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A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED BEFORE THE
OFFICERS AND GENTLEMEN
OF THE
MANCHESTER MILITARY ASSOCIATION.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

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PREACHED BEFORE THE
OFFICERS AND GENTLEMEN
OF THE
MANCHESTER MILITARY ASSOCIATION,

AT
ST. ANN'S CHURCH, in MANCHESTER,
On MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1783;
AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.

By SAMUEL HALL, A. M.
CHAPLAIN TO THE ASSOCIATION.

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T O T H E
O F F I C E R S A N D G E N T L E M E N
O F T H E
M A N C H E S T E R M I L I T A R Y A S S O C I A T I O N

T H I S
S E R M O N,
P R E A C H E D B E F O R E T H E M,
A N D P U B L I S H E D A T T H E I R R E Q U E S T,

I S B Y T H E
A U T H O R,
M O S T H U M B L Y I N S C R I B E D.

J U D G E S V . 2 .

PRAISE THE LORD FOR THE AVENGING OF ISRAEL,
WHEN THE PEOPLE WILLINGLY OFFERED THEM-
SELVES.

TH E S E words are ² part of the Song of Deborah, composed in order to celebrate a great and important victory, obtained by a few of the tribes of Israel, over the numerous host of Jabin king of Canaan. The land of Israel had long been subject to the depredations of this Gentile king; but Zabulun and Napthali particularly groaned under the weight of his Yoke. Their condition must seem the more deplorable, as they could entertain but little hope of relieving themselves from the oppression of a tyrant, who, according to the sacred historian, had nine hundred chariots of iron. Roused, however, at length, by the promises of deliverance made by the Prophetess Deborah, the people voluntarily assembled, and by one decisive effort, utterly destroyed the army of the invader, and recovered once more the blessings of peace and security.

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The words of the text have been selected for the present occasion, not from an exact resemblance of circumstances, for, blessed be God, we of this nation have neither bowed under the rod of oppression, nor experienced the horrors of invasion, but merely to suggest the happy effects that have flowed, from the voluntary services of even a few patriotic spirits, in seasons of national difficulty and distress—and more especially to point out, the merit of that generous disinterested principle, which on such occasions leads men to step forth in the service of their country; and sacrifice the selfish considerations of private ease, to the public good.

Patriotism has ever been held in the highest estimation, and celebrated by the united applause of all nations, in every age. If we take a survey of mankind, from the wandering tribes of the desert, where the social connection appears in its rudest form, to the regions of cultivated and well-ordered society; we shall invariably find, that the lover of his country, the warrior, and the hero, the man who has eminently distinguished himself for the care and defence of his own particular community, has always been considered as a public benefactor, and justly entitled to every mark of distinction and honour. So extravagant indeed was public gratitude in this respect, among ignorant and idolatrous nations,

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tions, as not only to immortalize, but even advance to the rank of gods and demigods, great and eminent characters, and consider them as proper objects of religious worship. Among the Romans of old, the love of country was esteemed the natural and only proof of a great soul, and the want of it as the strongest indication of a mean ignoble spirit. It was cultivated therefore with an enthusiastic ardour, and was not only stretched beyond all bounds of reason and common sense, but even made to countenance every act of violence, injustice, and oppression, that could serve to gratify the most unbounded ambition, and lust for power.—Such instances, however, are only to be considered as proofs, that the best qualities may be perverted, and applied to the worst purposes: for nothing can be more obvious, than that true patriotism, ever regulated by the eternal laws of justice and humanity, is at once the ^{orn}~~orn~~ament and security of any state.

Let us, for a moment, suppose a state, in which the Members were so utterly depraved, and sunk in languor and effeminacy; or, if you please, so much influenced by the principles of a misjudging conscience, as to be unable, or unwilling to provide for their safety and protection. It is evident such a state, like an edifice built without cement,

must be disjointed, and thrown down, by the first rude shock of violence. . Supposing no one *hardy* enough to stand forth at the hour of danger in his country's cause; no one *willing* to expose his life in her defence, and resist even to blood; it is evident the advantages of social life, its peace, and happiness, must immediately yield, to the ravages of the lawless invader. A state, thus unprovided for its own defence, would not only be exposed to the attacks of ambitious and enterprizing spirits; but would even challenge the insults of cowards, and of the most abject of mankind. In a word; on these terms “the whole earth would be
“ filled with violence, and the violent take it by force.”

But perhaps it may be enquired, whether this virtue so highly revered among heathen nations, has an equal claim to the regard of Christians. It may be said, that such a close attachment to the interests of one particular community, cannot be reconciled to the dictates of a religion, that tells us our regards should be as diffusive as the human race; and that a state of warfare and resistance, cannot be thought consistent with the pure spirit of the gospel, which expressly commands us “not to resist evil, but rather give
“ place unto wrath; never to avenge ourselves, but if
“ struck on the right cheek, to turn the other also.”—We are persuaded the patriotism for which we plead, is strictly
reconcilable

reconcilable to the whole tenor of the Christian religion.— It is true, we are taught in scripture to love even our enemies; and on all occasions to imitate the benevolence of that God, “who letteth his sun shine on the evil and on the good, and his rain descend on the just and on the unjust.”— But are we commanded to love all the race of men with the same measure, and degree of affection?—It has been justly observed, that social love and regard gradually spreads from relatives to friends, from friends to countrymen, and thence to all the world: still weakening in its energies, as each circle of it recedes from the centre, and becomes more expanded. The human heart is naturally thus influenced; and there is no precept of the gospel, that gives reason to conclude that our affections, thus varying, according to relation and circumstance, are ill regulated or misplaced. And with respect to the precepts of mutual forbearance abovementioned, it may be sufficient to observe, that they were designed, not to regulate the conduct of states, but of individuals in the same state, in order to suppress the unruly passions of malice and revenge, and secure by the exercise of mercy and forgiveness, the peace and happiness of each other.—They cannot, with any shew of reason, be applied to those maxims by which communities and kingdoms must of necessity be governed. But it may be inferred
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from various passages of scripture, that the genius of the Christian religion is so far from condemning the exercise of public spirit, that it encourages and enforces it, on better principles, and by more awful sanctions, than the heathen world could be acquainted with. Christianity extinguishes in the heart all mean and selfish regards, and renders us more alive to the impulse of a generous disinterested spirit. It secures us from the allurements of criminal pleasures, which at once enervate the body, and depress the native vigour of the soul; by this means removing those various obstacles, that so often keep us back, when called to the service of our country. In the words of an eminent prelate, “ *It commands us to love our neighbour, that is, our
 “ fellow-citizens as ourselves; to seek their welfare in pre-
 “ ference to our own, where they happen to interfere; †
 “ and, if it be necessary, even to lay down our lives for
 “ their sakes. ‡ It inspires us with every sentiment that is
 “ noble, liberal, and disinterested; with that holy, and
 “ sincere, and rational love of our country, which spring-
 “ ing from the love of God, and the love of man, knows
 “ no other bounds but what they prescribe, and acts of

* A Sermon preached before the House of Commons, 30th of JANUARY, 1767, by the Rev. Dr. Porteous, now Bishop of Chester.

† 1 Cor. 10. 24.

‡ 1 John, 3. 16.

“ course within a circumference wide enough to take in the
 “ real interests of any people, without invading (what
 “ ought never on any pretence to be invaded) the common
 “ rights of mankind. Beyond this, it is enthusiasm, not
 “ patriotism, to go.”

It seemed the more necessary to dwell upon this point, because an ingenious but fanciful writer* has represented patriotism as a mere heathenish virtue, unworthy to be ranked among those of a Christian, as breathing a spirit contrary to the general philanthropy of the gospel. But the writer evidently deludes himself with a spectre, on which he bestows the name, but not the true character of patriotism. For as long as the tender charities of friend and relative shall be dear to our hearts, the advantages of society worth our care, and the interests of religion truly valuable; so long will the love of country come powerfully recommended as equally the duty of the man, the citizen and the christian.

The exercise of this virtue is by no means confined to particular circumstances and pressing exigencies. In the
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* Soame Jenyns's Evidence of Christianity.

days of peace and tranquility it still operates, though in a manner less conspicuous, guided and directed in every duty, whether of public or of private life, by the uniform wish to promote the common good. But in times of national danger and alarm, when the ensigns of war are displayed, when the interest, perhaps the existence of the state lies at stake, and life and property are no longer secure, then its exertions become proportionably more vigorous, and its ardour in the public cause more warm and animated.

And did not we of this nation, my friends, lately experience a situation like that above described? Were we not unequally engaged in war with three powerful nations confederated for our ruin? Were we not menaced with invasion, devastation, and bondage? At a time too when Britain was torn and dismembered by the separation and resistance of a considerable part of her empire, and even internally convulsed by the struggles of contending parties?—At such an alarming crisis it might have been expected that the whole nation would have been roused into action, and that even a sense of private interest would have concurred with public spirit, to meet the threatening storm. But where, save in the efforts of a few, did we behold the genuine marks of that patriotic virtue, once esteemed the characteristic

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istic of Britons? Whither was that spirit fled, which, on other occasions, had so often humbled the insulting foe, and vindicated a nation's cause?—Lost alas! and extinguished in the lap of luxury and sloth, or, where alive, burning with an unfriendly heat in the animosity of party dispute.

It will be urged perhaps in reply, that where a regular and national defence is provided, there can be no just claim to the personal exertions of individuals, unacquainted with the habits of a military life.—But, to give weight to the reply, shou'd not this regular defence be supposed adequate to the exigencies of the state? The laws of our country have happily provided for the maintenance and support of the poor, that they might not be left exposed to the occasional and precarious supply of voluntary contribution; but no well disposed mind considers this as precluding the exercise of a charitable disposition, when the means and opportunities are offered. No more can the establishment of regular forces supersede the concern we have in the public welfare, or the necessity of even taking up arms, to guard against the efforts of a too powerful enemy. But in fact we were told, and that from the highest authority, that the military force of this kingdom was not judged adequate to
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the pressing occasion; and in consequence an application was made to require, and in a manner most likely to influence every generous heart, our voluntary aid. The return made by the nation at large to this requisition, can not be supposed to reflect much honour on the national character. In truth, does it not convincingly justify, this general conclusion, that our countrymen no longer inherit the virtues and the patriotism of their ancestors?

The sentiments of some modern writers, give us a very gloomy prospect, of the declining state of the British empire--we trust the unfavourable picture is, in many respects, overcharged. Yet the want of that public spirit, which, at former periods, has so much distinguished the natives of this isle, furnishes us with too plain and melancholy a symptom of a sinking state. While the love of country prevailed at Rome, and every citizen felt his heart deeply interested in her glory, her empire was daily extended, and she at length became mistress of the world. But when luxury and sensuality had debased the manly character, and extinguished patriotic zeal, how soon did this mighty empire crumble to pieces, and fall a prey to the ravages of the barbarians of the North.—The same causes must ever be productive of the same effects. If the prevalence

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lence of luxury, with its constant attendants, corruption of manners, and extinction of public virtue, have hitherto been destructive to other once flourishing states and kingdoms, they must at length prove fatal to Britain.

How far the blessings of peace may contribute to restore strength and vigour to the state, and prolong the term of its existence, must depend on the use or abuse of this providential dispensation. Riches and abundance will be the probable consequence. O let us beware of their enervating influence! and guard against a danger, the effects of which we have already too sensibly experienced!

If the conditions on which peace has been obtained appear humiliating and disgraceful, they may, at least, furnish us with a lesson of reproof for the past, and of caution for the time to come. Let us not be too much concerned that the British empire must now be confined within narrower bounds, rather let us reflect with confusion, that this has been the natural effect of national depravity. Let us sincerely recall and practise the virtues of the Christian and the patriot; and then we may reasonably hope, under the blessing of providence, that happiness, vigour, and security will be restored to the land.

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But though it may be observed with regret, that our late exertions have not been proportioned to the exigencies of public affairs, and such as might naturally be expected from a nation of freemen, and of Britons; yet the reproach cannot be justly extended to *all*. Many individuals have proved themselves alive to the virtuous emotions of public spirit. And it is a tribute of praise justly due to the inhabitants of *this town*, to declare, that they stand first in the list of those, who have exerted themselves in strengthening the hands of government. And you, my friends, in particular, stepped forth at your sovereign's call, prepared, even by your personal services, to contribute to the national defence, at a time big with difficulty and danger. Animated with the wish to render your services as beneficial as possible, you submitted, with patience and perseverance, to the rigid rules of military discipline, and devoted a considerable portion of your time to the use and exercise of arms. You very wisely considered that undisciplined bodies of men, however numerous and active, form but a very slender barrier against the artificial movements, and well-conducted efforts, of an invading foe; and that to be prepared to repel an attack, is the best and only pledge, that hostile attempts will never be made.

Were it necessary to make any observations on the
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plan of your association, it might not be difficult to shew, in answer to those, who affect to consider it as dangerous and unconstitutional, that it is more consistent with that species of national defence, which prevailed at the earlier periods of the British monarchy, than standing armies of regular, or even militia *corps*. In those days soldiers were, on any sudden emergency, collected from the body of the people, and at the expiration of, perhaps, one campaign, resigned the military character, and mingled again in the common mass of their fellow subjects. Those of our gallant ancestors who fought and conquered at Cressy, and at Agincourt, were chiefly men, well acquainted with the use, but not engaged in the regular and constant profession of arms. But it will not be thought necessary to dwell upon this subject; your Association has received the sanction of the Legislature; and whatever opinion may be entertained as to the expediency, no objection can be justly made to the legality of the measure.

There is every reason to believe that you have been influenced by the purest motives of promoting the public good. And yet that conduct, which in better times, would have been thought entitled to general applause, has served to expose you to censure and detraction. It has been said that
a spirit

A spirit of pride and ambition, has united you together. But surely the ambition to be distinguished in a good cause; in the cause of humanity, of honour, and your country, can hardly be ascribed to you as a crime: and in an establishment like yours, little food can be furnished, to gratify a lust for power. Pre-eminence and command, can be the lot only of a few; and even that too supposes a pre-eminence in care and unwearied attention.

The change which has lately taken place in our public affairs, removes every apprehension for *national* safety—we shall at least be secured from the insults of our *foreign* enemies. But you may still render important services to society, by aiding the civil magistrate; and by repressing (should unhappily an armed force be necessary) the riot and disorder of domestic enemies.—But how regular and guarded should be the conduct of those, who pretend to regulate the conduct of others? How peaceable those, who profess themselves the guardians of peace? In your circumstances, presume not too much on the indulgence of the world; but rather conclude that every instance of misconduct will be heightened, and every act of imprudence magnified, through the medium of prejudice.

“ Avoid therefore the very appearance of evil, and let not
 “ your

“ your good be evil spoken of.” “ As much as lieth in you
 “ if it be possible, live peaceably with all men.” And in particular beware of indulging a peevish, froward, resentful temper. Because you have added the military to your civil duties, adopt not therefore the less pleasing part of the soldier’s character, who too often becomes, in the language of the Poet, “ Jealous in honour, sudden, and quick in quarrels.”— Believe me my friends, there is not a temper more averse to that of the Christian, nor one indeed that is a greater bane to the pleasures of society, or bar to the freedom of friendly intercourse, than that fiery combustible spirit, that kindles into flame on every frivolous occasion, and seems to watch for opportunities of displaying superior courage. But true courage, like charity, “ is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.” It is a cool, calm, and steady principle of action; rather despises than fears the attempts of others, and never strikes till the motive will fully justify the blow.

If I may be allowed to advert more particularly to the present occasion, permit me to remark that you should consider the Standard, with which you have been this day presented, as designed, not to swell the parade of military array, and “ mock the air with idle state,” but as a Badge of honour, a Centre of union, and Pledge
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of fidelity. Your present numbers are not considerable; you can therefore expect to derive weight from nothing but the firmness of your union, and the exactness of your discipline; and this end cannot be obtained without a due subordination, and a prompt and regular obedience to the authority of those who command. To them you delegated this authority; and to obey, is only to respect yourselves. They were the men of your free and unbiassed choice; you are therefore bound by the ties of duty, and of honour, to pay them every necessary mark of respect.

Give me leave to add another, and that an interesting consideration, and I have done.—You are enlisted too under a SACRED BANNER, the banner of the great CAPTAIN of our salvation; and have solemnly engaged to become his faithful soldiers and servants. Let it be your constant care to discharge the duties of your spiritual warfare, and then, no doubt, you will be prepared, on every emergency, to quit yourselves like men. Let the spirit of Christianity once prevail in your hearts, and it will invariably teach you the duties you owe to the public and yourselves; and suggest, in every trying circumstance, what prudence, justice and humanity may require.

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But you have been told, perhaps, that Christianity is productive of a weak pusillanimous disposition, incapable of vigorous exertions and military prowess. Believe not the idle insinuation. Christianity indeed justly abhors wanton acts of violence, barbarity and bloodshed, either among individuals, or even contending states; but, as we have before seen, does not repress the ardour of true patriotism; on the contrary, encourages and supports it. Does it seem probable that the good man, who goes forth supported by the confidence of a righteous cause, and of a conscience void of offence, and for whom death cannot therefore have extraordinary terrors, should be less distinguished in the field for his bravery and intrepidity, than the wicked and abandoned wretch, to whom death must appear the most dreadful of all evils, and who can be supported by nothing but a blind brutal courage, strengthened by habit, and the absence of all thought?

Be assured, the virtues of the military character, however raised and exalted, can never become truly amiable, or equally beneficial to society, unless improved and adorned by the graces of the Christian: but, what is of infinitely more importance, without these, which are the true ornaments of the soul, you can entertain no reasonable hope, of
securing

securing the favour of God, and the rewards of heaven. Your earthly warfare must soon come to a period; it would therefore be the height of folly to pay all your attention to the concerns of the present world, of a country that must e'er long be relinquished, and neglect the infinitely superior interests of an enduring country, and of a state that will never end. How happy and enviable must be the closing scene of the Christian hero, who can with rapture cry out in the language of the apostle, *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

T H E E N D.

E R R A T A.

PAGE 7, line 5, *for part read a part.*
 - 9, 16, *for armament read ornament.*
 11, 8, *dele and regard.*
 12, 8, *for pleasure read pleasures.*
 14, 1, *for tranquility read tranquillity.*

