

**EULOGY ON LA FAYETTE,**

PRONOUNCED BEFORE

**THE SOCIETY OF CINCINNATI**

OF THE

**STATE OF NEW-JERSEY,**

ON THE 4TH OF JULY, 1835.

---

BY AARON OGDEN DAYTON,

A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY.

---

1835.

ON the 4th of July, 1834, the Society of Cincinnati of the State of New-Jersey passed the following resolution:

“ *Resolved*, That the Orator of this Society for the next Anniversary pronounce a eulogium on the character and services of General La Fayette, to be preserved among their archives for ever.”

In compliance with this resolution, the Oration now published was prepared, and such portions of it were delivered as the time would allow. It is printed by permission of the Society, granted at the request of the citizens of Elizabeth. The writer is well aware that whatever interest it may possess, is owing more to the subject than to the manner in which it is treated. He may be allowed to observe, however, that the facts have been carefully compiled from the most authentic sources, and to express the confidence which he feels, that they may be relied on as accurate.

## O R A T I O N .

---

BRETHREN OF THE CINCINNATI,  
AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,—

THE day and the place in which we are assembled, are full of interesting associations. The Declaration of Independence, with all its moral grandeur; the toils and sufferings, the doubts and fears, the glories and triumphs, of the seven years' war by which that independence was achieved; the never-dying memory of the patriots and heroes, in the cabinet and the field, who staked their fortunes and their lives upon the issue; our constitutional union; the influence of our example throughout the civilized world, manifesting itself in the gradual but irresistible progress of liberal opinions and free institutions; grateful recollections of the past, the multiplied enjoyments of the present, and cheering anticipations of the future, rush upon the mind, on this the anniversary of that great day to which we owe them all. To those of us who have been reared from infancy in the lap of liberty, whose bosoms have never been stirred up by oppression, the imagination essays in vain to paint, with the force and vividness of reality, the feelings that pervaded the Continental Congress and the people of the Colonies, at that important epoch which we are assembled to commemorate. The Fourth of July, 1776, was not, like this, a season of rejoicing. The tremendous consequences which hung upon its decision gave to it a character of profound solemnity. The council of patriots that assembled on that eventful morning were strongly impressed with the responsibility they were about to assume:

“ Deep on ” their “ front engraven,  
Deliberation sat, and public care.”

They knew the power against which they were to contend, they knew the poverty of their own resources, they knew the consequences if they failed. Success alone could save them

from the infamy and punishment of rebels and traitors, and to the eye of reason success was almost hopeless. This was not all. Even if the object of their hopes and exertions should be attained, it could only be at a fearful cost. The young fields of their country were to be crimsoned with the best blood of its sons; its fruitful plains were to be ravaged; its towns and villages plundered and burnt; the frame of society was to be shattered and unhinged; the sources of individual wealth and happiness were to be dried up; brother was to come into conflict with brother, and parent with child; the air was to be rent with the cries of widows and orphans; and all the horrors of protracted civil war were to spread desolation, and ruin, and death, over a hitherto peaceful, and in most respects a happy people. But the statesmen to whom the interests of America were intrusted were equal to the emergency. Independence was declared. It was proclaimed through the towns and villages of the country, and every where ratified by the approving voice of the people. To the mass of citizens, even more than to their delegates in Congress, the prospect was dark and cheerless; but they had a spirit within them that would not brook oppression; they had confidence in their leaders, and a firm conviction of the justice of their cause, and they trusted in God to deliver them. The loud acclamations with which the tidings from Congress were received, were not the sounds of joy and merriment that now rise from every part of our country on the annual return of the day of Independence: they were the outbreakings of a spirit determined to be free; they were the animating shouts that precede the desperate encounter; such as may have risen from the Spartan band of Leonidas, when they rushed upon the countless hosts of Xerxes at the pass of Thermopylæ. Over many of these brave men, too, with a slight variation, the touching inscription might afterwards have been graven, which was sculptured upon the monument that marked the spot where the Spartans fell: "O stranger! tell it in Lacedæmon, that we died here in obedience to her laws." The valor and virtue of our fathers met their reward. Heaven smiled upon their exertions, and the day on which

they staked all for liberty against such fearful odds, has become the brightest in the annals of our country. Hail then to the anniversary of that day! All that meets the eye and the ear proclaims the general joy at its return. The thunder of artillery that salutes the dawn, rolling along every river and valley, and reverberated from every hill throughout the wide extent of our country; the incense of gratitude and praise ascending to heaven from a thousand altars; the vast landscape radiant with the stars and stripes of our national banner, floating over every town, and village, and hamlet, from the Northern Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific, all proclaim the arrival of the great jubilee of American freedom. Well may we rejoice! for never since the sun was fixed in the firmament, has he shone upon a country so widely extended, so prosperous, and so free as ours.

The place in which we are assembled was conspicuous in the revolutionary contest, not indeed as the theatre of any important engagement, but as for a long time included in the seat of war, and the scene of varied and protracted suffering, as some who now hear me can probably bear witness. The very walls of this sacred edifice which surround us, were erected on the ruins of a conflagration, kindled by the sacrilegious hand of an enemy. Along the street from which we have just entered, passed the half-clothed, dispirited remains of the American army, with their unconquerable leader at their head, on their memorable retreat before the numerous and well-furnished hosts of Britain. The proximity of the town to Staten-Island and New-York, so long in possession of the enemy, exposed it for years to frequent alarms and incursions, from detachments of the British army and from bands of refugees. During the whole winter of 1776 and '77, it was occupied by a hostile force. In February, 1780, an unsuccessful attempt was made by General Gray, with a considerable corps, to surprise the Jersey Brigade which was quartered here, and to carry off the Governor of the State. On the 6th of June, 1780, General Knyphausen landed at the Point with a force of about six thousand men, and advancing as far as

Connecticut Farms, he there received so severe a check from the Jersey Brigade and the neighboring militia, that after setting fire to several houses in that village, he retired to Elizabeth-Town Point, where he remained until the 23d of that month, when he again advanced as far as Springfield, which he burnt, and then retreated to Staten-Island. In the City of New-York, a company was organized for purposes of depredation, under the name of "The Honorable Board of Associated Loyalists," which spread terror and distress through the whole surrounding country. In a place situated like this, the sufferings of the inhabitants must necessarily have been peculiarly severe. Families were driven from their homes and from their means of living; time after time their houses were robbed, and their fields laid waste; females were left defenceless and unprotected against the outrages of lawless ruffians, while their fathers and brothers were fighting in the cause of their country; and the fate of two neighboring villages, as well as their own experience, admonished them that they were at no hour secure from the torch of the incendiary, or the incursions of armed robbers; while the melancholy death of Mrs. Caldwell proclaimed to them that their sex was not always a protection against inhuman butchery. But if the town in which we are assembled had its full share of suffering, I am proud to say it contributed its full share also to the success which finally crowned the American arms. It was the testimony of the Commander-in-chief himself, that the Jersey officers had not been outdone by any others in the qualities either of citizens or soldiers. Of these officers commissioned in the regular line of the army, Elizabeth-Town alone, then possessing less than one-third <sup>even</sup> of its present population, furnished the number of twenty-nine. It may not be uninteresting to some of those whom I address, to recount the names of these brave men, which, especially in this <sup>the</sup> place that sent them forth, should never be forgotten. They are the following:

Elias Dayton, Matthias Ogden, Oliver Spencer, Francis Barber, William Barber, Elias Boudinot, Thomas Morrell, James Caldwell, William Barnet, Aaron Ogden, Jonathan

Dayton, Andrew McMyers, Aaron Clark, Cyrus Dehart, Seth Johnson, Jonathan Pierson, David Lyon, Joseph Periam, Absalom Martin, Ephraim L. Whitlock, William Shute, Edmund Thomas, Luther Halsey, William Crane, Moses Ogden, Morris Dehart, Thomas Clark, Robert Spencer.\*

Scanty remnant of this gallant band that I see before me! where are your comrades? Those who fought with you side by side, who bore with you the heat and burden of many a weary day—where are they? We are met to perpetuate the remembrance of the great event for which they toiled and bled; to keep alive those friendships which were formed under the pressure of common danger, and in many instances cemented by blood;—and they are absent. Absent! Ah! those hoary heads remind me that threescore years have run their round, since the day that first called those gallant spirits forth in their country's cause. I seem to hear, in the remote distance, the hoarse beat of the muffled drum, and the wailing of the shrill fife; and my memory recalls the solemn hour, when my youthful footsteps joined in the procession, which, with arms reversed and shrouded ensigns, conveyed the remains of him who was the eldest of your number, to their final repose in yonder cemetery.† Most of those patriotic men, though now departed, had the happiness to live until the object of their warfare was accomplished; and passed from a quiet death-bed to the grave. A few there were whose glory it was to die for their country; for whose last moments no couch was spread, under the domestic roof, by the sympathy of sorrowing friends—whose destiny it was

————— “to lie,  
Stretch'd out on honor's nobler bed,  
Beneath a nobler roof—the sky.”

Three of the number still survive; and two of them have come up on this joyful occasion, with their few remaining brethren in arms, still to cherish those ancient friendships,

\* Since the delivery of this oration, the writer has been informed that the name of Captain William Brittin should be added to the list of officers who entered the army from Elizabeth-Town.

† General Elias Dayton.

which were formed more than half a century ago, and to unite with another generation in the celebration of those great events, of which they themselves were eye-witnesses, and in which they bore a part. Venerable fathers! relics of the days that tried men's souls! happy are we that you are yet amongst us. May many returning anniversaries of this glorious day find you still, as now, rejoicing in the "fruits your valor won:" and when, in the course of Providence, you shall have passed from human sight, each succeeding anniversary shall revive the memory of your services and your virtues.

*Brethren of the Cincinnati—*

Shortly before our last annual meeting the whole country was covered with gloom, by the intelligence received from France of the death of one whom we all venerated and loved—the generous, the brave, the virtuous La Fayette. The Society hastened to express its sorrow at the decease of the last surviving general officer of the Revolution, by assuming the external badges of mourning, and by offering to the family of the deceased its deep condolence in their afflicting bereavement. The duty was at the same time imposed upon me of pronouncing before the Society, on the present occasion, a eulogy on the life and character of this extraordinary man, to be preserved in the archives of the Society. I did not consider myself at liberty to decline the task, although I felt, as I now most painfully feel, my inadequacy to its fulfilment. My diffidence is much increased by the reflection, that the subject has already been treated at the hands of others, whom I can aspire to follow only at a very humble distance. The best eulogy upon La Fayette would be a simple unadorned narrative of the events of his life. With these events you are all more or less familiar; I have not even the aid of novelty, therefore, by which I can hope to attract your attention—I must rely for a hearing upon your indulgence—upon that indulgence which affection is wont to show to the repetition of the virtuous deeds of a departed friend.

The darkest period of the American revolutionary contest



was unquestionably that of the retreat through the Jerseys, in the fall and winter of 1776. The great accession to the British army, the disastrous issue of the battle of Long-Island, the evacuation of New-York, the loss of Fort Washington, with its garrison of 2,000 men, the abandonment of Fort Lee, had followed each other in rapid succession; and the American army, reduced to three or four thousand men, was flying, ragged and barefooted, at an inclement season, closely pursued by a well disciplined, well furnished force of three times its number. A few weeks before, General Washington was at the head of 27,000 men, full of confidence and high in spirits. During the late reverses, thousands of these had been killed or captured; multitudes had become panic-stricken, and fled; the remnant, composed in part of regulars, whose terms of enlistment had nearly expired, and partly of raw militia, was dispirited and discontented. The currency had become depreciated to a fearful degree, and disaffection was spreading among the people. The stoutest hearts palpitated with anxiety and apprehension. Even the fortitude of the Commander-in-chief, which seemed "fixed as the everlasting hills," trembled in the general convulsion; and he expressed, in his letters to Congress, the most serious alarm lest the hopes of the country should be utterly blasted. The struggle, which at this agonizing crisis was a subject of such intense solicitude in America, had yet excited but little sympathy or interest in Europe; if we except the mother country itself. By most it was regarded as a family quarrel, which would soon be healed; as the rising of refractory children against parental authority, who, by proper correction, would soon be reduced to their former subjection. Little did the princes and potentates of the old world, reposing upon their honors in the fancied security of divine right—little did they anticipate the mighty consequences with which the rising contest was fraught. Little did they imagine that the cloud which they saw as a speck in the western horizon, was gathering the electric fire which was to burst in thunder over their heads, shaking down thrones, and riving institutions compacted by the duration of centuries; but dissipating, at the same time,

the noxious vapors by which the political atmosphere had been so long corrupted. While this general indifference prevailed—while monarchs and statesmen the most sagacious and experienced, exhibited a total blindness to the importance of the events that were transpiring on this side the Atlantic, there was one individual whose eye was *keenly fixed on every* movement of the American colonists, whose heart glowed with the warmest sympathy in their cause. This was a youth of one of the noblest families of France. At the early age of nineteen, an age devoted by most of the young men of his country to pleasure and dissipation; possessed of an ample fortune; cherished by affectionate and influential friends; wedded to a young and interesting wife; surrounded by the splendor and fascination of a luxurious court; a favorite of the young king, for whose immediate predecessor on the throne a father and an uncle had shed their blood; bearing a commission in the army of France, with a certain prospect of rapid promotion; with every thing, in short, to rivet him to his own country; the first tidings that reached his ear of a people beyond the Atlantic struggling against oppression, and fighting for *freedom*, stirred up the noble spirit within him, and he panted for an active participation in the conflict. His ardent and disinterested sympathy in the cause is best expressed in his own impassioned language, employed in a letter addressed to Congress two years afterwards: “The moment I heard of America I loved her; the moment I knew she was fighting for freedom I burnt with the desire of bleeding for her; and the moment I shall be able to serve her, at any time, or in any part of the world, will be among the happiest of my life.” A spirit like this difficulties but inspire with increased energy. Happy for us, in this instance, that it was so! Else La Fayette had declined our cause as hopeless; and what, in that case, would have been the issue of the struggle, is known only to the Omniscient. The same Providence that raised up, and conducted to our aid, in the time of our greatest need, this zealous and powerful friend, might of his unsearchable pleasure have used some other instrument in the accomplishment of our deliverance. But

in all human probability, if La Fayette had yielded to the obstacles which rose up before him at every step, the independence of America, if achieved at all, would have been obtained only after a much more protracted, expensive, and bloody contest. I believe I may say, without injustice to the memory of any among that host of noble spirits, who, for wisdom and courage in council, bravery and energy in the field, and zeal and self-devotion in the cause of freedom, was never surpassed, that there was but one man who contributed more to the happy result of the revolutionary war than La Fayette. This gallant and noble-minded youth, spurning the seductions of a life of ease, bursting the ties which bound him to his family and his native land, against the advice and the urgent entreaties of his friends, with perils and difficulties innumerable staring him in the face, in opposition to the known wish of his sovereign, at the risk of the confiscation of his large estate, and of personal degradation and punishment, had already offered his services to the American commissioner in France, as a volunteer in the cause of the revolted colonies. The offer had been accepted, and a passage was promised him in a vessel which was expected soon to sail for America, with stores and equipments. At this juncture arrived the dismal tidings of the evacuation of New-York, and the retreat of the American army through New-Jersey, almost annihilated before its pursuers. The hearts of the commissioners sunk within them; the shrieks of American freedom, expiring in its infancy, seemed wafted to their ear across the Atlantic; the credit of the country was gone; hope itself was almost extinct. This melancholy reverse was announced to La Fayette: his projected enterprise was discouraged; and he was informed that the idea of sending out a vessel to America was necessarily abandoned. Mark his noble reply—Americans! Freemen! whose destiny it may be turned on that resolve! Mark his magnanimous reply: “Hitherto I have only cherished your cause, now I am going to serve it. The lower it is in the opinion of the people, the greater will be the effect of my departure; and since you cannot get a vessel, I will purchase one, which shall

convey your despatches to Congress, and myself and my companions to America." A ship was purchased, and for greater safety was conveyed to a port in Spain. An order was issued by the King prohibiting his departure, and he was compelled to return to France. He afterwards fled to his vessel in the disguise of a courier, pursued by officers with a warrant for his arrest. He put to sea immediately with a clearance for the West Indies; but altering the course of the vessel, at the imminent risk of capture and imprisonment by the enemy, under such circumstances as would preclude the hope of an exchange, he steered for the American continent, and escaping the cruisers, which had been fortunately blown off by a gale, he landed near Charleston, in South-Carolina.

Here let us pause, and inquire what powerful motives induced this young member of a proud aristocracy, reared and educated under the dominion of a despotic king, to sympathize with the rebel subjects of a neighboring prince; what considerations impelled him, when the millions around him were standing aloof, at the risk of all his possessions and prospects, to rush with the burning zeal of chivalry to the support of a sinking and almost desperate cause in a strange and distant land. Open the history of his life, and at the head of every page, from the commencement to the close, you see inscribed, in conspicuous characters, LOVE OF LIBERTY—LOVE OF GLORY. These are the principles by which he has been swayed through the whole of his eventful career. Love of liberty, and ever in subordination to that, the love of glory. Not that liberty which consists in the absence of all government, in the destruction of all orders in society, and the overthrow of the most sacred and valuable institutions, and whose licentiousness terminates inevitably in despotism; but that rational genuine liberty, which admits of no restraint upon individual action, or the expression of individual opinion, beyond that which is necessary to the well-being of the society in which it exists, but which at the same time allows no license inconsistent with the morals and good order of the community. Not that glory which seeks a selfish gratification in wantonly shedding human blood, and spreading misery

and ruin and desolation over the face of unoffending nations, and with the blood-stained laurel on its brow, weeps for more worlds to conquer: but that glory which springs from noble actions achieved for noble purposes, from the gallant defence of a nation's liberties, from a manly resistance against oppression, from the promotion of the general happiness.

On the 31st of July, 1777, La Fayette, then not twenty years of age, received from Congress the commission of Major General in the army of the United States. By his own desire, he was to serve as a volunteer, and without pay. The interest which had been excited among the friends of the Revolution by the expected arrival of a personage so eminent by his rank and his illustrious connexions, who had exhibited so extraordinary a zeal in favor of the American cause, was not disappointed by his presence. Tall and slender in his person—his youthful countenance beaming with intelligence and vivacity—frank, and courteous, and affable in his manners—the warmth of his affection and the ardor of his feelings shining through his whole deportment—he inspired at once that attachment and confidence which, when yielded, were never withdrawn. He was adopted as an American citizen, a privilege which from that time was his pride and boast; a distinction to which he clung with fondness and exultation long after he had cast away the title derived from his noble birth, and had rejected as lighter than vanity the honorary insignia which princes can confer. It was his first request upon accepting his commission, that he might be near the person of Washington; and so favorable was the impression which he made upon the Commander-in-chief at the first interview, that he, whose confidence was hardly ever rashly given, invited the young volunteer to become one of his family. The invitation was accepted with avidity, and a connexion of the tenderest friendship was formed, which terminated only with life: a connexion, indeed, more intimate and endearing than the closest friendship; a filial veneration and affection on the one part, and a paternal fondness on the other. The sword of La Fayette was now to be unsheathed, and he was to encounter, under the eye of his

paternal chief, the terrors of the first battle field. It was at Brandywine that the young hero first found himself face to face with the enemy. His gallant spirit mocked at fear; and novel as the scene was, he displayed the courage of a veteran. When the fortune of the day was inclining against the American arms, he was to be seen on foot in the thickest of the danger, endeavoring to rally the retreating troops; and while thus engaged, he received a severe wound, which compelled him to retire for some weeks from active duty. During his confinement, his mind was not unemployed, nor was his zeal in the cause of American liberty in the least degree abated. While thus withdrawn from the field, he prepared and sent to Versailles a written project, which he hoped might bring about a declaration of war against England: and with the same view of producing a disagreement between the two countries, which might lead to active hostilities, he *proposed* to the Governor of ~~Mississippi~~ a joint expedition under American colors, against the English West India Islands; toward the expense of which he intended to contribute out of his own fortune: a measure which met with the approbation of the governor, and in favor of which that functionary addressed the French Court. In November we find him again in the field, acting as a volunteer in a detachment under General Greene, which was sent to succor Fort Mercer. In the course of this expedition, he distinguished himself by a spirited and successful attack with one hundred and fifty riflemen and as many militia, upon a picket of three hundred men, belonging to the army of Lord Cornwallis. Congress and the Commander-in-chief were satisfied, from the short experiment which had now been made, that property and influence were not all that the newly-constituted General had brought into the service of America. They perceived that he had military talent, which ought not to remain inactive for want of proper opportunity of exertion; and soon after he had recovered from his wound, the Commander-in-chief was informed that it would be agreeable to Congress, that General La Fayette should have command of a division. In the next month an appointment was conferred upon this

young soldier; which, while it was a flattering mark of the confidence reposed in him, brought into prominent relief another of that rare assemblage of qualities, which his life exhibited in such beautiful equilibrium. It was resolved to invade Canada with an army of 2500 men. This expedition was to have a double aspect, and was considered one of great importance. To capture St. John's, Chambly and Montreal; to seize the public stores at those places; and to obtain supplies for the American army in the States; constituted one class of objects in view: the other was to conciliate the inhabitants; to take advantage of their supposed disaffection to the British Government, and to induce them to join the Confederacy of States, submitting to the resolves of Congress, adopting the American currency, and sending delegates to represent their interests in the general body of representatives at Philadelphia. La Fayette, at that time but little more than twenty years of age, was unanimously elected by ballot to command this expedition. What an enviable opportunity for distinction was here presented to the young and chivalrous officer! With what elation of spirits, with what tumultuous joy, must he have received the unexpected tidings! He, a youth of twenty, intrusted with the separate and independent command of an army of 2500 men, the superior of officers grey with years and service, the head and conductor of an invasion of great difficulty and moment, requiring the exercise of the utmost skill, courage and address; with what eagerness must he have rushed to slake his burning thirst of glory at the fountain thus opened before him! With what alacrity and precipitation must he have hastened to the field, to reap the bright harvest of fame that waved before him! But no! Covetous as he was of glory, and full as he was of zeal, neither his ambition nor his ardor ever outran his prudence. When his appointment as the leader of the projected expedition was announced to him, he exhibited all the coolness, and wariness, and circumspection of a veteran. In his letter to the President of Congress, he said: "You will find me, Sir, very difficult, and rather too cautious; but it comes chiefly from my being strongly convinced how far indebted I am to

the Congress of the United States for the confidence they honor me with." He expressed his willingness to accept the command, only on condition of the most thorough preparation being made. He requested that the force to be employed might be considered as a detachment of the main army, and subject to the command in chief of General Washington; and that an additional number of general officers might be attached to the expedition, with whom he could consult. He had an eye to the most minute arrangements, urging the adoption of every precaution to prevent a failure; and after a considerable expenditure incurred by himself, in making the necessary preparations, the expedition was finally abandoned at his recommendation, from a supposed deficiency in the means for securing its success.

I should exceed the time allowed me on this occasion, were I to enter into a detailed account of all the scenes of the Revolutionary War in which the subject of this eulogy bore a conspicuous part. He always courted active service, and he never entered a field of battle without gathering fresh honors, and acquiring increased claims upon the admiration and gratitude of the American people. His masterly retreat with an advanced guard of 2000 men from Barren Hill, in the spring of 1778, for which he was complimented by General Washington; the gallantry and judgment displayed by him, in the battle of Monmouth, in which he had a principal command; his unremitted and successful exertions in healing the alarming feud between the American and French officers, arising out of the unhappy jealousy evinced by Admiral d'Estaing at the attack on Newport; his courage and good conduct in aiding the retreat of General Sullivan, after the departure of the French fleet, for which he received the particular thanks of Congress; each presenting a fruitful theme for the biographer or historian, can now receive but a passing notice.

With all the enthusiasm and devotion which La Fayette had manifested in the cause of America, he had lost none of his attachment to his native country, or of his loyalty to its king. With that high and delicate sense of duty, for which he was distinguished, now that war had been declared by



Great Britain against France, he resolved to present himself before his sovereign, and place his services at his disposal. It was a time, too, when his influence and exertions at the Court of Versailles might be of immense importance, in procuring the active and energetic co-operation of France, in the efforts which were making to drive the common enemy from their former possessions on this continent. Under these circumstances, much as his loss might be felt in America, his departure could not be opposed; and Congress, while granting him an unlimited furlough, returned him their thanks for the zeal and ability he had displayed in their cause, directed an elegant sword to be presented to him, as a testimonial of their gratitude and esteem, and gave him a letter to the King of France, in which they say:—"We recommend this young nobleman to your Majesty's notice, as one whom we know to be wise in council, gallant in the field, and patient under the hardships of war." He, on his part, assured them that the affairs of America should be his first business while in Europe; that any confidence he might have with the king and ministry, any popularity with his countrymen, and every means in his power, should be exerted in behalf of an interest he had so much at heart. And faithfully was his promise kept. During his absence, he was almost constantly in correspondence with the representative of the United States at Versailles, and with the French ministry, and exerting his influence at court, to procure contributions in men, ships and money, for carrying on the war. His mind was replete with resources, and his efforts were unceasing to render them available. At one time, we find him proposing that vessels of war should be hired from Sweden, upon the responsibility of France; at another, that a loan should be procured from Holland, with a French guaranty; and again, pressing upon the French government itself to send out a large military and naval force to the assistance of its allies. He urged their co-operation in a joint expedition against Canada and Nova Scotia, which had been specially recommended to his attention by Congress, previously to his departure from America; and he only ceased his exertions in this respect, when he was informed by its

authors that the scheme was abandoned. In his solicitude to recruit the American finances, he projected with the celebrated Paul Jones, a descent under American colors upon the western coast of England, for the purpose of levying contributions from Liverpool, and other towns upon the seaboard, for the American treasury. This project was superseded by a contemplated invasion of England, upon a much larger scale, by the united forces of France and Spain; which, however, was never undertaken. The reception of La Fayette in his native country was gratifying even beyond his expectation. His kindred and friends beheld him with increased interest and pride, as he came invested with the honors he had won in a foreign service; and after atoning, by a formal exile of a few days, for the disregard he had shown to the king's wishes, when he embarked for America, he was received with the fulness of royal favor, and was soon after appointed to the command of the king's own regiment of dragoons, and subsequently served with an honorable command under the Count de Vaux in Normandy. But beloved and cherished as he was in France, his heart was in America, and he yearned to be at the side of his former comrades, fighting in the cause of freedom. He writes in a letter of June, 1779:—"Never any thing was so warmly and passionately wished for, as I desire to return again to that country, of which I shall ever consider myself as a citizen." At length the wish of his heart was gratified. In April, 1780, he arrived at Boston, with the joyful intelligence that France had agreed to send out large succors to America, and that a formidable military and naval force might soon be expected to co-operate against the enemy. Cordial was the welcome, and great the rejoicing, with which this generous and tried friend of the American cause was greeted on his return. It seemed as if a new star of propitious aspect had risen upon America, toward which every face was turned, beaming with joy and hope. The news of the coming reinforcement flew with electrical rapidity to every quarter of the continent. The spirits of the whole country were revived, and renewed exertions were made, in the confidence that a speedy termination would be put to the war.

We are now approaching the most interesting and eventful period of La Fayette's service in America; a period which called forth all his talents and energies, and shed a lustre upon his military reputation, which, at his age, a Turenne or a Marlborough might have envied. In the summer of 1780 he was placed at the head of a separate corps, formed of the flower of the army, and ever after designated by him, with feelings of affection and pride, as his "beloved light infantry." When he obtained the command of this fine body of men, his fondest wish was gratified; and with them all his anticipations of future glory seemed to be identified. His private fortune was liberally expended in giving them a soldierlike appearance, and every effort was made to infuse into their breasts that lofty martial spirit which glowed in the bosom of their leader. In toil, in suffering, and in triumph, they were still his "beloved light infantry." From the time of his taking the command, through all the vicissitudes of the war in Virginia, until he bid them an affecting farewell, on his departure for Europe, after the surrender of Yorktown, he exhibited toward them the same parental fondness and sympathy. When they were destitute of clothing on their march to the South, he relieved them with means obtained upon his own private responsibility; and when, pressed with accumulated suffering, they threatened to desert, he secured their adherence by giving them leave to retire. The sight of their uniform, worn by a company in Boston, upon his last visit to the United States, filled him with the deepest emotion. The tear glistened in his eye, as he turned again and again to view this affecting memento of former days, and he repeatedly exclaimed, "My brave light infantry! such was their uniform! What courage! What resignation! How much I loved them!" It was with this corps that he achieved the memorable campaign of 1781, upon which his military fame will ever rest, and which, doubtless, paved the way to his subsequent elevation, in his own country, to the command of the National Guard of Paris, and to his selection as the leader of one of the three great armies employed against Austria. It was in the spring of 1781 that he entered upon this cele-

brated campaign. For some time previous, the enemy had been directing their principal operations against the Southern States. The fall of Charleston, the calamitous result of the battle of Camden, and the surprise of Sumpter at Catawba, had almost annihilated the American army at the South, and with it, the hopes of the friends of the cause in that quarter. The whole southern section of the Union was in imminent danger of falling into the undisputed control of the invaders; and although the reverses alluded to had been in a measure retrieved by subsequent successes under General Greene, in South-Carolina, the aspect of affairs in that quarter was still discouraging. The occupation of Virginia at this crisis was of the utmost importance; and so utterly defenceless was it, that the traitor Arnold, who had recently been invested by Sir Henry Clinton with the command of an expedition to that State, left his vessels, advanced with 900 men to Richmond, and returned almost without opposition, laying waste the country along his whole route. It was to capture this traitor, that a joint expedition was planned by the Commander-in-chief, in execution of which, on his part, General La Fayette was despatched by land with 1200 men, while the French were to transport about the same number to the Chesapeake by water. The French having failed to execute that part of the project which was assigned to them, and General Philips having been sent to the relief of Arnold, with 2000 additional troops, La Fayette was then ordered to take upon himself the defence of Virginia. The situation of La Fayette at this point of his history was deeply interesting. A youth of twenty-three, with little experience in war, he was directed to advance with less than a thousand regular troops, literally almost naked, and without tents to cover them from the weather in an uncongenial climate,—many of them sick, and all dispirited and dissatisfied,—for the purpose of defending the most important State of the Confederacy, the key to the whole southern country, against a disciplined and well appointed army of 3500 men, including a numerous corps of cavalry, and having command of the water. He who had been accustomed, on all former occasions of difficulty,

to look up with filial confidence to his paternal chief for guidance and direction, was now to assume what was, in effect, a separate command, where every movement must be made upon his own judgment and responsibility, against officers of high and established military character. General Philips, with whom he was first to cope, had served with great credit while young under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, and had acquired additional reputation as a commander of a division of the army under General Burgoyne. It was now to be determined by a severe test, whether the extraordinary confidence which Congress, and the Commander-in-chief, and the country, had reposed in La Fayette, was to be justified; whether the high hopes and expectations which had been excited in America and Europe by the incipient career of this noble adventurer in the cause of freedom, were to be realized, and the lustre of a new renown, such as he had never before acquired, should shed its light along the path of his future life; or whether his own eager aspirations after fame, and the fond anticipations of his friends, were to be blasted by a want of success, which, in the candidate for military fame, is so apt to be construed, however unjustly, into a want of merit. The prospect was appalling, and a bold heart might have trembled at the danger. Did La Fayette falter? No—not for a moment. With his other qualities, he possessed, in a high degree, that *self-confidence* which is so essential to the accomplishment of great enterprises, without which, in situations of command and in critical emergencies, great talents, if not wholly useless, are comparatively ineffective. He never lost a cause from fear of losing it. He received the order, and it was his duty as an officer, disregarding personal considerations, to do his utmost to execute it. He was to fight against a traitor, whom from the depths of his noble soul he execrated and despised; and against a commander before whose battery his gallant father had fallen on the field of Minden. It is not for me to narrate the details of this campaign, in the progress of which the young General was called to encounter, in the person of Lord Cornwallis, an officer who, in all the qualities required for

such a contest, in courage, activity, circumspection, and skill in manœuvre, had no superior in the British army; and in Simcoe and Tarleton, men whose enterprise and agility had struck terror into the country, and rendered them most dangerous adversaries. There is one at least among us\* who shared with him the trials and the triumphs of that memorable summer. He can tell you of the forced marches, the rapid advances, the hurried retreats, the frequent alarms, the narrow escapes, which rendered their days wearisome and their nights sleepless: he can tell you how often his heart has ached to behold those brave and devoted men hurried along from post to post, in miserable destitution of all conveniences and comforts on the road and in the camp, sinking under the oppressive heats of the day and the chilling damps of the night, yet striving to present a bold and warlike front to a formidable enemy. History will tell you, for she has inscribed it upon one of her fairest pages, how the young commander met and surmounted every difficulty, as the gallant ship rides the crested waves. She will tell you of the cautious prudence, which held in restraint the ardor of his youth, and the enthusiasm of his temperament, and led him, with Fabian policy, to act on the defensive, in spite of every artifice of the enemy and every temptation to act otherwise, and thus to harass and wear out the superior force of his adversary; of his courage and enterprise, which kept him with his comparatively small band upon the very skirts of an army of three times his effective numbers, and enabled him ever and anon to strike at some detached portion of the opposing forces: of his untiring vigilance, which, notwithstanding that he was incessantly hovering about the enemy, never suffered a surprise: of his military sagacity, which saw with eagle eye ~~where~~ an advantage was to be gained, or a danger escaped; and his skill and agility in manœuvres, which enabled him repeatedly to thrust himself between the enemy and his object, to check and foil him in his movements, and to extricate himself from all the snares laid for him by his dexterous opponent, even

---

\* Colonel Aaron Ogden.

when he fondly hoped and boasted, that "the boy" could not escape him. History will tell, too, of the glorious consummation of his anxieties and toils, in the surrender of his lion-like adversary in the lair to which he had tracked him; she will tell of the lustre which surrounded the young hero on the battle field, when, detached upon the most perilous service of the siege, his gallant spirit, freed from all restraint, rushed to victory in the face of danger and of death itself. The fall of Yorktown was decisive of the war; but the exertions of the Commander-in-chief were not for a moment relaxed. At his suggestion, La Fayette resolved again to visit France, and exert his powerful influence in procuring further aid for the next campaign. Previously to his departure, Congress expressed in the strongest terms their sense of the services rendered by him and his brave troops in Virginia. He was again recommended to the King, and the ministers plenipotentiary of the United States abroad were directed to confer with him respecting the affairs of the country. From the period of his arrival in France, his efforts were unremitting to promote the views of Congress, and the interests of his adopted country, by every means within his power; and, to use his own language, he became the political aid-de-camp of Dr. Franklin, then the minister of the United States at Versailles. The public documents of that day contain abundant evidence of his zealous and active interposition, both in providing for a vigorous prosecution of the war, and in promoting the negotiations for peace. He who, a few months before, first bore to our shores the welcome tidings of those succors from France which he had been so instrumental in procuring, and which hastened the close of the war by their co-operation at Yorktown, was now the first to announce by letter the joyful news that peace was concluded, and the Independence of the United States secured. At the time of the occurrence of this happy event, a French and Spanish force of forty-nine ships of the line and 20,000 troops was lying at Cadiz, in readiness for the next campaign in America; and he himself, who had marched 8,000 of these men from Brest, and who had been appointed chief of the staff to this expedition, was to enter

the St. Lawrence at the head of a French detachment, and prosecute his favorite scheme of annexing Canada to the United States. Having remained in France at the earnest solicitation of the commissioners who were conducting the negotiations for peace, until his services were no longer required in the field, anxious as he was to take his old comrades by the hand, and exchange congratulations upon the accomplishment of the object of their labors and anxieties, he sacrificed his personal feelings to the public interest, and hastened to Madrid at the call of the American representative there, and with the skill and address of an experienced diplomatist, exerted himself successfully to remove the difficulties that obstructed the establishment of friendly relations with that government. On his return to France, he was still occupied in seeking advantages for American commerce, and facilities in the payment of the public debts of the United States, which had been contracted in Europe; and it was not until the spring of 1784, that he was enabled to make his long desired visit to this country. He was received with enthusiasm, and his stay was accompanied by all those marks of admiration and attachment which his character and his services had justly inspired. At the close of that year he took an affectionate leave of Congress, and his old companions in America, and left these shores, never again to return, until after the lapse of forty years, (Oh! what eventful years!) and then to re-appear before another generation, with circumstances of indescribable interest and grandeur.

The scene of the exploits of La Fayette is now to be changed from the new world to the old. The Revolution in America had been brought to a happy conclusion, and the patriots of France, roused by the example, were about to erect the standard of popular rights in that country. This Revolution, which was commenced upon just grounds, for the redress of actual grievances, and which excited the sympathy of the friends of freedom every where, was soon perverted by unprincipled demagogues, to the overthrow of all social order, and the commission of excesses which outraged humanity. It were vain to attempt to picture to the eye or to the



imagination the horrors by which France was devastated under the abused and prostituted name of liberty. The most awful exhibition of destructive power that nature presents—the volcano, rolling forth its burning floods, amid thunders, and earthquakes, and flames, desolating fields that but yesterday rejoiced in verdure and bloom, and burying villages that a few hours before were instinct with life and gayety—affords but a faint image of the moral blight and ruin spread over the face of society by the atrocities of this dreadful period. A monarchy, hoary with the antiquity of fourteen hundred years, shivered to atoms by the fury of a mob; the crown which had sparkled upon the brows of sixty-six successive kings, trampled in the dust; the last of that royal line deposed, insulted and murdered; princes and nobles sent forth to exile and beggary; society upheaved from its very foundations, and the most ancient and valuable institutions overturned; the leaders of opposing factions butchering each other in their struggles for power; the prisons choked up with the victims of jealousy and revenge; the guillotine streaming incessantly with fresh blood; the temples and altars of religion desecrated and overthrown,—such were the scenes enacted by men with the cry of freedom on their lips. But what connexion have these horrible details with the character or conduct of La Fayette? It was declared by Burke, upon the floor of the House of Commons, and the accusation has been often repeated, that La Fayette was the origin and author of all the calamities of that frightful period. Never was a fouler calumny uttered by the lips of party virulence. As the candid eulogist of La Fayette, I would exhibit him to view upon this awful theatre, as an example of the purest consistency of character ever displayed by man, under circumstances of equal difficulty. Could I follow him, step by step, from the commencement of the Revolution, to the moment when he abandoned his country in despair, you would see at every stage an exhibition of heroic virtue which has never been sufficiently applauded, even by his warmest admirers. The same qualities by which he was distinguished during his youthful career in America, still constituted the beautiful

symmetry of his character; but the trying circumstances under which he was now called upon to act, brought out those qualities with a strength and boldness of relief which they had never before presented. All the powers and energies of his mind were called into action, and gave to his character a sublimity which can only be displayed in times of great difficulty and peril. Surrounded by the most unprincipled licentiousness, he was the consistent advocate of liberty regulated by law; in the midst of temptation and corruption, he preserved the most unblemished integrity; familiarized to scenes of cruelty, and subjected to the strongest provocation, he was always humane; thrown, time after time, into situations of the utmost perplexity and danger, his prudence and firmness never forsook him: while his rivals and his enemies were seeking the means of his destruction, by degrading themselves to a level with the lowest dregs of a Parisian populace, and while he himself was dependent for all his power and influence, and for life itself, upon popular favor, he never stooped to conciliate the multitude by the smallest sacrifice of principle, or the slightest departure from personal dignity. That he was a friend and chief promoter of the Revolution, is most true. In the first assembly of the Notables, it was he that moved the convocation of the States General. In the second assembly, it was he that insisted upon that most important measure, which secured the popular ascendancy, and lay at the foundation of all popular reform—the double representation of the Commons. He was a leading member and one of the vice-presidents of the National Convention. He was the first to present to that body for its adoption a declaration of popular rights, and was one of the principal framers of the *Constitution of 1791*; and he was, moreover, the commander of the National Guard of Paris. And was he to be blamed for all this? In the part which he acted, he but followed the examples of a Hampden, a Sydney and a Washington. He was a lover of liberty from his cradle. He fought for freedom in America, he yearned to give freedom to oppressed Ireland, and was he to look with submissive indifference upon the servitude to which his own country was

subjected? The government of France was not always an absolute monarchy. For centuries the royal prerogative was strictly limited; and in the early ages of the monarchy, the people even exercised the right of electing and deposing the king. Nor was nobility hereditary until the tenth century. To the question of Hugh Capet, "Who made you a noble?" the Viscount of Perigieux replied, "Not you, but those who made you king." The people had a share in legislation, and no taxes could be imposed upon them but with their consent. From the time of Charles VII., the kings of France had exercised despotic power; and although in succeeding reigns, the States General were occasionally convened, the people were virtually excluded from all participation in the government. For nearly two hundred years before the accession of Louis XVI., they had ceased to be represented or consulted even in name. It is unnecessary to enter upon a particular detail of the numerous causes which conspired to bring about the Revolution. Although the nation had reached its highest splendor under the absolute government to which it had been subjected, and although the condition of the people under Louis XVI. was happiness itself, in comparison with the anarchy and wild misrule of the Jacobins, yet no friend of freedom can deny that the situation of public affairs in 1789, was such as to justify an attempt at reform. The people were subjected to oppressive taxation at the will of the monarch, and were excluded from the highest offices; the public finances were in a state of almost hopeless embarrassment; the numerous body of nobles was exempt from contributing to the expenses of the government; titles conferring this exemption were bought and sold; the administration of justice was corrupted, and the personal liberty of the subject was constantly in jeopardy from the *lettres de cachet* of the king. Our fathers were far from having suffered, or even apprehended, evils like these, when they rose against their oppressors, and threw off the yoke. How, then, can any American condemn the authors of the French Revolution? The friends and advocates of salutary reform and rational liberty cannot justly be held responsible for the excesses which were afterwards committed

by those who proved themselves to be the most rancorous enemies of genuine freedom. They who held up the torch to show to an oppressed people their rights, and the way to obtain them, are not to be condemned for the acts of vile incendiaries, who plucked it from their hands, and fired the whole social edifice, involving life, liberty and property in one common ruin. The Constitution of 1791, defective as it was, if it had been suffered to remain, would undoubtedly have improved the condition of the French people, and to the principles asserted by the framers of that Constitution is France indebted for all the protection, imperfect though it be, which is afforded to popular rights by her present system.

It must be acknowledged that the original movers in the French Revolution, with honest intentions, committed great errors of judgment. They aimed to accomplish too much at once, and paid too little regard to the character of the people, and to their former habits. Let it be remembered, however, to the credit of La Fayette, that he never was favorable to the establishment of a republican government in France. During the Revolution of 1789, he never even suggested such a change; on the contrary, he more than once avowed his opinion to be in favor of a hereditary executive; and in the Revolution of 1830, he expressly declared himself opposed to the foundation of a republic, and in favor of "a popular throne surrounded by republican institutions." He was never so unreasonable as to believe that the same form of government was adapted to every people, whatever might be their dispositions, their habits, or their circumstances. Looking upon the American government as the best that had ever been framed, he knew the French people too well to attempt to introduce it among them. The declaration of rights which he proposed to the National Assembly, contained the same leading principles as the Declaration of Independence of the United States, placing all power where it rightfully belongs, in the body of the people; but the government which he proposed to base upon those principles was not a republic. He foresaw that the first popular election of the chief executive officer would shake the constitutional fabric to pieces.

The form of government established by the Constitution of 1791, which was the foundation of all his hopes, and to which he adhered to the last, was a limited monarchy. The kingly office was to remain hereditary, and the royal person to be sacred and inviolate. It was a radical and a fatal error, however, that in abolishing the hereditary peerage, no substitute was interposed as a barrier between the king and the popular assembly. There were other conspiring causes, undoubtedly, which tended to produce the disorganization of the newly-established government, and not the least were the irresolution, the vacillation, the insincerity, and the weakness of the King himself, and the ignorance, degradation, and excitability of the Parisian populace : but, after all, the defect of which I have spoken was the rock upon which the Constitution split. The too popular cast given to the new system, including this want of protection to the King against the waves of popular excitement, appears to have been foreseen by La Fayette ; for in a letter addressed to his constituents, in the year 1831, he expressly states that the experience of the world upon this subject, anterior to the year '89, led him to regret that the Constituent Assembly preferred the unity of the legislative body to its division into two elective chambers. Afterwards, too, in a speech delivered by him in the Chamber of Deputies, against an hereditary peerage, he declared that he had always been in favor of the system of two chambers ; and during the same session he voted for a Chamber of Peers, the members of which should be constituted for the term of fifteen years. As it does not appear, however, that he exerted his influence, which at that period was very great, to procure the adoption of this feature in the Constitution of 1791, it may fairly be inferred that he was not aware of its vital importance ; and herein, it must be confessed, that he showed a want of due sagacity as a statesman, the less excusable, as the omission was a departure from the only free constitutions then existing, those of America and England. But if he committed an error in judgment, the honesty of his intention was proved beyond controversy, by his unwavering support of the new

Constitution, through evil as well as through good report; and by his sufferings and sacrifices in the cause. He supported the constitutional king from the first to the last moment, with as much zeal and devotion as he manifested in favor of the constitutional parliament. His language to the Duke of Orleans, when he advised that prince, for the sake of the public peace, to quit the country, was: "The throne itself still exists, and will always exist, for it is the rampart of the Constitution, and of the liberty of the people." Again and again he perilled his influence and his life for the personal safety of the monarch. On the memorable 5th and 6th of October, when the palace of Versailles was attacked by an infuriated rabble, crying out for bread, and thirsting for revenge against the King and Queen, who were suspected of a design to reduce the city of Paris to submission by famine, La Fayette rushed into the midst of the exasperated crowd, from which cries for his head were heard to issue, and after rescuing several of the King's body guards from assassination, passed into the palace, and took the royal family under his personal protection. It was by his courage and devotion alone, as they ever afterwards acknowledged, that their lives were preserved on this occasion. When the departure of the King to St. Cloud was successfully resisted by the populace and a part of the National Guards, La Fayette, in disgust, resigned his commission as commandant of the Parisian guard; and it was only upon the most urgent entreaties of the municipality of Paris, of the troops themselves, and of the royal family, and after the most solemn assurances that he should be sustained in repressing future disorders, that he consented to resume the command. The flight of the royal family to Varennes, with an intention of leaving the kingdom, was undertaken without the knowledge of La Fayette, and after he had been induced, by the promises of the King, to declare publicly that such an attempt would not be made. It was a step which threatened to overturn the Constitution, and to involve France in intestine and foreign war; and in such imminent jeopardy did it place La Fayette himself, that Louis upon his arrest expressed his surprise that

the General yet lived and commanded the National Guard. Still the solicitude which he had always manifested for the personal security of the monarch was not relaxed. At the risk of his popularity, he dispersed by force of arms the crowd assembled in the Champ de Mars, for the purpose of signing a petition for the dethronement of the King. A few days before the memorable 10th of August, he offered to conduct the unfortunate monarch in safety to Compeigne, where he would be out of the reach of his enemies; but the offer was only accepted when it was too late to accomplish the object. He denounced the Jacobins at the peril of his life, when they threatened to overturn the throne; and, finally, when the royal authority was suspended, he abandoned the army and the country.

We are thus brought to the consideration of an event which was probably the most painful of all the varied occurrences that chequered the life of La Fayette—his flight from France. What tongue can tell the anguish that must have wrung the bosom of this faithful soldier and patriot at the necessity of taking such a step! His country, dearer to him than his life, seemed to stretch out her bleeding hands and implore him not to leave her in the hour of her greatest need. Liberty, the object of his earliest affection, for whom his youthful blood had been shed, and to whom he had consecrated the labors and sufferings of after years, pierced his ear with her plaintive cries, and conjured him to rescue her from the grasp of enemies in the guise of friends. Those visions of happiness for his beloved France, which had hitherto sustained him through every vicissitude, and cheered him onward in his course, were now dissipated like morning dreams. The sun of freedom, whose rising beams he had hailed with so much rapture, and whose struggling rays gilded to his eye every cloud that intervened to obscure their radiance, was “going down while it was yet day;” and the lurid clouds, that now swept with fearful rapidity across the horizon, portended a night of darkness and blood. The allurements of military glory, which to him were so inviting, and which glittered almost within his reach, were to

be foregone. He was about to take a step, the motives of which were likely to be misunderstood, and certain to be misrepresented; he was to incur the charge of flying from danger, of deserting his standard, of forsaking in an hour of peril, the brave troops that looked up to him as their leader, and above all, of abandoning, from cowardly despondency, the glorious cause of liberty, of which he had professed to be the fearless and zealous champion, which it would be said might still, peradventure, have been redeemed by his exertions, in the defence of which, at all events, he should have conquered or died: a family, too, to which he was tenderly attached, and whose natural protector he was, must be left to rely upon the mercy and forbearance of blood-thirsty ruffians, to whom his very name was hateful, and whose rage would be excited to desperation by the news of his escape from their fangs. He paused to consider. On whichever side he looked he saw his enemies triumphant: the constitution and laws were prostrate, and the "reign of terror" had commenced. He had contended for his principles until he stood almost alone; corruption and intrigue had shorn him of his power and influence, seduction had even been busy in the ranks of his army; he had been denounced by the National Assembly as a traitor and a monster, and a price had been set upon his head. If he remained in France there was nought before him but an ignominious death, at which his adversaries would exult, and the friends of freedom would despond. He determined to withdraw, and await a more auspicious day, when the advocates of liberty might again be rallied, and led on to victory. Having provided for the safety of the army under his command, he passed the frontier, with some members of his staff, with a view of proceeding to Holland and England; but was arrested by an Austrian corps in the neutral territory of Liege, and having refused to take part against his country in the war that was waging, he was subjected to incarceration as a prisoner of state. I must pass over his long and cruel captivity in the dungeons of Prussia and Austria, from which he was at length released upon the intercession of the French Directory, and through the influence of Bonaparte. Those



principles which neither time nor suffering had changed, forbade his return to France until after the revolution of the 18th Brumaire, which established the consular government. He then repaired to his native country to live as a private citizen, and it was in vain that Bonaparte, who was anxious to attach him to his government, sought, by personal solicitation, to draw him from his retreat at La Grange. Full of gratitude as he was to the First Consul, for the interest he had taken in procuring his discharge from imprisonment, and for his uniform kindness, that consideration was not permitted to prevail over his love of country ; and he firmly refused his consent to the establishment of the Consulate for life, unless some guaranty should be previously given for the liberties of France. Thus separated Bonaparte and La Fayette, never again to meet ; like two majestic rivers, whose near approach had almost mingled their waters, now parting to roll their floods by different courses, and at a wider and wider distance asunder, toward the same ocean ; the one pursuing its way over rocks and precipices, displaying at every obstruction new beauty or grandeur, in the glittering waterfall or the thundering cataract, widening and deepening as it proceeds, and acquiring increased rapidity, until all its original transparency lost, it presents to the view the sublime but fearful spectacle of a capacious sea lashed into fury by storms and tempests, and bearing upon its agitated surface the weight of contending fleets—the other pouring its smooth and fertilizing current through valleys and plains, every where ministering to health and convenience, till its accumulated waters, flowing from nation to nation, wash the feet of mighty cities, bearing upon their brimming surface the freights of distant climes and throngs of joyful people, and through all their course reflecting from their crystal bosom, as from a mirror, the purity of the o'er-arching heaven. The great object of Bonaparte's life was personal glory ; the great object of the life of La Fayette was the happiness of mankind ; and, wide as the objects were from each other, so widely different were the means by which they were sought to be attained.

From this period until the restoration of the Bourbons, in 1815, La Fayette remained in retirement at *La Grange*. After the return of Bonaparte from Elba, when hosts of foreign enemies were marshalled against him, and the fearful struggle was about to commence upon the issue of which his destiny was suspended, the confidence of the people was sought to be regained, and the nation roused to vigorous exertion by promises of liberty, on the part of him by whom nearly every vestige of freedom had been long since destroyed. La Fayette, diffident as he was of the fulfilment of these engagements, felt it to be his duty, upon the urgent solicitation of the brother of Napoleon, to come forth from his retreat at such a crisis; and having been elected a member of the Chamber of Representatives, he became one of the vice-presidents of that body. He urged the adoption of active measures for the national defence, but at the same time boldly asserted the rights of the people, and refused to hold personal intercourse with the Emperor. When Napoleon, driven to desperation, meditated the dissolution of the Chambers, and the assumption of the Dictatorship, La Fayette proposed that the Assembly should declare its sitting permanent, and that it would consider as a traitor any one who should attempt to dissolve it. The proposition was adopted, but the face of affairs was soon changed by the battle of Waterloo and the abdication of the Emperor. A provisional government was formed, and La Fayette, being excluded by the intrigues of Fouché, was sent to treat with the enemy for an armistice. In the course of this negotiation, still mindful of the generous part which Bonaparte had taken in procuring his release from the prison of Olmutz, he indulged his grateful feelings by endeavoring to secure to the fallen Emperor a safe passage to the United States. In the meantime, a capitulation was signed at Paris, and Louis XVIII. was soon after placed by the allied powers again upon the throne. La Fayette retired once more to *La Grange*, and was elected to the Chamber of Deputies. In this body he continued until the year 1824, contending on all occasions for the principles of 1789. At length the loss of his election afforded him an

opportunity, without deserting his duty at home, of gratifying an inclination which he had long felt, to visit in his old age the country to which the flower of his youth had been devoted, and which, in its rapid career of prosperity and happiness, had transcended the most enthusiastic anticipations of his early years. You remember, my hearers—and were ages to pass over your heads, they could not efface the remembrance—you remember that joyful day, when it was announced that this patriarch of liberty had landed upon our shores. You remember the pause of incredulity with which the tidings of this expected event were received, as though it were proclaimed that one had risen from the dead. You remember how millions of grateful people, with one heart and one voice, sent forth the shout of “Welcome La Fayette!” until inanimate nature seemed to catch the strain, and every mountain, and rock, and grove, echoed back the sound “Welcome La Fayette!” You remember the magnificent spectacle exhibited in his progress through the Union; the living floods that poured forth to meet him on his way; the military pageantry; the acclamations of the multitude; the thunder of cannon, and the pealing of bells; the crowns and garlands of laurel that were showered upon his head, and the flowers that were every where strewed in his path; the splendid banquets; the blazing illuminations by which the nation manifested its joy at the arrival of its guest, and afforded him a prouder triumph than Rome in her loftiest day awarded to her returning conquerors. You witnessed the emotion with which the aged fathers of our country grasped once more the hand of their early, and long-absent friend; the eagerness with which another generation, in the vigor of life, who had been taught by their sires to venerate his character, gathered around him to express their gratitude, and to bid him welcome to the country for which he had shed his youthful blood; the ardor with which even infants, uniting in the feeling that filled every heart, pressed forward to share his smile or receive his blessing.

The eventful life of this extraordinary man was not yet full. The Bourbons, since their restoration to the throne, had

broken down, one after another, the guards which had been established for the preservation of popular rights, and the country was fast sinking back into the despotism, which she had made such fearful sacrifices to overthrow. These oppressions at length became intolerable; the patience of the community was exhausted; and the cry of Revolution again issued from the capital. La Fayette, whose aged frame had now encountered the storms of threescore and twelve years, was reposing at La Grange. The voice of liberty crying out against oppression fell upon his ear, and he started like an old war-horse at the sound of the trumpet. He hastened to Paris, and offered his services to the insurgent patriots. He was received with enthusiasm. The friends of freedom rallied around the veteran chief. His well-known voice was heard in all their councils, and *the whole military force* was subjected to his command. He thus became the head of another revolution. The last words of Charles X. to the officer who conducted him to England, were: "It is that old Republican, La Fayette, who has done all this." A new government was formed under Louis Philippe as the head, and La Fayette now hoped to see the wish of his heart accomplished, in the firm establishment of "a popular throne surrounded by republican institutions." But this hope was not destined to be realized. The gradual departure of Louis Philippe from those principles of constitutional freedom, to the profession of which he owed his elevation, at length induced La Fayette to withdraw his confidence from the new administration, and to resign his office as commander of the National Guards. He continued, however, to represent the district of Meaux in the Chamber of Deputies, and to raise his voice on all occasions in favor of liberty, and the principles of the Revolution of July. On the 27th day of May, 1834, the toils and cares of this friend of mankind were brought to a close. Agreeably to his own request, his remains were deposited in the family vault at the private cemetery of ~~Pietus~~ *Pie*. Simple and unostentatious in death, as in life, a plain stone points the stranger to the humble spot, where, by the side of his beloved partner, the ashes of this great man repose. There he

sleeps—he the champion of liberty, before whose moral power monarchs trembled on their thrones—he the patriot and the statesman, whose honest and manly eloquence so often swayed a tumultuous senate, and calmed the waves of popular fury; whose voice animated and cheered the friends of freedom wherever it was heard—he the warrior and the hero, to whose youthful prowess the fields of our own country, and the records of our own history bear witness, and by whose word of command, in later life, a million and a half of men were marshalled and controlled. The storms of party violence may sweep over his lowly dwelling; the cries of the oppressed may pierce the surrounding air; the tread of armies, or the clash of conflicting hosts, may shake the earth in which he rests; they shall be alike unheard and unheeded. But the place in which he lies shall not be neglected nor forgotten. Liberty shall hold there, through every age, her unseen vigils, and the friends of freedom of each successive generation shall resort as pilgrims to his tomb.

Thus lived and died the man, who, if we consider the opportunities of influence which he possessed, the great and varied powers of his mind, the honesty and perseverance with which he devoted them all to the improvement of the civil condition of mankind, may be pronounced the most remarkable of his times. In an age emblazoned as this has been with great events, and thick-studded as it has been with great men, it is venturing little to say, that there is no one whose moral power has been more felt, or has left a deeper impression upon the civilized world, than that of La Fayette. By the impulse which he has given to the spirit of popular freedom, he has founded a monument to his fame, which each emancipated nation in its turn shall contribute to raise, until the top-stone shall be laid by a liberated world.

From the conspicuous part which La Fayette acted on the theatre of human affairs, and the frankness and openness which marked every step of his career, the lines of his character are so distinctly visible upon his history, that it seems almost superfluous to point them out to view. The brief allusion to them which will now be made, is designed chiefly

to afford an opportunity of directing your attention to a few prominent incidents of his life by way of illustration.

That feature of his character which was most strongly marked, and to which observers of every description would first point, is, undoubtedly, his LOVE OF REGULATED LIBERTY. For such an instance of early, persevering, extended, and self-sacrificing devotion to this noble cause, the records of the world, ancient and modern, will be searched in vain. Thousands have suffered and died rather than be slaves themselves, and other thousands have suffered and died that their country might be free. But the liberty for which La Fayette underwent labor and pain, and for which he staked his fortune, his friends, his health, his life, and even his temporary reputation, was not confined to himself or to his country. It was the liberty of mankind. At one time we find him contending for the independence of America; at another time, seeking means to effect the enfranchisement of Ireland; his exertions in the cause of his own country are known to all; he made repeated efforts to procure the abolition of negro slavery; his sympathies and his counsels were given to the patriots of South America, of Belgium, of Poland, of Italy, of Spain, of Greece; in short, wherever in the wide world a friend of liberty existed, he was sure of a counsellor and a friend in La Fayette.

But this zeal in the cause of freedom, however noble and amiable in itself, would have been of little utility, and might, indeed, have been productive of more injury than benefit, had it not been regulated and controlled by other qualities. Among these was a remarkable DISCRETION. Even during the ardor of youth, and with a most excitable temperament, he had the circumspection and prudence of sober age. It was the testimony of General Washington, communicated to Congress in 1778, that he united to all the military fire of youth an uncommon maturity of judgment; and the truth of this observation was evinced by his whole career in this country, and more especially by the campaign of 1781 in Virginia. He was no fanatic in the cause to which his life was devoted. He was not for giving to every people the utmost degree of liberty of which organized society is suscep-

tible ; but so much only as was adapted to their particular circumstances, as would conduce to their greatest happiness, and be most enduring. His proposed “ Declaration of Rights ” contained the broadest principles of freedom and equality, and it was his frequent declaration that he regarded the Constitution of these United States as the best ever invented, and yet upon two occasions, when his opinion would probably have been decisive, he favored the establishment of a different system of government in his own country.

Another striking trait in the character of La Fayette, is his **COURAGE**, moral and physical. The same leading principles which he adopted in early youth, in opposition to the seductive allurements of a luxurious and despotic court, he preserved unimpaired to his latest breath, through all the vicissitudes of half a century, and of three revolutions, under circumstances, at one time, of prosperity and temptation that would have turned any but the strongest head, and at another, of danger and adversity which would have subdued any but the stoutest heart. No considerations of personal security, no fear of losing the popularity which he at times possessed, and with which most men would have been intoxicated, ever induced him to abandon, for one moment, or in the slightest degree, a single important principle. When the public good required it he was ready to throw himself into any situation of peril or responsibility ; and, when surrounded by danger, he never lost his presence of mind. Over and over again he rushed unprotected into the midst of the infuriated multitudes of Paris, when thousands upon thousands in dense mass extended as far as the eye could see, raging and roaring like an angry ocean, and interposed himself between the excited populace and the objects of their fury. At the risk of his popularity, and of the vengeance of the mob, he commanded the National Guards to fire upon the throngs of people assembled in the Champ de Mars, to plot the dethronement of the King ; and when the Jacobins, with their forty thousand affiliated clubs, were obtaining the ascendancy in the Legislative Assembly, and threatening to overturn the government and deluge the nation in blood, he left a powerful army,

strongly attached to his person, and presented himself alone at the bar of the Assembly, in the very jaws of these bloodhounds, and fearlessly denounced them to their colleagues and the country, as the instigators of all the calamities that were impending over France.

His courage was not more remarkable than his HUMANITY. While all around him was calculated to harden the heart against human suffering, and to provoke to acts of unjustifiable severity; while scenes of atrocious cruelty were daily presenting themselves to his view, and the very air was scented with human blood; when *compassion seemed to have* "fled to brutish beasts, and men" to "have lost their reason," he once and again jeoparded his own life to save the lives of others, but never, throughout his whole career, committed, or designedly caused, a single act of wanton or unnecessary bloodshed.

Finally, to give the highest value to all his other qualities, he was DISINTERESTED. He never suffered considerations of personal advantage to interfere with his duty to the public. Wealth and distinction, and popularity, were alike disregarded, when they came in competition with the advancement of those great principles which it was the business of his life to promote. Born to fortune and rank, he sacrificed both in the cause of freedom. He steadily refused all compensation for his services both in America and France. The highest honors were repeatedly laid at his feet, but he refused to accept them. During the first Revolution in France, fond as he was of military distinction, he declined a marshal's baton, a constable's sword, and the *lieutenant-generalcy of the kingdom*. When at the summit of his popularity, he refused the command of a greater military force than was ever subjected to the orders of one individual. The fourteen thousand deputies who represented the National Guards of the kingdom at the Grand Federation in 1790, came prepared to confer upon him the command in chief of the whole body, consisting of between four and five millions of men; but, anticipating their design, he procured the passage of a law by the National Assembly, that no individual should command the guards of



more than one Department. He had previously resisted and defeated a proposition for the accomplishment of the same object, introduced at a meeting of the municipality of Paris, and unanimously supported by the members of that body. Although it has often been stated, it is nevertheless untrue, that he ever commanded the whole body of National Guards of France during the Revolution of 1789. After the proceedings of the famous 10th of August, the new ministry wrote him the most flattering letters; and the deputies who were commissioned by the National Assembly to proceed to his army, proposed to him the establishment of a republic, and offered him a place at its head; but he had sworn to be faithful to the Constitution of 1791, and he refused to listen to the proposal. In the interval between the dethronement of Charles X. and the accession of Louis Philippe, the patriots who had accomplished the Revolution insisted upon the establishment of a republic, with La Fayette as the President; but he resisted all the solicitations that were addressed to him on the subject. There were even those who demanded, that if they must have a monarchy, he should be the king. After the insurrection at Brussels, the Belgians sent deputies to propose to him the acceptance of the presidency or the crown. He declined both, upon the ground that his presence in France would be more useful to the cause of liberty.

Such was La Fayette—the prudent, courageous, humane, disinterested friend of regulated freedom throughout the world: so judicious, so honest, and so consistent, that, in reference to all important subjects of public concern, it may be truly said of him, in the language which he himself used in his letter of June 30, 1792, to the National Assembly, that he never changed his principles, nor his opinions, nor his language. Had all the leaders in the Revolution of 1789 been like him, how different would have been the fate of France! The great Charles James Fox thus spoke of him in the British Parliament: “If ever there existed a man, who, in a great and hazardous situation, amidst the conflict of opinions carried on either side to extremes, could claim the merit of having steered a temperate and middle course, uninfluenced by the

violence of the moment, and directed by preconceived opinions, that man was La Fayette."

In private life he was a pattern of moral excellence. He was eminent for that simplicity of character, which is so frequent and so delightful an accompaniment of true greatness. He was a warm friend, a kind father, an affectionate husband. His greatest happiness appeared to consist in the cultivation of the domestic virtues, and in the exercise of an unbounded hospitality, of which his residence was at all times the seat, and of which so many of our own countrymen enjoy the grateful recollection. But the main spring of his prodigious moral power was his rare and incorruptible integrity. To him may be applied, with great truth and justness, the sentiment inscribed upon the monument erected to the memory of the famous Duke of Marlborough: "He acquired an influence which no rank, no authority can give, nor any force but that of superior virtue." It might be exaggeration to say that his mind was of the very highest order, but he possessed a singular assemblage of great and good qualities, admirably balanced, and exercised on all occasions with a peculiar nicety of perception. The Revolution of 1789, in France, brought out a host of men, eminent alike for the brilliancy of their talents and for their zeal in the cause of liberty. These have nearly all passed off the stage; but which of them has left a reputation like that of La Fayette?

"He was the noblest Roman of them all:

\* \* \* \*

He—in a general honest thought,  
And common good to all, made one of them,—  
His life was gentle; and the elements  
So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up,  
And say to all the world—'This was a man.'"