

WASHINGTON'S PAPERS.

LETTER II.

From Mr. Jared Sparks to the Honorable JOSEPH STORY.

Mount Vernon, May 7, 1827.

DEAR SIR: Having in a former letter presented you with a brief account of the character and importance of Gen. Washington's papers, as they are preserved at Mount Vernon, I now proceed to explain the manner in which it is contemplated to prepare them for the press, and send them out to the public.

It is obvious, that it would be quite inexpedient to print, in detail, such a mass of papers, which the public can neither spare money to purchase, nor time to read; yet every American will desire to have preserved, in a durable form, such portions of the writings of Washington, as illustrate his own great deeds and character, and reflect honor on the country whose national existence and prosperity his services contributed so much to create and establish.

Notes and historical additions will be inserted throughout the work, tending to elucidate the text, and to place in the clearest view the motives, opinions and actions, of Washington. In discharging this duty, however, special care will be taken to avoid prolixity, and to introduce nothing which shall not have a direct bearing on the subject in hand; for it is not my purpose to connect with the writings of Washington a history of the times, any farther than that history may be developed by the writings themselves, and by the introduction of such facts as have an intimate alliance with them.

PART I.

Letters and other Papers relating to Washington's early military career, in the French Wars, and as Commander of the Virginia forces.

This period will occupy a comparatively small portion of the work, yet it will by no means be the least valuable. When it is recollected, that Washington was then a mere youth, engaged in hazardous enterprises, to which he was led by his native ardor and spirit; that, from the age of 22 to 27, he held a very responsible command over the united forces of the largest colony on the continent, and was required to defend a dangerous frontier, where he was exposed to the perpetual incursions of the French and Indians; that he acquitted himself honorably on all occasions, and received the public thanks of his Government, and the unanimous applause of his fellow-citizens, for his good conduct; when these circumstances are brought to mind, the conviction cannot be resisted, that an account of such a train of occurrences, written by his own hand, while these were taking place, must have much in it worthy to be treasured up among the permanent records of the country, for the inspection of the present and of future generations.

In making the selection for this part, regard will be had to the substance and historical character of the papers, so as to exhibit the intellectual habits, moral feelings, and special views, of the writer, together with as regular a narrative of occurrences, as can be attained by such a method. The notes will be designed chiefly to explain allusions in the text to particulars necessarily omitted, to fill out breaks in the narrative, and occasionally to trace the connexion between the proceedings on the Virginia frontier, and operations in other colonies, with remarks on the colonial policy of the English Government then prevailing.

PART II. Letters and other Papers relating to the American Revolution.

Here is opened a wide field, but the papers are so admirably classified, according to Washington's directions, that little difficulty will be felt in exploring it. All the letters, whether private or public, the orders, instructions, addresses, and other documents, which may find a place under this division, will be printed in strict chronological order. In some respects a classification by subjects and campaigns, would be preferable, but taking the whole together, this would create a confusion and transposition of dates, that would overbalance any advantage that might be derived from such an arrangement.

To make a choice of the best materials, from so voluminous a mass as forty-four volumes of manuscripts is the main difficulty to be encountered in preparing this part. The two volumes of Washington's official letters, which have been printed embrace those only to the President of Congress, for about three years and a half of the war. Some of the others to the same officer were also printed in the newspapers. Yet, all these together, constitute a very small part of the revolutionary letters, and hardly any of the remainder were ever made public. In selecting papers under this large division, I shall be guided by one rule, only, that of choosing such as shall seem most worthy of lasting preservation in the shape of historical annals.

The notes to this division will be frequent, growing out of a fruitful stock of materials. Four abundant sources of these exist among Washington's papers; first, the books of orders, in which the daily proceedings of the army through the whole war are entered; secondly, the results of Councils of War, and the opinions of the general officers in writing, on important topics submitted to them by the Commander in Chief; thirdly, the letters received by the Commander in Chief from the officers of the army, which are all preserved; fourthly, returns of the army weekly and monthly, reports of the inspectors, the quarter masters, and other officers for superintending the various departments of the army, and minutes respecting the arrangements of the different lines.

PART III.

Private Correspondence on Public Affairs.

You are already informed, that, after the Revolution, Washington took a deep interest in public concerns, although living and acting in retirement. His letters betray the secret workings of his mind, and the painful emotions with which he contemplated the prospects of the country under the Old Confederation. To his friends in Europe and America, he wrote much and feelingly on this subject. His letters upon the internal navigation of the States may likewise be considered of a public nature; and particularly his correspondence with several persons on the Convention for forming the new Constitution, and the progress of the State Conventions for adopting the same.

Parts of this division will require a good many notes, especially the letters to Ministers abroad and the Members of the Cabinet. These involve topics, that will need some further explanation than is contained in the letters themselves, but which may often be derived from the answers, and other documents. The records of intercourse between the Presidents and the Departments, mentioned in my last letter, will be consulted for the same purpose, and also the official correspondence during Washington's Presidency, on file in the Office of the Secretary of State.

PART IV. Messages and Addresses.

In the first years of the new Government, the President's communications at the opening of the sessions of Congress were called speeches, & those transmitted afterwards, till the end of the session, were denominated messages. All these will come into this fourth Part, together with proclamations, and a selection of some of the best addresses, or rather replies to addresses, that were made to Washington at different periods of his life.

To this part free additions will be contributed by way of notes. In the character of Washington there was not a more predominant practical trait, than his extreme care to possess himself of the views of persons in whom he had confidence, respecting any public measure, before he proceeded to act. This was his uniform practice in the army, and one to which he adhered more rigidly, if possible, after he was placed at the head of the Government. A speech, or message, was rarely composed, before he had consulted the members of the Cabinet, and solicited their opinions separately in writing, both as to the points suitable to be introduced, and the manner of introducing them.

The opinions of the members of the cabinet, commonly written out with care and labor, on various important subjects brought up from time to time for discussion, possess much value as connected with the history of the events of that day. It was a period when some of the most interesting points relating to the intercourse between the United States and other countries had not been settled, and when our infant republic was not of an age to have gained wisdom and character by experience. On the question whether a Minister from France, during the distracted state of that country, should be received without qualification, it is well known the Cabinet were divided: Hamilton and Knox being on one side, and Jefferson and Randolph on the other.

PART V.

Miscellaneous Private Letters.

Compared with the other materials, the number of letters strictly private, and suited for publication, is not large. It is presumed that letters of this sort, being deemed less important, were not copied with so much scrupulous care as others. King in the whole series, however, there will be found not a few which are, in all respects, worthy of the notice, and will add to the value and dignity of the work. The benevolence and kindness of his nature, which could hardly be manifested in the correspondence of a public man, sent out from a camp or the highest office of state, will here be disclosed. His remarks on human life in its connexion with retirement and the social principle, his interchange of feelings and sentiments with relations, friends, and neighbours, his advice to the young, counsels to the imprudent, consolations to the afflicted, his reflections and practical hints on the proper economy of time and means—all these have attractions which will make his private letters highly valued.

PART VI.

Agricultural Papers.

There was no station in which Washington took more delight, or the duties of which he discharged with more zeal and activity, than that of a practical farmer. His achievements in this walk were prodigious. It may be fairly questioned, whether any other individual in the country, not excepting the most industrious and enterprising, who has been devoted to this pursuit alone, has ever accomplished so much. He was commander of an army, and at the head of a nation, for a few years only at a time, but a day never passed in which his farm was out of his mind. During the whole war he was planning improvements, directing them, and often writing letters of minute instructions to his manager. While President of the United States it was his standing custom to write weekly, and to receive weekly returns, in which he required great particularity and exactness in specifying occurrences, and the employment and progress of the laborers. I have before me a volume of press copies of letters, written in one year, during the Presidency, to his manager and overseers. Some of them extend to several pages, and they average more than one a week. They are written in his own hand, with its usually fair and regular character, and bear every mark of having been as much studied in expression and style as any of his compositions. In some cases, and probably in most, they were written and copied out by himself before the press impressions were taken.

These instances are mentioned only as examples; they indicate the habit, and it is unnecessary to add more. For a time he kept an agricultural journal, and was engaged in experi-

ments as a rotation of crops, noting down for a series of years the crops of each lot, with remarks on the comparative success of different rotations. He was at much pains to stock his farms with the best breed of animals, and his grounds were adorned with rare and curious trees and shrubs, collected from various parts of the United States, and from foreign countries. His correspondence, with Sir John Sinclair, Mr. Anderson and Arthur Young, on agriculture, has been printed. It is not my intention to select much for publication under this head, but such papers will be included, and such illustrations appended, as will exhibit in their due proportions the character of Washington on his farm, and his attention to the humbler concerns of life.

Here I bring to a close what I proposed to say in reply to your inquiries, and if your patience has carried you along with me thus far, you will possess as full and accurate an account of the present condition of the papers of General Washington, and the manner in which they are to be prepared for publication, as I have been enabled to embrace within the limits which I prescribed to myself. You will observe the great object is to publish such a collection of Washington's writings, as will hold a permanent place in the historical literature of the country, and transmit to posterity in one body the best memorials of his character & actions and the best fruits of his mind, that were recorded by himself. I will add that the letters received by him constitute a mass of materials more extensive and important than would be inferred from the casual manner in which I have alluded to them, and that they will afford me very essential aids throughout the work. They amount in number to more than twenty thousand, and the literary merits of a portion of them are of a much higher order than is common in letters of the same promiscuous character; comparatively few persons wrote to Washington on trifling subjects, and few without more than ordinary care in regard to ideas and style. At no distant day it is presumed a selection from these letters will be published. Each volume of the work in contemplation, will probably have an appendix, in which extracts from them will occasionally be inserted. I hardly need to repeat to you what you know already, that Chief Justice Marshall most cordially approves my undertaking, and will favor me with such assistance by his counsel and otherwise, as his intimate knowledge of the papers will make it easy for him to render.

If you ask me how large the work will be when finished on the above plan, I cannot reply with certainty to your question. I may venture to predict, however, that it will not be less than eight volumes nor more than twelve; and these bounds have suggested themselves in accordance with the principle heretofore stated, that it will not be advisable to print so much as to encroach on a proper economy of purse and time in the reader, nor so little as to leave materials of substantial value behind. If you ask again, when the publication will be closed, I am equally at a loss for a definite answer. I have nearly completed a general assortment of the papers, and prepared them for a removal to Boston, where I shall apply myself to the task with as much expedition as the nature of the undertaking and my other pursuits will admit.

As the work is of a kind to have an equal interest with readers in every part of the U. S. it will be published by subscription, and every person so disposed will have an opportunity of procuring a copy with facility from the hands of agents to be employed for the purpose. Within a few weeks a prospectus will be issued and put in circulation. It is intended that the style of printing shall be handsome, & worthy of the subject, but not so expensive as to impose an unreasonable tax on the purchasers. The volumes will be published one, two, or three at a time, and at such periods as circumstances may render convenient.

A work thus comprising the best of Washington's writings, faithfully prepared in its literary execution, and published in the form and manner here described, will have claims, it is hoped, to general approbation, and to a liberal patronage from the American public. I am, sir, &c.

JARED SPARKS. Hon. JOSEPH STORY.

Communications.

FOR THE REGISTER.

Messrs. Editors.—As the Presidential canvass of 1828 begins to create considerable excitement throughout the United States, and especially as the friends of Gen. Jackson seem to be indefatigable in their exertions to secure his election, we think it would well comport with the standing and the respectability of the friends of the existing Administration, to call a meeting or meetings for the purpose of adopting such measures as may be deemed necessary in promoting a re-election of our present Chief Magistrate. Many, no doubt, will decriy such a proposition as vain and visionary, under the impressions that the friends of Mr. Adams are not sufficiently numerous to justify such a procedure; but I profess, Messrs. Editors, to know something of the popular sentiment in regard to the approaching important election, in several sections of North-Carolina, and I hazard nothing in saying, that the friends of Mr. Adams are sufficient in number to justify such a measure, and that if they display that zeal and activity in promoting his views which the opposition forces here have long exhibited for Gen. Jackson, we may reasonably hope that the Administration will yet triumph in North-Carolina. At any rate, we feel disposed to try our strength, let the contest eventuate as it may. We will therefore, at all events, form a ticket in this state for Mr. Adams, for the purpose of giving him an equal chance with his competitor; as we believe that the active and zealous exertions of his friends will make him the successful candidate in North-Carolina. Mr. Adams has influential friends in every section of the state, and nothing but their influence is now wanting to secure him success.

Notwithstanding the constant exertions of the opposition party for their favor, strong indications of discontent and uneasiness in the neighborhood where Gen. Jackson's friends are most numerous. It is to the friends of Mr. Adams we have to stand for him in this State which had a right to expect, yet we confidently hope that the time is not distant, when they will be aroused from their lethargy and set seriously to work in the cause that great man who now directs the destinies of our common Country. But notwithstanding the backwardness of Mr. Adams' friends in North-Carolina, we speak confidently when we say, that they are respectable in point of numbers. In one district in the State, in which we are acquainted, we know that Mr. Adams has a large majority. It is highly probable that there are other districts in the State in which he is in the majority. We ask nothing but the zealous exertions of his friends to secure the vote of the State—and this aid we are because we feel well assured that it will be given. The wisdom and uniformness with which Mr. Adams has discharged his duty while in the Presidential Chair, ought to guarantee to him the support of the Nation for a re-election. An organized, and, we say, an unprincipled opposition, has existed against Mr. Adams ever since his election by the House Representatives. We call it unprincipled because it is devoid of reason or principle. It would seem that a whole life devoted to the service of his country, is not sufficient to shield him from the slanderous aspersions of this opposition. They find a salvo by saying, that Mr. Adams, in his administration of the General Government, has departed from the venerable track of his predecessors; but, Messrs. Editors, where is the material difference between his Administration and that of Mr. Monroe? We say there is none—it exists only in the rant of Calumniators.

But time hurries me. Perhaps you will hear from me again. Farewell. H. C. S. May 19, 1827.

FOR THE REGISTER.

Messrs. Gales & Son.—An old friend to those Republican principles you have always inculcated, and an old subscriber to your very useful paper, being necessarily in Raleigh for a short time, in order to give up a few leisure moments, is desirous of his plain way, to communicate a few thoughts, which you are at liberty to use as you please.

I have seen with great pleasure in the Register (and it should be cause of gratulation to the reflecting portion of the community) not a direct adhesion given in the present Administration of the General Government, but an evident breathing of the same democratic sentiments, an adherence to the same American principles that have been so characteristic of our Governmental policy for the last twenty years; which has prospered in an unexampled degree the nation, and of which you have always been the temperate, though firm, and unwavering supporters. Has not a crisis in national affairs come about, when those who have correct principles in keeping, should stand up in their defence? Is it not a dereliction of duty, for those who have witnessed the wholesome influence of the measures of the Government, in promoting this unheard-of growth of national greatness, to see them put to flight, to see them scouted from the national councils, by the brandishing of a sword, the glitter of an epaulet, without endeavouring to arrest the march of error? Is it not criminal in those who are well acquainted with the history of the Government, well acquainted with those who have administered it, from its origin, well acquainted too, with the prominent men of the country who now aspire to the holding of its reins, to suffer themselves to be taken by surprise, while slumbering in conscious security, unwilling to believe danger near, or that harm can come from such a quarter? Until those who, as it were, were born but yesterday, who take up opinions in politics, as in other things, without proper information, whose political growth is as the mushroom, shall have run away with public sentiment?

Is it not time that the moral strength, the intellectual weight of every good citizen, should be exerted in opposition to error and misrepresentation? Let those who know their principles need the start, and repeated propping to support them, should so impress upon the unthinking mind, upon those who do not go far back for their political knowledge, who are susceptible of almost any impression, especially under the cover of imposing names, as to render them difficult to displace. Is it not time, when a system of political swindling is practised, when an effort is making to deprive the people of their senses; when they are emphatically told that the bread and meat they have been subsisting on for these thirty years, in the greatest comfort, is no longer wholesome and nutritious, for honest men to undeceive them, to advise them not to be alarmed, but to continue in the course experience has taught them to be safe and trust-worthy? Not to give up a substantial food for a preparation, I believe called water gruel, though it be ever so high coloured!

Is it not time, when young men, who have grown up shamefully ignorant of the history of the country, are crowding into its councils, who are free, and forward, in the expression of opinions they have not gotten in the proper ordeal; when almost every school-boy is presumptuous enough to speak of his wish, and even of his capacity to remodel the fundamentals of the government, is it not time that those who have taken along with them some observation, should speak out? Such is the respect paid to that sacred instrument, such is the homage paid to the best offering that Samuel Adams, J. Adams, Jefferson, Washington and Franklin could bequeath to their country, by those who now aspire to the first places under its provisions.