, and an Address in this fatal Art as necessary, in the early Ages of the World, as they are at present. To this Service *Naaman* devoted himself ; and for this he had peculiar Talents ; possessing at once the Intrepidity of a Soldier, and the Capacity of a General. He was in his Person, *a mighty Man of Valor* ; and in his Post, he was Captain of the whole Host of *Syria*.

His superior Talents were neither buried in Indolence and Supineness ; nor so misapplied, as to be worse than useless. Had either of these been the Case, he would not have been represented in holy Writ as so honorable a Person. But that which exalted his Character, and threw a Lustre around it, was, that he considered himself as born for others ; and as Honor called, and Duty obliged him, he employed his Capacity and Power for the Good of his Country, and bravely endeavored the Deliverance of *Syria*.

Naaman happily accomplished those public Services which he had undertaken ; and Providence tho't fit to crown his generous Fortitude with singular Success. God, who has reserved in his own Hands the Fate of Empires and Kingdoms ;

doms ; who exalts them with a Smile, or depresses them with a Frown, was pleased to honor him as an Instrument of conveying to the *Syrians*, that Prosperity which he had designed for them. By him, says the Text, *the Lord had given Deliverance to Syria.*

No wonder then that *Naaman* was so high in the Esteem of his Prince. *He was a great Man with his Master.* The King was sensible of his Worth ; had a just Resentment of his important Services, and gave him Marks of his peculiar Favor. Such was his Confidence in him that he appointed him General of his Forces : And his tender Affection for his Person appears in the Letter which he wrote on his Behalf, and sent by his own Hands to the King of *Israel.* — It is happy for Princes when they distinguish between the precious and the vile ; when they are quick to discern and prompt to cherish and reward true Virtue and Merit ; and only Persons of this Character are allowed to possess their Affections, and to be exalted by their Favor. Then their own Honor and the People's Happiness will flourish together : — For where the People are happy, the Ruler must be glorious.

But we have not yet considered *Naaman's* Honor in the full Extent of it. He was the Darling of
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of the People, as well as the Favourite of his Prince ; not only *a great Man with his Master, but honourable* ; i. e. according to Bishop *Patrick*, he was highly esteemed and honored by his Fellow Subjects. This is an additional Proof of the intrinsic Worth and Goodness of his Character ; a strong Presumption that he neither gained his Advancement by dishonorable Means, nor employed it to any base unworthy Ends. The *Syrians* found their own Happiness in his Exaltation. After extending the Glory of his Country abroad, he did not, like some Conquerors, return Home to enslave it. His Personal Valor, and his victorious Army were the Defence, not the Terror of the People : — they reaped the happy Fruits of the Toils he endured, and the Dangers which he faced : — they owned their Guardian and Benefactor ; and as such, far from envying his Greatness, they rejoiced in it, and augmented it with their own Applauses.

What a great and happy Man does *Naaman* appear to be ! Adorned with so much Virtue ! Crowned with such Success ! A chosen Instrument in the Hand of Providence to deliver his Country ! So distinguished by the Favor of his Royal Master ; and so high in the Love and Admiration of the People ! But alas, pure and unallayed Prosperity is what the present Life, will by

no means admit. Human Nature at its best Estate is but imperfect ; and the most happy Circumstances the World can place a Man in, are always mingled with something disagreeable and adverse. *Naaman* in the Height of his Power, and the Fulness of his Glory was seized with a distressing Disease, which all his Greatness could not defend him from, nor all his Fortitude make him easy under. *He was a mighty Man in Valor, but he was a Leper.* In his Affliction he hears by a captive Maid of the Prophet *Elisba*, and the Wonders performed by him in the Name of his God. Immediately he sets out on his Journey to the Prophet, and implores the Help of the Deity, whom he worshipped. — But how often is the Wisdom of God Foolishness with Men, and the Justness of His Appointments called in Question by the prejudiced Great, and the short-sighted Politicians of the Earth ! *Naaman* is at first offended with the Method which the Prophet directs for his Recovery : It was plain and simple, and therefore with him it was foolish ; not considering that the *Waters of Jordan*, at the Appointment, and with the Blessing of the God of *Israel*, could do that, which the most costly Medicines, joined with all the pompous Superstitions of *Syria*, were never able to effect. — But by the prudent Advice of his Servants, he is soon bro't to a better Mind ; *he washes in Jordan, and is clean.*

sleam. Struck with Astonishment at the Greatness of the Miracle, and filled with Gratitude to the Author of it, he adores the Power and Goodness of *Elisha's* God, and resolves to offer Sacrifice to no other. *Now I know,* says he, *that there is no God in all the Earth, but in Israel. Thy Servant will not offer Sacrifice, but unto the Lord.*

After this Acknowledgment and Resolution, it is strange to hear *Naaman* desiring Leave to attend his Master *to the House of Rimmon, to bow with him there* : and altho' his Intention in this was rather to pay Respect to his Prince, than any Honor to the Idol ; yet he was sensible himself that the Action carried in it the Appearance of Evil, if nothing worse ; for which Reason he begs it may be pardoned. It is hard, even for an honest Courtier to maintain an inflexible Virtue ; and here the Fortitude of *Naaman* appears to fail him, tho' he was upon the whole a Man of Integrity : He was a new Convert, and discovered some Weakness ; but he was a real one, and as such the Prophet bids him *depart in Peace.* — Thus the severe Affliction of *Naaman* proved in the End of the greatest Advantage to him : had he not been a Leper, he might still have remained ignorant of the true God ; but the Loss of his Health was abundantly made up in the divine Knowledge which he attained ; and he would

really have been more great and happy in this Knowledge alone, than the most prosperous Circumstances could have made him without it.

This Passage of sacred History, thus descanted upon, suggests to us several Observations, not altogether foreign to the present Occasion.

IN the FIRST Place, We may observe from it, that true Fortitude is an honorable Quality ; and represented as such in the sacred Oracles. It is indeed unhappy for the World, that the Profession of a Soldier is become so necessary an one. No Person of Humanity, and much less one possessed of that divine Benevolence which Christianity inspires, can help being sensibly touched, when he contemplates the Confusion and Misery which War introduces ; and observes, how ingenious Men are to contrive, and how prompt to carry into Execution, the surest Methods of destroying one another. But since Communities have their Rights as well as private Persons ; and each one, not content with the Enjoyment of its own, is but too apt to invade the Rights of others ; the Welfare of a State does therefore call for Valor as well as Policy ; and the Soldier is as necessary to a Community as the Magistrate : While the latter preserves it from intestine Confusions, the former is to defend it from foreign Invasions.

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The military Character, when viewed in this Light, is an honorable one ; and the Success of a Soldier, who acts in the just and necessary Defence of his Country, is truly glorious.

It is certainly for the Interest of a Community, to treat with Respect those martial Accomplishments, which in the present State of Things, are so necessary to its Defence. Honor is the Parent of brave and meritorious Actions, and the Politicians of the World have endeavoured by this Means to propagate them. They have known that the Love of Life so deeply implanted in our Nature, is apt to make Men shrink back from those dangerous Services, to which the Safety of their Country may call them : and accordingly they have endeavored to lessen this, by artfully addressing to the Love of Fame, an Affection as natural to Men as the former, and oftentimes superior to it. By this Motive alone, many have been led to serve their Country in the most important Instances, who, it is to be feared, would never have served it upon better Principles. The *Romans* therefore had their particular Marks of Honor, to reward the Bravery of their Soldiers, according to their different Ranks and Degrees of Merit ; and as Victories gave Occasion to their Triumphs, so Triumphs, in their Turn, begot Victories.

Some perhaps may imagine, that tho' War is oftentimes necessary, and therefore lawful, yet it does not become Christian Communities to take any such Methods as these, to encourage and reward the Soldier ; inasmuch as they have a natural Tendency to inflame the Ambition of Men ; to take them off from better Principles, and form them only into *Pagan* Heroes ; whose Love of Glory was generally extravagant, and their Pursuit of it wild and fantastical.—But it is by no means the Design of Religion wholly to eradicate the natural Passions and Affections of human Nature ; only to direct them to their proper Objects, and correct their Excesses. The Love of Fame, or a Desire of the Esteem and Commendation of others, tho' it may be too strong, hurrying Men into a foolish and absurd Behaviour, and so disappointing itself, is nevertheless, under proper Regulations, a just Principle of Action. It is not indeed, the highest and the best ; but it has it's Place, and in Conjunction with other Principles, is of great Service in the Conduct of human Life. The Gospel therefore, has never required us to lay this Motive wholly aside, but plainly allows, as the Author of Nature certainly intended, that it should influence us in some good and reasonable Degree. It even addresses to this natural Affection, and recommends the several Graces of the Christian Life, from the Consideration of their De-

Decency — encouraging us to *let our Light shine before Men* ; to think upon and practise *whatsoever is honorable and lovely, as well as just and true* ; whatsoever is ornamental to human Nature, and perfective of it. The Rewards also, which the Gospel promises to the Just in the coming State, are glorious ones :—They, who have been *faithful to the Death*, are represented in white Robes,—their Hands filled with Palms, and their Temples adorned with Crowns. So that our religious Profession is no way inconsistent with the Pursuit of Glory, provided it be real and substantial, not false and imaginary. *If there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise*, we are encouraged to follow it : — And as such, Fortitude in particular is recommended to us. This Quality, so essential to the military Character, the Gospel with all its *Peace and Good-will to Men*, with all its meek forgiving Spirit, is very far from condemning : It only gives us a just Idea of it ; determines its Limits ; settles it upon proper Principles ; and rejects the several Counterfeits of this Virtue, which commonly pass in the World for Bravery, tho' they never deserved so honorable a Name.

The Fortitude of a Christian is not that Contempt of Death, which is founded upon a Slowness of Apprehension, and an Absence of Thought ;
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which is a meer Privation, rather than any positive Attainment, and no great Credit to one, who has the Figure of a reasonable Being. It is different from the Courage that appears in other Men of quicker Apprehensions ; that flows from Warmth of Blood, and a brisk Agitation of the Spirits ; that suspends the Exercise of Reason, and rashly plunges them into the greatest Dangers. This sort of Hero possesses much the same Kind of Ardor as the Horse upon which he rides, who *swallows the Ground with his Fierceness and Rage, and believeth not that it is the Sound of the Trumpet.*—Many owe their Valor to a natural Firmness of Constitution ;—to their having been habituated and enur'd to Dangers ; — to a cruel and unnatural Delight in Scenes of Desolation and Slaughter ; — to a Spirit of Revenge ; — or a sensual rapacious Disposition, which makes them despise Toils and Hazards, from the Prospect of rioting upon the Spoils of Victory.—But Christian Fortitude is a Greatness of Mind, flowing from the rational and divine Principles of the Gospel, that leads a Person at all Adventures to act up to the Dictates of his Conscience, and renders him, while he does so, undaunted in Dangers, and unshaken by Sufferings.

Our holy Religion admonishes the Soldier, to regulate his Ardor, and pursue his Glory by the
Rules

Rules of Justice, without which, the Hero degenerates into a Robber and a Murderer ; and his Infamy enlarges with his Success. It instructs him to maintain the Activity of his Body, and the Vigor of his Spirit, by *being temperate in all Things* ; and to acquire a Strength and Compactedness of Mind, able to *endure Hardness*, by the habitual Practice of Patience and Self-Denial. While it leaves him that Sense of Honor so peculiar to the Profession of a Soldier, it affords him other Principles to co-operate with and correct it ; and all united give him a Firmness of Soul, which this alone would be insufficient to. It obliges him to that habitual Honesty of Intention, and Innocence of Behavior, which are always accompanied with a manly Confidence and Courage. It inspires him with a disinterested Benevolence, a public Spirit, that animates him to exert himself in a Cause, in Proportion to the Importance of it to the Welfare of others ; and makes him forget his own Ease and Safety, in the Service of his Country.

It has indeed been objected to the Gospel that it does not particularly enjoin Love to our Country. But is not the whole System of it evidently calculated to promote that sincere and universal Love to Mankind, which certainly comprizes in it this, and all other inferior social Affections ? Does it

not oblige us in all Circumstances, and upon all Occasions to do the *greatest* Good ? And is not this obliging us to serve the Community to which we belong, in every Instance not inconsistent with universal Benevolence ? This it *primarily* enjoins, and with very good Reason.

For altho' the Love of our Country is a noble Affection, yet it has its Limits, beyond which it degenerates into a Fault. It is evident the *Romans* were extravagant in it : — this Passion was so unbounded in them, that they sent Terror and Distress with their Armies, to the most distant and peaceful Nations, and trampled upon the Rights of all Mankind, for the sake of enlarging the Grandeur and Authority of *Rome*. However then we may admire their Courage, we cannot in this applaud their Virtue. For as the Interest of single Families, ought always to be regarded in subordination to the Welfare of the Community : so the Love of our Country should never be so great, as to swallow up those Sentiments of Justice and Benevolence, which we owe to Mankind in general. It was therefore finely said, *I love my Friends well ; I love my Country better ; but I love the World of Mankind best of all*. This is a Sentiment perfectly agreeable to the Gospel, and enters into the Character of the Christian Hero. Christianity allows us to serve our Country only in a just Cause ;

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—in such a Cause it obliges us to Action ; and is able to inspire us with an undaunted Spirit.—In such a Cause it teaches us to depend for Success upon Him, who loves Equity ; who *does his Pleasure in the Armies of Earth, as well among the Hosts of Heaven* ; and who gives the Victory where He pleases.—Or if Success is denied, it disposes us to acquiesce in the Divine Will, which is all-perfect ; and to resign Life with transport, not from the Hopes of immortal Fame here, a poor shadowy Existence ; but the Prospect of that substantial *Life and Immortality brought to Light by the Gospel.*

Nor is the Valor of the religious Soldier ever separated from Meekness, and a generous Compassion to the vanquished. To engage in Battle meerly from Hatred and Revenge, and to improve a Conquest to the gratifying any such mean and rancorous Passions, is alien from the Spirit of the Gospel, and a certain Indication of Littleness of Mind. Humanity and Pity, are essential Ingredients of a truly bold and great Spirit.—Such an one, knows how to enlarge his Glory, by setting Bounds to his Victories : Nor is he more ready to encounter an haughty and threatening Enemy, than to pardon and oblige one whom his Valor has disarmed, and reduced into his own Power. *A Coward has fought,* says a polite Writer, *a Cow-*

ard has vanquished, but a Coward never forgave.
 It was therefore handsomely observed to a great and successful Warrior, who had shewn a remarkable Clemency to the conquered ; *You had subdued all the World before, but now you have gloriously subdued yourself.*

The Government of our Passions is essential to true Fortitude. Slavery breaks the Spirits, and subdues the Force of the Mind ; and there is certainly no meaner Slave than one who is mastered by his own Passions, and cannot possess himself. The Man of christian Bravery is free from this Bondage : He subjects every wayward Humor, and every blind Impetus to the Dictates of Reason and Religion : — Whenever he is called to *the Battle of the Warrior, which is with confused Noise, and Garments rolled in Blood,* he still maintains something of that Calmness and Serenity, with which we may suppose, an Angel executes the Wrath of Heaven. And in this Self-government, he appears to the Eye of sober Reason, with greater Dignity, than in all his other Conquests : *for he that is slow to Wrath is better than the Mighty, and he that ruleth his Spirit than he that taketh a City.*

You see then, that as the Gospel does not absolutely condemn the Profession of a Soldier, neither
 does

does it deprive him of the Valor which this Profession implies : On the contrary, it recommends to him a refined and exalted Fortitude, and gives him the best Motives to support it. Nor ought we to esteem this Virtue, in the just Extent of it, a low and inconsiderable one ; since the sacred Scriptures have set it in another Light ; and represented it to us, as accompanied with, and made up of, the purest and most divine Principles, that are ever to be found in human Nature.

A SECOND OBSERVATION is, That He only appears truly great, and worthy the Esteem of Mankind, whose superior Talents, and high Station, are improved to the Welfare of others. Notwithstanding the Valor of *Naaman* ; notwithstanding his high and important Post, the Holy Ghost would not have represented him as so great and honorable a Personage, if he had not exerted himself for the Good of his Country, and *given Deliverance unto Syria.*

One of a narrow selfish Spirit, whose Charity ends as well as begins at home, who has burst the social Link that should unite him to others, and make the common Interest his own, who only lives and feels for himself, is really mean and contemptible, and represented as such in the sacred Oracles. No external Circumstances can add any Thing to the intrinsic Value of his Character :

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And Titles and Preferment to a Man of such little Worth, are like a false Medium to an Object of Sight, they magnify him in Appearance, but not in Reality.

Neither will a superior Capacity; added to these exterior Distinctions, be sufficient to render him truly great ; this being only valuable according to the Use that is made of it, and the Purposes to which it is employed. Let a Person be possessed of Valor or Policy in ever so high a Degree, yet if others receive no Benefit from the right Application of these great Qualities, Mankind owe him no Esteem, nor can he justly expect it from them. Nay, a superior Capacity, when separated from an honest, disinterested, public Spirit ; and under the Direction of selfish and base Principles, does but render a Man the more extensively mischievous, and therefore the more deservedly odious.—Goodness then is essential to true Greatness, and he, the honorable Person, who like the Sun, is as extensively useful, as exalted in his Station ; who while he dazzles with his Lustre, refreshes with his kindly Influences ; and whom the World at once admires and enjoys.

Nor has this diffusive Goodness ever been found to lessen private Happiness : On the contrary, he, who according to the Directions of the Gospel, cultivates

cultivates those social Instincts, which the Author of Nature has implanted in our Bosoms ; and who makes the Good of others an Object of real Affection, is acquainted with a thousand Pleasures, which a contracted Heart knows nothing of. “ He receives Happiness at second Hand, and by Rebound from others, as well as by direct and immediate Sensation ; ” and whether he serves his Country in the Cabinet, or in the Field, he really enjoys the Prosperity of the whole Community, in the same Proportion he endeavors to promote it.—This is the right Posture of an human Soul ; and in this Attitude it appears with true Beauty and Lustre :—it appears, like one of those superior Beings, who glory in the Stile of *ministring Spirits* ; and whose delightful Employment it is, under Providence, to defend and bless Mankind. Persons then of this Character are entitled to the Esteem and Praise of the World ; and they who are more immediately under their Guardianship, and reap the Fruits of their public-spirited Conduct, *they who sit under their Shadow with great Delight*, cannot help adding to their Esteem, Gratitude and Love. All this is but a just Debt, to such eminent Virtue and Goodness ; and every Man should be ready to pay his own Proportion of it. This is one way to spread these Qualities in the World, and increase the Number of such Characters.

The *Greeks* therefore, were neither just nor politic, in banishing those from the Commonwealth who by their great and shining Actions, had gained the Admiration of the People. This *bad Effect*, sprung indeed from a *noble Cause*, a Jealousy of their *Liberty*; but in this, their Care was over nice and scrupulous; the weak Sollicitude of a too indulgent Mother, rather than a well-tempered masculine Affection; plainly tending to discourage Persons from distinguishing themselves by public Services, and to leave that *Liberty* naked and defenceless, of which they were so extremely fond. *Carthage* imitated *Greece* in neglecting and ill-treating at a Time of Security, those who had best served her in a Crisis of Danger: and being not so fruitful of Patriots and Heroes as the other, this Conduct had a very unhappy Influence upon her Affairs. *Hannibal* indeed performed Wonders, under all his Discouragements from home; but this, was perhaps as much owing to the invincible Hatred which from his Infancy he had conceived to the *Romans*, as an Affection for *Carthage*, that had so ill rewarded his Bravery and Merit.

Nor can we think it strange, if some of the greatest Spirits among the *Heathen*, were by such Treatment discouraged from serving the Public.— But the Principles of Christianity, are able to support us under so hard a Lot. Our divine Redeemer has

has taught us to regard the Rule of Duty, rather than the Acceptance of our Services ; and to continue to do good, even to those who return us ill ; assuring us, that *our Reward is great*, while we thus approve ourselves *the Children of our Father in Heaven*, who causes his Sun to rise, and his Rain to fall, *upon the evil, and the unthankful.*

IN the THIRD PLACE, this Passage suggests to us, how much Influence the Providence of God has, in the Government of the World, and in crowning the Services of Patriots and Warriors with Success. Little as *Naaman* knew Him, it was the God of *Israel* who fitted him for his high and important Post ; who exalted him to it ; and used him as an Instrument in his own Hand to give Deliverance unto *Syria*. He is *the God of the Spirits of all Flesh* : From Him, we receive the Powers of our Bodies, and the Faculties of our Minds : He, distinguishes Men by their various Capacities, and places them in their several Stations. *The Understanding of the prudent ; the Authority of the great ; the Valor of the mighty ; and the public Spirit of the Patriot, are from Him —the Father of Lights, from whom cometh down every good, and every perfect Gift. God sitteth upon the Circle of the Earth, and the Inhabitants thereof are before Him as Grasshoppers ;—He, exalteth or depresseth them, putting down one, and*

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setting up another ; enlarging or contracting their Sphere of Influence and Activity, just as He pleases. And this he does among all Nations, among those that are ignorant of him, as well as those that *know his Name*, and acknowledge his Dominion.

We have a remarkable Instance of this in the Introduction of the *Persian Empire*. *Cyrus the Persian*, was no more a Worshipper of the true **JEHOVAH**, than *Naaman the Syrian* : yet, he was an elect Servant of God, formed by his Spirit, and employed in his Providence, to accomplish some great and important Ends, which his Wisdom had designed. The Prophet *Isaiab*, gave a particular Account of him, and the Purposes God intended to answer by him, several Ages before he was born. * *Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right Hand I have holden, to subdue Nations before him : and I will loose the Loins of Kings, to open before him the two leaved Gates, and the Gates shall not be shut. I will go before thee, and make the crooked Places strait ; and I will break in Pieces the Gates of Brass, and cut in sunder the Bars of Iron. And I will give thee the Treasures of Darknes, and hidden Riches of secret Places, that thou mayest know, that I the Lord, which call thee by thy Name, am the God of Israel.*

* Isai. xlv.

For Jacob my Servant's sake, and Israel mine Elect, I have even called thee by thy Name : I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

God had determined to humble the proud and oppressive Power of *Babylon*. *Cyrus* was appointed to this Service, and accomplished for it. God led him by the right Hand to the Battle : for him, he broke in Pieces the Gates of Brass, and cut in funder the Bars of Iron : And in that very Night in which *Belsazzar* was drinking with his Nobles in the holy Vessels of the Temple, and the Hand-writing came out upon the Wall ; in that very Night, *Cyrus* in a surprizing Manner entered *Babylon* ; slew the impious Prince with his Nobles ; and fulfilled the divine Predictions and Decrees. As to the Method he made use of to penetrate into the City, by draining the deep Channel of *Euphrates*, a Stratagem without a Parallel in History, *this*, was put into his Heart by Him, who *had anointed his Servant with Wisdom*, as well as girded him with Power : for this Circumstance is particularly mentioned by another Prophet : * *A Drought is upon her Waters, and they shall be dried up.*

* Jer. l. 38.

So that let Men think as they please, of their own Influence and Importance, it is God that governs the World ; who circumscribes the Bounds, and fixes the Dates of Empires and Kingdoms : Who raises up one for a Deliverer, and employs another as a Scourge. The Hearts of Princes and Generals, of Statesmen and Politicians, *are in his Hand, and he turneth them, as the Rivers of Water are turned.* He can strike Terror into the bravest Heart, and scatter Confusion among the most regular Army. So that when He pleases, *the Race is not to the swift, nor the Battle to the strong ; but one, shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to Flight.*

God then is to be *acknowledged in all our Ways* ; Him we are to praise for all public Deliverances ; and upon Him we are to depend, for public Tranquility. “ For when He giveth Quietness, who then can make Trouble ? And when He hideth his Face, who then can behold Him ? Whether it be done against a Nation, or against a Man only. ”

FOURTHLY, We cannot but observe from our Text, the Regard God is pleased to manifest, even for *Pagan Nations* ; and that He sometimes makes use of such, to punish the Crimes of those, who profess his Name, and are visibly related to Him.

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Syria, with the rest of the Gentile World, was corrupted with Superstition and Idolatry ; and too much lost to the Knowledge of the true God, the Maker of Heaven and of Earth. But forgetful as this People were of Him, God was not wholly unmindful of them : He raised up his Servant *Naaman* for their Protection and Deliverance ; giving them Success by him, even against the People of *Israel*. And, as some of the ancient Jews say, he was the Man, whose Arrow, under the particular Direction of Providence, entered *between the Joints of the Harness of Abab*, and carried the just Vengeance of Heaven, to that impious Prince.

The God whom we worship, having *made of one Blood all Nations to dwell upon the Face of the Earth*, looks upon every one as Part of his Charge, for whose Welfare he is pleased to concern himself. Being *all his Offspring*, none are excluded from the Care and Bounty of his paternal Providence. His tender Mercies are over them all, even such, as do not *enquire after God their Maker* ; do not consider, what Hand supplies their Wants, nor by whose Goodness they are maintained. Among these, He has *not left Himself without Witness, in that he gives them Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling their Hearts with Food and Gladness.*

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Not, that all, who have not a divine Revelation, are therefore wholly destitute of every Thing pleasing and acceptable to God. The single Instance of *Naaman*, is enough to convince us of the contrary. And the Apostle supposes, that *the Gentiles who have not the Law, may do by Nature, many Things contained in the Law : being a Law to themselves, and having the Works of it, in some Measure written upon their Hearts.* They want indeed those peculiar Talents and Advantages, with which they are so happy as to be entrusted ; and therefore God requires and accepts the less from them. According to that everlasting Rule of Equity ; *that to whom Men have committed much, of them they will ask the more.*

The Jews rated themselves by far too high, meerly upon Account of their external Relation to God, and their religious Priviledges. They treated other People with great Contempt, calling them the base Children of Earth, while they looked upon themselves as the Sons and Favorites of Heaven ; and impatiently expected the Time when they should subject all Nations to their Dominion, and triumph upon their Ruins. But God thought fit, often to punish them for their Sins, which their distinguishing Priviledges did but render the more heinous, by those very Gentiles, whom they so much despised and abhorred.

So he did by the *Assyrians*, according to the Prediction of the Prophet *Isaiab*; * *O Assyrian, the Rod of mine Anger, and the Staff in their Hand is mine Indignation: I will send him against an hypocritical Nation, against the People of my Wrath will I give him a Charge, to take the Spoil, and to take the Prey, and tread them down as the Mire of the Streets.* And thus he did by the *Romans* afterwards. The Jews were warned not to say, so confidently, *within themselves, We have Abraham to our Father:* They were warned, that the Time was coming, when their external Priviledges would be no Security to them: And *the Ax would be laid to the Root of the Tree.* But when they continued obstinate in their Sins, under all their Advantages for Repentance; and had filled up the Measure of their Iniquities; God sent the *Roman Army*, to execute upon this devoted People, Wrath unto the uttermost.

Of a Truth then we may perceive, that the most High *is no Respector* of Nations, any more than *Persons*; and that he treats Communities not according to their religious Priviledges, but the Manner in which they improve them. They who abuse peculiar Favors, may expect peculiar Marks of divine Resentment; while such as are

* Chap. x. 5, 6, Ver.

faithful over a few Things, are more virtuous under less Opportunities, shall in no wise lose their Reward.—And what a severe Censure are the Virtues of some Pagans, upon the Lives of many Christians. If some of them, notwithstanding the Disadvantages they laboured under, were yet great Examples of Justice and Integrity, a brave and a public Spirit; while we on the contrary, with all the superior Light and Encouragements of the Gospel, are oppressive and rapacious; possessed of a narrow selfish Disposition, that prevents us from encountering any Difficulties or Dangers for the public Good, and disposes us to pursue our private Interest to the Hurt of the Community; can we avoid blushing upon such a Comparison of ourselves! Can we avoid seriously reflecting upon the Words of our Savior, *It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than for you!*

AGAIN, The Story of *Naaman* presents us with a lively Picture of the Imperfection of the present State, and the Vanity of human Greatness. In the Heighth of his Prosperity he was arrested with a distressing Malady, for which, neither his Prince, to whom he was so justly dear, nor the whole Country he had so well defended, could afford him any Cure. Under this Infelicity, the Leader of the Host of *Syria*, the valorous, the success-

successful, the admired *Naaman*, might envy the Condition of the meanest Slave.

Such is the Inconstancy of Human Affairs! So flattering and deceitful a prosperous State. Men are apt to admire it at a Distance, not considering the Troubles and Disasters to which it is liable; but when they have climbed to this envied Height, expecting nothing but a bright Sun and a serene Sky, the Cloud which before appeared no bigger than *a Man's Hand*, suddenly enlarges, and there is the *Sound of Abundance of Rain*. When with great Care and Labor, we are at length possessed of what are generally esteemed the best Accommodations to Happiness, some unexpected Accident dashes all our Hopes, and some distasteful Drop, embitters all our Cup.

Man in his present State is a strange Mixture of Weakness and Strength, of Meanness and Dignity: Health is nearly allied to Sickness, and Life, in the most perfect Enjoyment of it, has but a thin Partition from Death. They who have the Lives of Millions at their arbitrary Disposal, cannot in the appointed Hour, secure their own: And they, who upon Account of their Authority are called *Gods*, and represent in some measure the Majesty of Heaven, may yet say to Corruption, *Thou art my Father*, and to the Worm, *Thou art my Mother*

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and my Sister. It is Folly therefore very highly to value any such external Distinctions in ourselves, and more so, to depend upon them in others. It is Folly to confide for Protection and Happiness, in those who cannot defend themselves: To put our chief *Trust* even in *Princes*, who are but the *Sons of Men*; whose *Breath goeth forth, and they return to their Dust.*

An affecting Instance of this Instability of human Greatness, our gracious Sovereign, and the whole *British* Nation, with its Dependencies, are now mourning. We have indeed, besides lamenting Him in secret, been paying our open and solemn Respects, to the Memory of our late dear and Illustrious PRINCE; and the dark Dispensation of divine Providence, in his *untimely* Removal from us, has been repeatedly taken Notice of from the Desk. Yet upon this returning public Occasion, I cannot forbear to say;—that we have lost a *Prince*, who by a shining Example of Self-government, too seldom found in such exalted Stations, gave the surest Pledge of a prudent and steady Administration, whenever he should have ascended that Throne, to which He was entitled by Birth, and for which we hoped He had been designed by Providence: — A *Prince*, of such uncommon Humanity and Sweetness of Temper, that had He not been so carefully educated in the Principles

Principles of Liberty ; had He not known Himself for so many Years the Heart of a Subject ; had He not learned from so great, and to Him peculiarly engaging Example, how much it is the Glory of a Monarch to rule a free and a happy People ; yet his Goodness alone, would have rendered Him as much concerned for the *Rights* of the Subject, as his own Prerogative ; and effectually secured us from the terrible Consequences of *arbitrary* Power :—A *Prince*, in whom this amiable Quality was so conspicuous, and so remarkably influenced all his domestic as well as public Conduct, that we have good Reason to think, he valued his Greatness only as it enlarged the Sphere of his Usefulness ; and sensible of the important Duties connected with the Dignity to which He was born, esteemed it a *painful Prebeminence*, which yet, for the Sake of others, He was not only willing but glad to sustain :—A *Prince*, whose Goodness extended from so high a Station, to the meanest Person, and the most remote Subjects of the *British* Crown ; and from whom, we in particular promised ourselves much Happiness, as He was not insensible, how closely the Interest of these Northern Colonies and the *British* Nation are conjoined, and was known to have expressed a particular Concern for us. — We have lost a *Prince*, who served the Cause of Religion and Virtue as far as his own great Example would go,

which was certainly very far in such degenerate Times ; whose Bounties were employed in a Princely Manner to the same noble End ; and who, had Providence seen fit, ever to have enlarged his Influence, would doubtless have served it in the same Proportion : — A *Prince*, who as his own *Heart was tender*, like that of good King *Josiah*, and He knew the Force of *Conscience* in his own Breast, expressed a particular Regard for the Rights of this Principle in others, and was desirous to remove as far as might be, the Burdens and Restraints, that have at any Time been laid upon it.—Such a Stock of public Happiness, lost to the World, and lost to Ourselves in particular who had so much Interest in it, must very sensibly affect us, and render it impossible, that the universal Sorrow appearing among us, should be either a *dissembled*, or a *short-lived Passion*.

There is nothing perhaps in the Dispensations of divine Providence, more dark and perplexing than such an Event. Does God govern the World ? Is the Pestilence which walketh in Darkness conducted by Him ? Is He peculiarly concerned for the Welfare of Communities ? And shall a Prince of such Hopes, not only die like other Men, but be forbidden to fill up the short Span of human Life ? Forbidden to enter upon the Stage of Action ? Shall such a Blessing only
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be placed awhile in the View of the World, and then forever removed from it; when the Tyrants and Oppressors of the Earth, *live, become olds and are mighty in Power!* “How unsearchable are thy Judgments, O Lord, and thy Ways past finding out. Thy Way is in the Sea, thy Path is in the great Waters, and thy Footsteps are not known.” Yet we are assured of this comfortable Truth, that God doth “not pervert Judgment, neither doth the Almighty pervert Justice.”—— Leaving then the Government of the World, the Fate of Empires and Kingdoms, and the Cause of Truth and Righteousness in his Hands, who knows how to bring Order from Confusion, Light from Darkness, and Good from Evil; our humble and submissive Language must be, “Even so Father, or so it seemeth Good in thy Sight.”—— May God support and long preserve our *Sovereign*, and grant that in his illustrious House, there may be a Succession of Princes, to fill the *British Throne*, and patronize the Cause of Liberty and pure Religion, *so long as the Sun and Moon shall endure.*

But to return—

The Passage we are upon affords us several other Observations, which the Bounds of a single Discourse will not allow me to consider. Yet, from the Desire of *Naaman* to attend his Master to the House of *Rimmon*, and bow with him there,

I cannot but take Occasion just to observe ; that Men of great Fortitude and Integrity have their weak Side, some unguarded Avenues to the Mind, that endanger their Virtue : — that the Fear of Man which bringeth a Snare, discovers itself in different Ways, and oftentimes influences those who would be thought, and perhaps imagine themselves, the most free from it ; that the Soldier in particular, who above all disdains the Imputation of Cowardice, is frequently chargeable with it ; since He who resolutely maintains his Honor in the Field, is often seen nearly to resign his Virtue out of it : And he, whom nothing can influence to a Behavior unbecoming his military Character, does yet many times from a base Compliance with the Humor of others, and a slavish Regard to Custom, conduct in a Manner unworthy his Character as a Man, and a Christian ; being afraid with all his Courage to act up to the Dictates of his Reason : — But I must pass over these Things, and draw to a Close : —

— Yet not without addressing myself to you Gentlemen of the ARTILLERY, at whose Invitation we are now assembled in the House of Worship.

Your ancient Company justly bears the Title of *Honorable*, inasmuch as you profess to devote yourselves to the Service of your Country, and
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to be industrious in acquiring those military Accomplishments, by which, without any View of raising your private Fortunes in this Way, you may be qualified to act, as Guardians of the Community to which you belong.

Such an Institution is truly noble, and a standing Proof of the Heroic Ardor, and public Spirit, which warmed the Breasts of our Ancestors, the first Settlers of this Country. You will therefore think yourselves obliged to observe the original Design of your Institution ; and cultivate that generous Fortitude you profess.

In this Christianity gives you the best Directions, and to this it propounds the most powerful Motives. Sincerely believe the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST, and let its divine Principles have their genuine Influence upon you ; your Hearts will then dilate with Love to your Country : Your private Interest will become inseparable from that of the public : You will act up to the Rules of true Honor : Your Courage will be bounded by Justice, tempered with Kindness and Compassion ; and guided by a Sense of Duty : In a Word, you will be inspired with an invincible Bravery of Spirit, sufficient to support you under such Circumstances of Danger and Distress, as the Heroism of the greatest *Pagans* have failed them in.

The *British* Nation and its Dependencies, are now indeed, thro' the Favor of Heaven, enjoying
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the Blessings of Peace : A Peace which the Arms of *New-England* had no small Influence in restoring to our Mother Country, and its Allies. But as *largely* as we contributed to purchase this Peace, it is not improbable, that we shall feel as early and severely as any, the Consequences of a new War.

You will therefore endeavor, not only to be instructed with the exactest Skill and the bravest Courage yourselves, but be industrious to diffuse these through all Parts of our Land : That so if we should be called by Providence, to beat our Plow-shares into Swords, and our Pruning-hooks into Spears, there may not be wanting those among us, who shall maintain the military Reputation which we bear, and greatly merit of their Country, for being the Bulwarks of it.

To conclude, May we all act up to our Character as Christians : May the Principles of the Gospel, accompanied with the Energy of God's good Spirit, influence and form our Temper and Conduct : May they inspire us with that true Fortitude, which shall make us intrepid in the Path of Duty, and enable us to vanquish our spiritual Enemies ; with that Benevolence and public Spirit, which shall lead us to serve God, by serving our Generation, in the various Stations assigned us by Providence. In this Way, the lowest and the meanest in the present State, may expect to appear with distinguished Advantage upon the Stage of Immortality.