

# HENRY CABOT LODGE

GEORGE WASHINGTON,  
VOLUME II

**Henry Cabot Lodge**  
**George Washington, Volume II**

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# Содержание

CHAPTER I	4
CHAPTER II	47
CHAPTER III	74
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	94

# **Henry Cabot Lodge George Washington, Volume II**

## **CHAPTER I WORKING FOR UNION**

Having resigned his commission, Washington stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once to Virginia, and reached Mount Vernon the next day, in season to enjoy the Christmas-tide at home. It was with a deep sigh of relief that he sat himself down again by his own fireside, for all through the war the one longing that never left his mind was for the banks of the Potomac. He loved home after the fashion of his race, but with more than common intensity, and the country life was dear to him in all its phases. He liked its quiet occupations and wholesome sports, and, like most strong and simple natures, he loved above all an open-air existence. He felt that he had earned his rest, with all the temperate pleasures and employments which came with it, and he fondly believed that he was about to renew the habits which he had abandoned for eight weary years. Four days after his return he wrote to Governor Clinton: "The scene is at last closed. I

feel myself eased of a load of public care. I hope to spend the remainder of my days in cultivating the affections of good men and in the practice of the domestic virtues." That the hope was sincere we may well suppose, but that it was more than a hope may be doubted. It was a wish, not a belief, for Washington must have felt that there was still work which he would surely be called to do. Still for the present the old life was there, and he threw himself into it with eager zest, though age and care put some of the former habits aside. He resumed his hunting, and Lafayette sent him a pack of splendid French wolf-hounds. But they proved somewhat fierce and unmanageable, and were given up, and after that the following of the hounds was never resumed. In other respects there was little change. The work of the plantation and the affairs of the estate, much disordered by his absence, once more took shape and moved on successfully under the owner's eye. There were, as of old, the long days in the saddle, the open house and generous hospitality, the quiet evenings, and the thousand and one simple labors and enjoyments of rural life. But with all this were the newer and deeper cares, born of the change which had been wrought in the destiny of the country. The past broke in and could not be pushed aside, the future knocked at the door and demanded an answer to its questionings.

He had left home a distinguished Virginian; he returned one of the most famous men in the world, and such celebrity brought its usual penalties. Every foreigner of any position who came

to the country made a pilgrimage to Mount Vernon, and many Americans did the same. Their coming was not allowed to alter the mode of life, but they were all hospitably received, and they consumed many hours of their host's precious time. Then there were the artists and sculptors, who came to paint his portrait or model his bust. "*In for a penny, in for a pound* is an old adage," he wrote to Hopkinson in 1785. "I am so hackneyed to the touches of painters' pencils that I am now altogether at their beck, and sit 'like patience on a monument,' whilst they are delineating the lines of my face. It is a proof, among many others, of what habit and custom can accomplish." Then there were the people who desired to write his memoirs, and the historians who wished to have his reminiscences, in their accounts of the Revolution. Some of these inquiring and admiring souls came in person, while others assailed him by letter and added to the vast flood of correspondence which poured in upon him by every post. His correspondence, in fact, in the needless part of it, was the most formidable waste of his time. He seems to have formed no correct idea of his own fame and what it meant, for he did not have a secretary until he found not only that he could not arrange his immense mass of papers, but that he could not even keep up with his daily letters. His correspondence came from all parts of his own country, and of Europe as well. The French officers who had been his companions in arms wrote him with affectionate interest, and he was urged by them, one and all, and even by the king and queen, to visit France. These were

letters which he was only too happy to answer, and he would fain have crossed the water in response to their kindly invitation; but he professed himself too old, which was a mere excuse, and objected his ignorance of the language, which to a man of his temperament was a real obstacle. Besides these letters of friendship, there were the schemers everywhere who sought his counsel and assistance. The notorious Lady Huntington, for example, pursued him with her project of Christianizing the Indians by means of a missionary colony in our western region, and her persistent ladyship cost him a good deal of time and thought, and some long and careful letters. Then there was the inventor Kumsey, with his steamboat, to which he gave careful attention, as he did to everything that seemed to have merit. Another class of correspondents were his officers, who wanted his aid with Congress and in a thousand other ways, and to these old comrades he never turned a deaf ear. In this connection also came the affairs of the Society of the Cincinnati. He took an active part in the formation of the society, became its head, steered it through its early difficulties, and finally saved it from the wreck with which it was threatened by unreasoning popular prejudice. All these things were successfully managed, but at much expense of time and thought.

Then again, apart from this mass of labor thrust upon him by outsiders, there were his own concerns. His personal affairs required looking after, and he regulated accounts, an elaborate business always with him, put his farms in order, corresponded

with his merchants in England, and introduced agricultural improvements, which always interested him deeply. He had large investments in land, of which from boyhood he had been a bold and sagacious purchaser. These investments had been neglected and needed his personal inspection; so in September, 1784, he mounted his horse, and with a companion and a servant rode away to the western country to look after his property. He camped out, as in the early days, and heartily enjoyed it, although reports that the Indians were moving in a restless and menacing manner shortened his trip, and prevented his penetrating beyond his settled lands to the wild tracts which he owned to the westward. Still he managed to ride some six hundred and eighty miles and get a good taste of that wild life which he never ceased to love, besides gathering a stock of information on many points of deeper and wider interest than his own property.

In the midst of all these employments, too, he attended closely to his domestic duties. At frequent intervals he journeyed to Fredericksburg to visit his mother, who still lived, and to whom he was always a dutiful and affectionate son. He watched over Mrs. Washington's grandchildren, and two or three nephews of his own, whose education he had undertaken, with all the solicitude of a father, and at the expense again of much thought and many wise letters of instruction and advice.

Even from this brief list it is possible to gain some idea of the occupations which filled Washington's time, and the only wonder is that he dealt with them so easily and effectively. Yet



the greatest and most important work, that which most deeply absorbed his mind, and which affected the whole country, still remains to be described. With all his longing for repose and privacy, Washington could not separate himself from the great problems which he had solved, or from the solution of the still greater problems which he had done more than any man to bring into existence. In reality, despite his reiterated wish for the quiet of home, he never ceased to labor at the new questions which confronted the country, and the old issues which were the legacy of the Revolution.

In the latter class was the peace establishment, on which he advised Congress, much in vain; for their idea of a peace establishment was to get rid of the army as rapidly as possible, and retain only a corporal's guard in the service of the confederation. Another question was that concerning the western posts. As has been already pointed out, Washington's keen eye had at once detected that this was the perilous point in the treaty, and he made a prompt but unavailing effort to secure these posts in the first flush of good feeling when peace had just been made. After he had retired he observed with regret the feebleness of Congress in this matter, and he continued to write about it. He wrote especially to Knox, who was in charge of the war department, and advised him to establish posts on our side, since we could not obtain the withdrawal of the British. This deep anxiety as to the western posts was due not merely to his profound distrust of the intention of England, but to his extreme solicitude

as to the unsettled regions of the West. He repeatedly referred to the United States, even before the close of the war, as an infant empire, and he saw before any one else the destined growth of the country.

No man of that time, with the exception of Hamilton, ever grasped and realized as he did the imperial future which stretched before the United States. It was a difficult thing for men who had been born colonists to rise to a sense of national opportunities, but Washington passed at a single step from being a Virginian to being an American, and in so doing he stood alone. He was really and thoroughly national from the beginning of the war, at a time when, except for a few oratorical phrases, no one had ever thought of such a thing as a practical and living question. In the same way he had passed rapidly to an accurate conception of the probable growth and greatness of the country, and again he stood alone. Hamilton, born outside the colonies, unhampered by local prejudices and attachments, and living in Washington's family, as soon as he turned his mind to the subject, became, like his chief, entirely national and imperial in his views; but the other American statesmen of that day, with the exception of Franklin, only followed gradually and sometimes reluctantly in adopting their opinions. Some of them never adopted them at all, but remained imbedded in local ideas, and very few got beyond the region of words and actually grasped the facts with the absolutely clear perception which Washington had from the outset. Thus it was that when the war closed, one of the two ruling

ideas in Washington's mind was to assure the future which he saw opening before the country. He perceived at a glance that the key and the guarantee of that future were in the wild regions of the West. Hence his constant anxiety as to the western posts, as to our Indian policy, and as to the maintenance of a sufficient armed force upon our borders to check the aggressions of Englishmen or of savages, and to secure free scope for settlement. In advancing these ideas on a national scale, however, he was rendered helpless by the utter weakness of Congress, which even his influence was powerless to overcome. He therefore began, immediately after his retreat to private life, to formulate and bring into existence such practical measures as were possible for the development of the West, believing that if Congress could not act, the people would, if any opportunity were given to their natural enterprise.

The scheme which he proposed was to open the western country by means of inland navigation. The thought had long been in his mind. It had come to him before the Revolution, and can be traced back to the early days when he was making surveys, buying wild lands, and meditating very deeply, but very practically, on the possible commercial development of the colonies. Now the idea assumed much larger proportions and a much graver aspect. He perceived in it the first step toward the empire which he foresaw, and when he had laid down his sword and awoke in the peaceful morning at Mount Vernon, "with a strange sense of freedom from official cares," he directed his attention at once to this plan, in which he

really could do something, despite an inert Congress and a dissolving confederation. His first letter on the subject was written in March, 1784, and addressed to Jefferson, who was then in Congress, and who sympathized with Washington's views without seeing how far they reached. He told Jefferson how he despaired of government aid, and how he therefore intended to revive the scheme of a company, which he had started in 1775, and which had been abandoned on account of the war. He showed the varying interests which it was necessary to conciliate, asked Jefferson to see the governor of Maryland, so that that State might be brought into the undertaking, and referred to the danger of being anticipated and beaten by New York, a chord of local pride which he continued to touch most adroitly as the business proceeded. Very characteristically, too, he took pains to call attention to the fact that by his ownership of land he had a personal interest in the enterprise. He looked far beyond his own lands, but he was glad to have his property developed, and with his usual freedom from anything like pretense, he drew attention to the fact of his personal interests.

On his return from his tour in the autumn, he proceeded to bring the matter to public attention and to the consideration of the legislature. With this end in view he addressed a long letter to Governor Harrison, in which he laid out his whole scheme. Detroit was to be the objective point, and he indicated the different routes by which inland navigation could thence be obtained, thus opening the Indian trade, and affording an outlet at

the same time for the settlers who were sure to pour in when once the fear of British aggression was removed. He dwelt strongly upon the danger of Virginia losing these advantages by the action of other States, and yet at the same time he suggested the methods by which Maryland and Pennsylvania could be brought into the plan. Then he advanced a series of arguments which were purely national in their scope. He insisted on the necessity of binding to the old colonies by strong ties the Western States, which might easily be decoyed away if Spain or England had the sense to do it. This point he argued with great force, for it was now no longer a Virginian argument, but an argument for all the States.

The practical result was that the legislature took the question up, more in deference to the writer's wishes and in gratitude for his services, than from any comprehension of what the scheme meant. The companies were duly organized, and the promoter was given a hundred and fifty shares, on the ground that the legislature wished to take every opportunity of testifying their sense of "the unexampled merits of George Washington towards his country." Washington was much touched and not a little troubled by this action. He had been willing, as he said, to give up his cherished privacy and repose in order to forward the enterprise. He had gone to Maryland even, and worked to engage that State in the scheme, but he could not bear the idea of taking money for what he regarded as part of a great public policy. "I would wish," he said, "that every individual who may hear

that it was a favorite plan of mine may know also that I had no other motive for promoting it than the advantage of which I conceived it would be productive to the Union, and to this State in particular, by cementing the eastern and western territory together, at the same time that it will give vigor and increase to our commerce, and be a convenience to our citizens."

"How would this matter be viewed, then, by the eye of the world, and what would be the opinion of it, when it comes to be related that George Washington has received twenty thousand dollars and five thousand pounds sterling of the public money as an interest therein?" He thought it would make him look like a "pensioner or dependent" to accept this gratuity, and he recoiled from the idea. There is something entirely frank and human in the way in which he says "George Washington," instead of using the first pronoun singular. He always saw facts as they were; he understood the fact called "George Washington" as perfectly as any other, and although he wanted retirement and privacy, he had no mock modesty in estimating his own place in the world. At the same time, while he wished to be rid of the kindly gift, he shrank from putting on what he called the appearance of "ostentatious disinterestedness" by refusing it. Finally he took the stock and endowed two charity schools with the dividends. The scheme turned out successfully, and the work still endures, like the early surveys and various other things of a very different kind to which Washington put his hand. In the greater forces which were presently set in motion for the preservation of the future

empire, the inland navigation, started in Virginia, dropped out of sight, and became merely one of the rills which fed the mighty river. But it was the only really practical movement possible at the precise moment when it was begun, and it was characteristic of its author, who always found, even in the most discouraging conditions, something that could be done. It might be only a very little something, but still that was better than nothing to the strong man ever dealing with facts as they actually were on this confused earth, and not turning aside because things were not as they ought to be. Thus many a battle and campaign had been saved, and so inland navigation played its part now. It helped, among other things, to bring Maryland and Virginia together, and their combination was the first step toward the Constitution of the United States. There is nothing fanciful in all this. No one would pretend that the Constitution of the United States was descended from Washington's James River and Potomac River companies. But he worked at them with that end in view, and so did what was nearest to his hand and most practical toward union, empire, and the development of national sentiment.

Ah, says some critic in critic's fashion, you are carried away by your subject; you see in a simple business enterprise, intended merely to open western lands, the far-reaching ideas of a statesman. Perhaps our critic is right, for as one goes on living with this Virginian soldier, studying his letters and his thoughts, one comes to believe many things of him, and to detect much meaning in his sayings and doings. Let us, however,

show our evidence at least. Here is what he wrote to his friend Humphreys a year after his scheme was afoot: "My attention is more immediately engaged in a project which I think big with great political as well as commercial consequences to the States, especially the middle ones;" and then he went on to argue the necessity of fastening the Western States to the Atlantic seaboard and thus thwarting Spain and England. This looks like more than a money-making scheme; in fact, it justifies all that has been said, especially if read in connection with certain other letters of this period. Great political results, as well as lumber and peltry, were what Washington intended to float along his rivers and canals.

In this same letter to Humphreys he touched also on another point in connection with the development of the West, which was of vast importance to the future of the country, and was even then agitating men's minds. He said: "I may be singular in my ideas, but they are these: that, to open a door to, and make easy the way for those settlers to the westward (who ought to advance regularly and compactly), before we make any stir about the navigation of the Mississippi, and before our settlements are far advanced towards that river, would be our true line of policy." Again he wrote: "However singular the opinion may be, I cannot divest myself of it, that the navigation of the Mississippi, *at this time* [1785], ought to be no object with us. On the contrary, until we have a little time allowed to open and make easy the ways between the Atlantic States and the western territory, the obstructions had better remain." He was right in describing



himself as "singular" in his views on this matter, which just then was exciting much attention.

At that time indeed much feeling existed, and there were many sharp divisions about the Mississippi question. One party, for the sake of a commercial treaty with Spain, and to get a troublesome business out of the way, was ready to give up our claims to a free navigation of the great river; and this was probably the prevalent sentiment in Congress, for to most of the members the Mississippi seemed a very remote affair indeed. On the other side was a smaller and more violent party, which was for obtaining the free navigation immediately and at all hazards, and was furious at the proposition to make such a sacrifice as its opponents proposed. Finally, there was Spain herself intriguing to get possession of the West, holding out free navigation as a bait to the settlers of Kentucky, and keeping paid agents in that region to foster her schemes. Washington saw too far and too clearly to think for one moment of giving up the navigation of the Mississippi, but he also perceived what no one else seems to have thought of, that free navigation at that moment would give the western settlements "the habit of trade" with New Orleans before they had formed it with the Atlantic seaboard, and would thus detach them from the United States. He wished, therefore, to have the Mississippi question left open, and all our claims reserved, so that trade by the river should be obstructed until we had time to open our inland navigation and bind 'the western people to us by ties too strong to be broken. The fear that

the river would be lost by waiting did not disturb him in the least, provided our claims were kept alive. He wrote to Lee in June, 1786: "Whenever the new States become so populous, and so extended to the westward, as really to need it, there will be no power which can deprive them of the use of the Mississippi." Again, a year later, while the convention was sitting in Philadelphia, he said: "My sentiments with respect to the navigation of the Mississippi have been long fixed, and are not dissimilar to those which are expressed in your letter. I have ever been of opinion that the true policy of the Atlantic States, instead of contending prematurely for the free navigation of that river (which eventually, and perhaps as soon as it will be our true interest to obtain it, must happen), would be to open and improve the natural communications with the western country." The event justified his sagacity in all respects, for the bickerings went on until the United States were able to compel Spain to give what was wanted to the western communities, which by that time had been firmly bound to those of the Atlantic coast.

Much as Washington thought about holding fast the western country, there was yet one idea that overruled it as well as all others. There was one plan which he knew would be a quick solution of the dangers and difficulties for which inland navigation and trade connections were at best but palliatives. He had learned by bitter experience, as no other man had learned, the vital need and value of union. He felt it as soon as he took command of the army, and it rode like black care behind him

from Cambridge to Yorktown. He had hoped something from the confederation, but he soon saw that it was as worthless as the utter lack of system which it replaced, and amounted merely to substituting one kind of impotence and confusion for another. Others might be deceived by phrases as to nationality and a general government, but he had dwelt among hard facts, and he knew that these things did not exist. He knew that what passed for them, stood in their place and wore their semblance, were merely temporary creations born of the common danger, and doomed, when the pressure of war was gone, to fall to pieces in imbecility and inertness. To the lack of a proper union, which meant to his mind national and energetic government, he attributed the failures of the campaigns, the long-drawn miseries, and in a word the needless prolongation of the Revolution. He saw, too, that what had been so nearly ruinous in war would be absolutely so in peace, and before the treaty was actually signed he had begun to call attention to the great question on the right settlement of which the future of the country depended.

To Hamilton he wrote on March 4, 1783: "It is clearly my opinion, unless Congress have powers competent to all general purposes, that the distresses we have encountered, the expense we have incurred, and the blood we have spilt, will avail us nothing." Again he wrote to Hamilton, a few weeks later: "My wish to see the union of these States established upon liberal and permanent principles, and inclination to contribute my mite in pointing out the defects of the present constitution, are equally

great. All my private letters have teemed with these sentiments, and whenever this topic has been the subject of conversation, I have endeavored to diffuse and enforce them." His circular letter to the governors of the States at the close of the war, which was as eloquent as it was forcible, was devoted to urging the necessity of a better central government. "With this conviction," he said, "of the importance of the present crisis, silence in me would be a crime. I will therefore speak to your Excellency the language of freedom and of sincerity without disguise.... There are four things which I humbly conceive are essential to the well-being, I may even venture to say, to the existence, of the United States, as an independent power:—

"First. An indissoluble union of the States under one federal head.

"Second. A regard to public justice.

"Third. The adoption of a proper peace establishment; and,

"Fourth. The prevalence of that pacific and friendly disposition among the people of the United States, which will induce them to forget their local prejudices and policies; to make those mutual concessions which are requisite to the general prosperity; and in some instances to sacrifice their individual advantages to the interest of the community." The same appeal went forth again in his last address to the army, when he said: "Although the general has so frequently given it as his opinion, in the most public and explicit manner, that unless the principles of the federal government were properly supported, and the powers

of the Union increased, the honor, dignity, and justice of the nation would be lost forever; yet he cannot help repeating on this occasion so interesting a sentiment, and leaving it as his last injunction to every soldier, who may view the subject in the same serious point of light, to add his best endeavors to those of his worthy fellow-citizens towards effecting those great and valuable purposes on which our very existence as a nation so materially depends."

These two papers were the first strong public appeals for union. The letter to the governors argued the question elaborately, and was intended for the general public. The address to the army was simply a watchword and last general order; for the army needed no arguments to prove the crying need of better government. Before this, Hamilton had written his famous letters to Duane and Morris, and Madison was just beginning to turn his thoughts toward the problem of federal government; but with these exceptions Washington stood alone. In sending out these two papers he began the real work that led to the Constitution. What he said was read and heeded throughout the country, for at the close of the war his personal influence was enormous, and with the army his utterances were those of an oracle. By his appeal he made each officer and soldier a missionary in the cause of the Union, and by his arguments to the governors he gave ground and motive for a party devoted to procuring better government. Thus he started the great movement which, struggling through many obstacles,

culminated in the Constitution and the union of the States. No other man could have done it, for no one but Washington had a tithe of the influence necessary to arrest public attention; and, save Hamilton, no other man then had even begun to understand the situation which Washington grasped so easily and firmly in all its completeness.

He sent out these appeals as his last words to his countrymen at the close of their conflict; but he had no intention of stopping there. He had written and spoken, as he said, to every one on every occasion upon this topic, and he continued to do so until the work was done. He had no sooner laid aside the military harness than he began at once to push on the cause of union. In the bottom of his heart he must have known that his work was but half done, and with the same pen with which he reiterated his intention to live in repose and privacy, and spend his declining years beneath his own vine and fig-tree, he wrote urgent appeals and wove strong arguments addressed to leaders in every State. He had not been at home five days before he wrote to the younger Trumbull, congratulating him on his father's vigorous message in behalf of better federal government, which had not been very well received by the Connecticut legislature. He spoke of "the jealousies and contracted temper" of the States, but avowed his belief that public sentiment was improving. "Everything," he concluded, "my dear Trumbull, will come right at last, as we have often prophesied. My only fear is that we shall lose a little reputation first." A fortnight later he wrote to the governor of Virginia:

"That the prospect before us is, as you justly observe, fair, none can deny; but what use we shall make of it is exceedingly problematical; not but that I believe all things will come right at last, but like a young heir come a little prematurely to a large inheritance, we shall wanton and run riot until we have brought our reputation to the brink of ruin, and then like him shall have to labor with the current of opinion, when compelled, perhaps, to do what prudence and common policy pointed out as plain as any problem in Euclid in the first instance." The soundness of the view is only equaled by the accuracy of the prediction. He might five years later have repeated this sentence, word for word, only altering the tenses, and he would have rehearsed exactly the course of events.

While he wrote thus he keenly watched Congress, and marked its sure and not very gradual decline. He did what he could to bring about useful measures, and saw them one after the other come to naught. He urged the impost scheme, and felt that its failure was fatal to the financial welfare of the country, on which so much depended. He always was striving to do the best with existing conditions, but the hopelessness of every effort soon satisfied him that it was a waste of time and energy. So he turned again in the midst of his canal schemes to renew his exhortations to leading men in the various States on the need of union as the only true solution of existing troubles.

To James McHenry, of Maryland, he wrote in August, 1785: "I confess to you candidly that I can foresee no evil greater

than disunion; than those unreasonable jealousies which are continually poisoning our minds and filling them with imaginary evils for the prevention of real ones." To William Grayson of Virginia, then a member of Congress, he wrote at the same time: "I have ever been a friend to adequate congressional powers, consequently I wish to see the ninth article of the confederation amended and extended. Without these powers we cannot support a national character, and must appear contemptible in the eyes of Europe. But to you, my dear Sir, I will candidly confess that in my opinion it is of little avail to give them to Congress." He was already clearly of opinion that the existing system was hopeless, and the following spring he wrote still more sharply as to the state of public affairs to Henry Lee, in Congress. "My sentiments," he said, "with respect to the federal government are well known. Publicly and privately have they been communicated without reserve; but my opinion is that there is more wickedness than ignorance in the conduct of the States, or, in other words, in the conduct of those who have too much influence in the government of them; and until the curtain is withdrawn, and the private views and selfish principles upon which these men act are exposed to public notice, I have little hope of amendment without another convulsion."

He did not confine himself, however, to letters, important as the work done in this way was, but used all his influence toward practical measures outside of Congress, of whose action he quite despaired. The plan for a commercial agreement between



Maryland and Virginia was concerted at Mount Vernon, and led to a call to all the States to meet at Annapolis for the same object. This, of course, received Washington's hearty approval and encouragement, but he evidently regarded it, although important, as merely a preliminary step to something wider and better. He wrote to Lafayette describing the proposed gathering at Annapolis, and added: "A general convention is talked of by many for the purpose of revising and correcting the defects of the federal government; but whilst this is the wish of some, it is the dread of others, from an opinion that matters are not yet sufficiently ripe for such an event." This expressed his own feeling, for although he was entirely convinced that only a radical reform would do, he questioned whether the time had yet arrived, and whether things had become bad enough, to make such a reform either possible or lasting. He was chiefly disturbed because he felt that there was "more wickedness than ignorance mixed in our councils," and he grew more and more anxious as public affairs declined without apparently producing a reaction. The growing contempt shown by foreign nations and the arrogant conduct of Great Britain especially alarmed him, while the rapid sinking of the national reputation stung him to the quick. "I do not conceive," he wrote to Jay, in August, 1786, "we can exist long as a nation without having lodged somewhere a power which will pervade the whole Union in as energetic a manner as the authority of the state governments extends over the several States." Thus with unerring judgment he put his finger

on the vital point in the whole question, which was the need of a national government that should deal with the individual citizens of the whole country and not with the States. "To be fearful," he continued, "of investing Congress, constituted as that body is, with ample authorities for national purposes, appears to me the very climax of popular absurdity and madness.... Requisitions are actually little better than a jest and a byword throughout the land. If you tell the legislatures they have violated the treaty of peace, and invaded the prerogatives of the confederacy, they will laugh in your face.... It is much to be feared, as you observe, that the better kind of people, being disgusted with the circumstances, will have their minds prepared for any revolution whatever.... I am told that even respectable characters speak of a monarchical government without horror. From thinking proceeds speaking; thence to acting is often but a single step. But how irrevocable and tremendous! What a triumph for our enemies to verify their predictions!... It is not my business to embark again upon a sea of troubles. Nor could it be expected that my sentiments and opinions would have much weight on the minds of my countrymen. They have been neglected, though given as a last legacy in the most solemn manner. I had then perhaps some claims to public attention. I consider myself as having none at present."

It is interesting to observe the ease and certainty with which, in dealing with the central question, he grasped all phases of the subject and judged of the effect of the existing weakness with

regard to every relation of the country and to the politics of each State. He pointed out again and again the manner in which we were exposed to foreign hostility, and analyzed the designs of England, rightly detecting a settled policy on her part to injure and divide where she had failed to conquer. Others were blind to the meaning of the English attitude as to the western posts, commerce, and international relations. Washington brought it to the attention of our leading men, educating them on this as on other points, and showing, too, the stupidity of Great Britain in her attempt to belittle the trade of a country which, as he wrote Lafayette in prophetic vein, would one day "have weight in the scale of empires."

He followed with the same care the course of events in the several States. In them all he resisted the craze for issuing irredeemable paper money, writing to his various correspondents, and urging energetic opposition to this specious and pernicious form of public dishonesty. It was to Massachusetts, however, that his attention was most strongly attracted by the social disorders which culminated in the Shays rebellion. There the miserable condition of public affairs was bearing bitter fruit, and Washington watched the progress of the troubles with profound anxiety. He wrote to Lee: "You talk, my good sir, of employing influence to appease the present tumults in Massachusetts. I know not where that influence is to be found, or, if attainable, that it would be a proper remedy for the disorders. *Influence* is not *government*. Let us have a

government by which our lives, liberties, and properties will be secured, or let us know the worst at once." Through "all this mist of intoxication and folly," however, Washington saw that the Shays insurrection would probably be the means of frightening the indifferent, and of driving those who seemed impervious to every appeal to reason into an active support of some better form of government. He rightly thought that riot and bloodshed would prove convincing arguments.

In order to understand the utter demoralization of society, politics, and public opinion at that time, the offspring of a wasting civil war and of colonial habits of thought, it is interesting to contrast the attitude of Washington with that of another distinguished American in regard to the Shays rebellion. While Washington was looking solemnly at this manifestation of weakness and disorder, and was urging strong measures with passionate vehemence, Jefferson was writing from Paris in the flippant vein of the fashionable French theorists, and uttering such ineffable nonsense as the famous sentence about "once in twenty years watering the tree of liberty with the blood of tyrants." There could be no better illustration of what Washington was than this contrast between the man of words and the man of action, between the astute leader of a party, the shrewd manager of men, and the silent leader of armies, the master builder of states and governments.

I have followed Washington through the correspondence of this time with some minuteness, because it is the only way by

which his work in overcoming the obstacles in the path to good government can be seen. He held no public office; he had no means of reaching the popular ear. He was neither a professional orator nor a writer of pamphlets, and the press of that day, if he had controlled it, had no power to mould or direct public thought. Yet, despite these obstacles, he set himself to develop public opinion in favor of a better government, and he worked at this difficult and impalpable task without ceasing, from the day that he resigned from the army until he was called to the presidency of the United States. He did it by means of private letters, a feeble instrument to-day, but much more effective then. Jefferson never made speeches nor published essays, but he built up a great party, and carried himself into power as its leader by means of letters. In the same fashion Washington started the scheme for internal waterways, in order to bind the East and the West together, set on foot the policy of commercial agreements between the States, and argued on the "imperial theme" with leading men everywhere. A study of these letters reveals a strong, logical, and deliberate working towards the desired end. There was no scattering fire. Whether he was writing of canals, or the Mississippi, or the Western posts, or paper money, or the impost, or the local disorders, he always was arguing and urging union and an energetic central government. These letters went to the leaders of thought and opinion, and were quoted and passed from hand to hand. They brought immediately to the cause all the soldiers and officers of the army, and they aroused

and convinced the strongest and ablest men in every State. Washington's personal influence was very great, something we of this generation, with a vast territory and seventy millions of people, cannot readily understand. To many persons his word was law; to all that was best in the community, everything he said had immense weight. This influence he used with care and without waste. Every blow he struck went home. It is impossible to estimate just how much he effected, but it is safe to say that it is to Washington, aided first by Hamilton and then by Madison, that we owe the development of public opinion and the formation of the party which devised and carried the Constitution. Events of course worked with them, but they used events, and did not suffer the golden opportunities, which without them would have been lost, to slip by.

When Washington wrote of the Shays rebellion to Lee, the movement toward a better union, which he had begun, was on the brink of success. That ill-starred insurrection became, as he foresaw, a powerful spur to the policy started at Mount Vernon, and adopted by Virginia and Maryland. From this had come the Annapolis convention, and thence the call for another convention at Philadelphia. As soon as the word went abroad that a general convention was to be held, the demand for Washington as a delegate was heard on all sides. At first he shrank from it. Despite the work which he had been doing, and which he must have known would bring him once more into public service, he still clung to the vision of home life which he had brought with him

from the army. November 18, 1786, he wrote to Madison, that from a sense of obligation he should go to the convention, were it not that he had declined on account of his retirement, age, and rheumatism to be at a meeting of the Cincinnati at the same time and place. But no one heeded him, and Virginia elected him unanimously to head her delegation at Philadelphia. He wrote to Governor Randolph, acknowledging the honor, but reiterating what he had said to Madison, and urging the choice of some one else in his place. Still Virginia held the question open, and on February 3 he wrote to Knox that his private intention was not to attend. The pressure continued, and, as usual when the struggle drew near, the love of battle and the sense of duty began to reassert themselves. March 8 he again wrote to Knox that he had not meant to come, but that the question had occurred to him, "Whether my non-attendance in the convention will not be considered as dereliction of republicanism; nay, more, whether other motives may not, however injuriously, be ascribed for my not exerting myself on this occasion in support of it;" and therefore he wished to be informed as to the public expectation on the matter. On March 28 he wrote again to Randolph that ill-health might prevent his going, and therefore it would be well to appoint some one in his place. April 2 he said that if representation of the States was to be partial, or powers cramped, he did not want to be a sharer in the business. "If the delegates assemble," he wrote, "with such powers as will enable the convention to probe the defects of the constitution to the

bottom and point out radical cures, it would be an honorable employment; otherwise not." This idea of inefficiency and failure in the convention had long been present to his mind, and he had already said that, if their powers were insufficient, the convention should go boldly over and beyond them and make a government with the means of coercion, and able to enforce obedience, without which it would be, in his opinion, quite worthless. Thus he pondered on the difficulties, and held back his acceptance of the post; but when the hour of action drew near, the rheumatism and the misgivings alike disappeared before the inevitable, and Washington arrived in Philadelphia, punctual as usual, on May 13, the day before the opening of the convention.

The other members were by no means equally prompt, and a week elapsed before a bare quorum was obtained and the convention enabled to organize. In this interval of waiting there appears to have been some informal discussion among the members present, between those who favored an entirely new Constitution and those who timidly desired only half-way measures. On one of these occasions Washington is reported by Gouverneur Morris, in a eulogy delivered twelve years later, to have said: "It is too probable that no plan we propose will be adopted. Perhaps another dreadful conflict is to be sustained. If, to please the people, we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterwards defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair. The event is in the hand of God." The language is no doubt that of Morris, speaking



from memory and in a highly rhetorical vein, but we may readily believe that the quotation accurately embodied Washington's opinion, and that he took this high ground at the outset, and strove from the beginning to inculcate upon his fellow-members the absolute need of bold and decisive action. The words savor of the orator who quoted them, but the noble and courageous sentiment which they express is thoroughly characteristic of the man to whom they were attributed.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is necessary to say a few words in regard to this quotation of Washington's words made by Morris, because both Mr. Bancroft (*History of the Constitution*, ii. 8) and Mr. John Fiske (*The Critical Period of American History*, p. 232) quote them as if they were absolutely and verbally authentic. It is perfectly certain that from May 25 to September 17 Washington spoke but once; that is, he spoke but once in the convention after it became such by organization. This point is determined by Madison's statement (Notes, in. 1600), that when Washington took the floor in behalf of Gorham's amendment, "it was the only occasion on which the president entered *at all* into the discussions of the convention." (The italics are mine.) I have examined the manuscript at the State Department, and these words are written in Madison's own hand in the body of the text and inclosed in brackets. Madison was the most accurate of men. His notes are only abstracts of what was said, but he was never absent from the convention, and there can be no question that if Washington had uttered the words attributed to him by Morris, a speech so important would have been given as fully as possible, and Madison would not have said distinctly that the Gorham amendment was the only occasion when the president entered into the discussions of the convention. It is, therefore, certain that Washington said nothing in the convention except on the occasion of the Gorham amendment, and Mr. Bancroft rightly assigns the Morris quotation to some time during the week which elapsed between the date fixed for the assembling of the convention and that on which a quorum of States was obtained. The words given by Morris, if uttered at all, must have been spoken informally in the way of conversation before there was any convention, strictly speaking, and of course before Washington was chosen president. Mr. Fiske, who devotes a page to these sentences from the eulogy, describes Washington as rising from his president's chair and addressing the convention with

When a quorum was finally obtained, Washington was unanimously chosen to preside over the convention; and there he sat during the sessions of four months, silent, patient, except on a single occasion,<sup>2</sup> taking no part in debate, but guiding the business, and using all his powers with steady persistence to

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great solemnity. There is no authority whatever to show that he rose from the chair to address the other delegates, and, if he used the words quoted by Morris, he was certainly not president of the convention when he did so. The latter blunder, however, is Morris's own, and in making it he contradicts himself. These are his words: "He is their president. It is a question previous to their first meeting what course shall be pursued." In other words, he was their president before they had met and chosen a president. This is a fair illustration of the loose and rhetorical character of the passage in which Washington's admonition is quoted. The entire paragraph, with its mixture of tenses arising from the use of the historical present which Morris's classical fancies led him to employ, is, in fact, purely rhetorical, and has only the authority due to performances of that character. It seems to me impossible, therefore, to fairly suppose that the words quoted by Morris were anything more than his own presentation of a sentiment which he, no doubt, heard Washington urge frequently and forcibly. Even in this limited acceptance his account is both interesting and valuable, as indicating Washington's opinion and the tone he took with his fellow-members; but this, I think, is the utmost weight that can be attached to it. I have discussed the point thus minutely because two authorities so distinguished as Mr. Bancroft and Mr. Fiske have laid so much stress on the words given by Morris, and have seemed to me to accord to them a greater weight and a higher authenticity than the facts warrant. Morris's eulogy on Washington was delivered in New York, and may be found most readily in a little volume entitled *Washingtoniana* (p. 110), published at Lancaster in 1802.

<sup>2</sup> Just at the close of the convention, when the Constitution in its last draft was in the final stage and on the eve of adoption, Mr. Gorham of Massachusetts moved to amend by reducing the limit of population in a congressional district from forty to thirty thousand. Washington took the floor and argued briefly and modestly in favor of the change. His mere request was sufficient, and the amendment was unanimously adopted.

compass the great end. The debates of that remarkable body have been preserved in outline in the full and careful notes of Madison. Its history has been elaborately written, and the arguments and opinions of its members have been minutely examined and unsparingly criticised. We are still ignorant, and shall always remain ignorant, of just how much was due to Washington for the final completion of the work. His general views and his line of action are clearly to be seen in his letters and in the words attributed to him by Morris. That he labored day and night for success we know, and that his influence with his fellow-members was vast we also know, but the rest we can only conjecture. There came a time when everything was at a standstill, and when it looked as if no agreement could be reached by the men representing so many conflicting interests. Hamilton had made his great speech, and, finding the vote of his State cast against him by his two colleagues on every question, had gone home in a frame of mind which we may easily believe was neither very contented nor very sanguine. Even Franklin, most hopeful and buoyant of men, was nearly ready to despair. Washington himself wrote to Hamilton, on July 10: "When I refer you to the state of the counsels which prevailed at the period you left this city, and add that they are now, if possible, in a worse train than ever, you will find but little ground on which the hope of a good establishment can be formed. In a word, I almost despair of seeing a favorable issue to the proceedings of our convention, and do therefore repent having had any agency in the business."

Matters were certainly in a bad state when Washington could write in this strain, and when his passion for success was so cooled that he repented of agency in the business. There was much virtue, however, in that little word "almost." He did not quite despair yet, and, after his fashion, he held on with grim tenacity. We know what the compromises finally were, and how they were brought about, but we can never do exact justice to the iron will which held men together when all compromises seemed impossible, and which even in the darkest hour would not wholly despair. All that can be said is, that without the influence and the labors of Washington the convention of 1787, in all probability, would have failed of success.

At all events it did not fail, and after much tribulation the work was done. On September 17, 1787, a day ever to be memorable, Washington affixed his bold and handsome signature to the Constitution of the United States. Tradition has it that as he stood by the table, pen in hand, he said: "Should the States reject this excellent Constitution, the probability is that opportunity will never be offered to cancel another in peace; the next will be drawn in blood." Whether the tradition is well or ill founded, the sentence has the ring of truth. A great work had been accomplished. If it were cast aside, Washington knew that the sword and not the pen would make the next Constitution, and he regarded that awful alternative with dread. He signed first, and was followed by all the members present, with three notable exceptions. Then the delegates dined together at the city tavern,

and took a cordial leave of each other. "After which," the president of the convention wrote in his diary, "I returned to my lodgings, did some business with, and received the papers from, the secretary of the convention, and retired to meditate upon the momentous work which had been executed." It is a simple sentence, but how much it means! The world would be glad to-day to know what the thoughts were which filled Washington's mind as he sat alone in the quiet of that summer afternoon, with the new Constitution lying before him. But he was then as ever silent. He did not go alone to his room to exhibit himself on paper for the admiration of posterity. He went there to meditate for his own guidance on what had been done for the benefit of his country. The city bells had rung a joyful chime when he arrived four months before. Ought they to ring again with a new gladness, or should they toll for the death of bright hopes, now the task was done? Washington was intensely human. In that hour of silent thought his heart must have swelled with a consciousness that he had led his people through a successful Revolution, and now again from the darkness of political confusion and dissolution to the threshold of a new existence. But at the same time he never deceived himself. The new Constitution was but an experiment and an opportunity. Would the States accept it? And if they accepted it, would they abide by it? Was this instrument of government, wrought out so painfully, destined to go to pieces after a few years of trial, or was it to prove strong enough to become the charter of a nation and hold the

States together indissolubly against all the shocks of politics and revolution? Washington, with his foresight and strong national instinct, plainly saw these momentous questions, somewhat dim then, although clear to all the world to-day. We can guess how solemnly he thought about them as he meditated alone in his room on that September afternoon. Whatever his reflections, his conclusions were simple. He made up his mind that the only chance for the country lay in the adoption of the new scheme, but he was sober enough in his opinions as to the Constitution itself. He said of it to Lafayette the day after the signing: "It is the result of four months' deliberation. It is now a child of fortune, to be fostered by some and buffeted by others. What will be the general opinion or the reception of it is not for me to decide; nor shall I say anything for or against it. If it be good, I suppose it will work its way; if bad, it will recoil on the framers." We catch sight here of the old theory that his public life was at an end, and now, when this exceptional duty had been performed, that he would retire once more to remote privacy. This fancy, as well as the extremely philosophical mood about the fate of the Constitution, apparent in this letter, soon disappeared. Within a week he wrote to Henry, in whom he probably already suspected the most formidable opponent of the new plan in Virginia: "I wish the Constitution, which is offered, had been more perfect; but I sincerely believe it is the best that could be obtained at this time, and as a constitutional door is opened for amendments hereafter, the adoption of it under the present circumstances of

the Union is, in my opinion, desirable." Copies of this letter were sent to Harrison and Nelson, and the correspondence thus started soon increased rapidly. He wrote to Hamilton and Madison to counsel with them as to the prospects of the Constitution, and to Knox to supply him with arguments and urge him to energetic work. By January of the new year the tone of indifference and doubt manifested in the letter to Lafayette had quite gone, and we find him writing to Governor Randolph, in reply to that gentleman's objections: "There are some things in the new form, I will readily acknowledge, which never did, and I am persuaded never will, obtain my cordial approbation, but I did then conceive and do now most firmly believe that in the aggregate it is the best Constitution that can be obtained at this epoch, and that this or a dissolution of the Union awaits our choice, and is the only alternative before us. Thus believing, I had not, nor have I now, any hesitation in deciding on which to lean."

Thus the few letters to a few friends extended to many letters to many friends, and traveled into every State. They all urged the necessity of adopting the Constitution as the best that could be obtained. What Washington's precise objections to the Constitution were is not clear. In a general way it was not energetic enough to come up to his ideal, but he never particularized in his criticisms. He may have admitted the existence of defects in order simply to disarm opposition, and doubtless he, like most of the framers, was by no means completely satisfied with his work. But he brushed all faults

aside, and drove steadily forward to the great end in view. He was as far removed as possible from that highly virtuous and very ineffective class of persons who will not support anything that is not perfect, and who generally contrive to do more harm than all the avowed enemies of sound government. Washington did not stop to worry over and argue about details, but sought steadily to bring to pass the main object at which he aimed. As he had labored for the convention, so he now labored for the Constitution, and his letters to his friends not only had great weight in forming a Federal party and directing its movements, but extracts from them were quoted and published, thus exerting a direct and powerful influence on public opinion.

He made himself deeply felt in this way everywhere, but of course more in his own State than anywhere else. His confidence at first in regard to Virginia changed gradually to an intense and well-grounded anxiety, and he not only used every means, as the conflict extended, to strengthen his friends and gain votes, but he received and circulated personally copies of "The Federalist," in order to educate public opinion. The contest in the Virginia convention was for a long time doubtful, but finally the end was reached, and the decision was favorable. Without Washington's influence, it is safe to say that the Constitution would have been lost in Virginia, and without Virginia the great experiment would probably have failed. In the same spirit he worked on after the new scheme had secured enough States to insure a trial. The Constitution had been ratified; it must now be made to work,



and Washington wrote earnestly to the leaders in the various States, urging them to see to it that "Federalists," stanch friends of the Constitution, were elected to Congress. There was no vagueness about his notions on this point. A party had carried the Constitution and secured its ratification, and to that party he wished the administration and establishment of the new system to be intrusted. He did not take the view that, because the fight was over, it was henceforth to be considered that there had been no fight, and that all men were politically alike. He was quite ready to do all in his power to conciliate the opponents of union and the Constitution, but he did not believe that the momentous task of converting the paper system into a living organism should be confided to any hands other than those of its tried and trusty friends.

But while he was looking so carefully after the choice of the right men to fill the legislature of the new government, the people of the country turned to him with the universal demand that he should stand at the head of it, and fill the great office of first President of the Republic. In response to the first suggestion that came, he recognized the fact that he was likely to be again called upon for another great public service, and added simply that at his age it involved a sacrifice which admitted of no compensation. He maintained this tone whenever he alluded to the subject, in response to the numerous letters urging him to accept. But although he declined to announce any decision, he had made up his mind to the inevitable. He had put his hand to

the plough, and he would not turn back. His only anxiety was that the people should know that he shrank from the office, and would only leave his farm to take it from a sense of overmastering duty. Besides his reluctance to engage in a fresh struggle, and his fear that his motives might be misunderstood, he had the same diffidence in his own abilities which weighed upon him when he took command of the armies. His passion for success, which determined him to accept the presidency, if it was deemed indispensable that he should do so, made him dread failure with an almost morbid keenness, although his courage was too high and his will too strong ever to draw back. Responsibility weighed upon his spirits, but it could not daunt him. He wrote to Trumbull in December, 1788, that he saw "nothing but clouds and darkness before him," but when the hour came he was ready. The elections were favorable to the Federalists. The electoral colleges gave Washington their unanimous vote, and on April 16, having been duly notified by Congress of his election, he left Mount Vernon for New York, to assume the conduct of the government, and stand at the head of the new Union in its first battle for life.

From the early day when he went out to seek Shirley and win redress against the assumptions of British officers, Washington's journeys to the North had been memorable in their purposes. He had traveled northward to sit in the first continental congress, to take command of the army, and to preside over the constitutional convention. Now he went, in the fullness of his fame, to enter upon a task less dangerous, perhaps, than leading armies, but

more beset with difficulties, and more perilous to his reputation and peace of mind, than any he had yet undertaken. He felt all this keenly, and noted in his diary: "About ten o'clock I bade adieu to Mount Vernon, to private life, and to domestic felicity; and with a mind oppressed with more anxious and painful sensations than I have words to express, set out for New York, with the best disposition to render service to my country, in obedience to its call, but with less hope of answering its expectations."

The first stage of his journey took him only to Alexandria, a few miles from his home, where a public dinner was given to him by his friends and neighbors. He was deeply moved when he rose to reply to the words of affection addressed to him by the mayor as spokesman of the people. "All that now remains for me," he said, "is to commit myself and you to the care of that beneficent Being who, on a former occasion, happily brought us together after a long and distressing separation. Perhaps the same gracious Providence will again indulge me. But words fail me. Unutterable sensations must then be left to more expressive silence, while from an aching heart I bid all my affectionate friends and kind neighbors farewell."

So he left his home, sad at the parting, looking steadily, but not joyfully, to the future, and silent as was his wont. The simple dinner with his friends and neighbors at Alexandria was but the beginning of the chorus of praise and Godspeed which rose higher and stronger as he advanced. The road, as

he traveled, was lined with people, to see him and cheer him as he passed. In every village the people from the farm and workshop crowded the streets to watch for his carriage, and the ringing of bells and firing of guns marked his coming and his going. At Baltimore a cavalcade of citizens escorted him, and cannon roared a welcome. At the Pennsylvania line Governor Mifflin, with soldiers and citizens, gathered to greet him. At Chester he mounted a horse, and in the midst of a troop of cavalry rode into Philadelphia, beneath triumphal arches, for a day of public rejoicing and festivity. At Trenton, instead of snow and darkness, and a sudden onslaught upon surprised Hessians, there was mellow sunshine, an arch of triumph, and young girls walking before him, strewing flowers in his path, and singing songs of praise and gratitude. When he reached Elizabethtown Point, the committees of Congress met him, and he there went on board a barge manned by thirteen pilots in white uniform, and was rowed to the city of New York. A long procession of barges swept after him with music and song, while the ships in the harbor, covered with flags, fired salutes in his honor. When he reached the landing he declined to enter a carriage, but walked to his house, accompanied by Governor Clinton. He was dressed in the familiar buff and blue, and, as the people caught sight of the stately figure and the beloved colors, hats went off and the crowd bowed as he went by, bending like the ripened grain when the summer wind passes over it, and breaking forth into loud and repeated cheers.

From Mount Vernon to New York it had been one long triumphal march. There was no imperial government to lend its power and military pageantry. There were no armies, with trophies to dazzle the eyes of the beholders; nor were there wealth and luxury to give pomp and splendor to the occasion. It was the simple outpouring of popular feeling, untaught and true, but full of reverence and gratitude to a great man. It was the noble instinct of hero-worship, always keen in humanity when the real hero comes to awaken it to life. Such an experience, rightly apprehended, would have impressed any man, and it affected Washington profoundly. He was deeply moved and touched, but he was neither excited nor elated. He took it all with soberness, almost with sadness, and when he was alone wrote in his diary:—

"The display of boats which attended and joined us on this occasion, some with vocal and some with instrumental music on board; the decorations of the ships, the roar of cannon and the loud acclamations of the people, which rent the skies as I passed along the wharves, filled my mind with sensations as painful (considering the reverse of this scene, which may be the case after all my labors to do good) as they were pleasing."

In the very moment of the highest personal glory, the only thought is of the work which he has to do. There is neither elation nor cynicism, neither indifference nor self-deception, but only deep feeling and a firm, clear look into the future of work and conflict which lay silent and unknown beyond the triumphal arches and the loud acclaim of the people.

On April 30 he was inaugurated. He went in procession to the hall, was received in the senate chamber, and thence proceeded to the balcony to take the oath. He was dressed in dark brown cloth of American manufacture, with a steel-hilted sword, and with his hair powdered and drawn back in the fashion of the time. When he appeared, a shout went up from the great crowd gathered beneath the balcony. Much overcome, he bowed in silence to the people, and there was an instant hush over all. Then Chancellor Livingston administered the oath. Washington laid his hand upon the Bible, bowed, and said solemnly when the oath was concluded, "I swear, so help me God," and, bending reverently, kissed the book. Livingston stepped forward, and raising his hand cried, "Long live George Washington, President of the United States!" Then the cheers broke forth again, the cannon roared, and the bells rang out. Washington withdrew to the hall, where he read his inaugural address to Congress, and the history of the United States of America under the Constitution was begun.

## **CHAPTER II**

# **STARTING THE GOVERNMENT**

Washington was deeply gratified by his reception at the hands of the people from Alexandria to New York. He was profoundly moved by the ceremonies of his inauguration, and when he turned from the balcony to the senate chamber he showed in his manner and voice how much he felt the meaning of all that had occurred. His speech to the assembled Congress was solemn and impressive, and with simple reverence he acknowledged the guiding hand of Providence in the fortunes of the States. He made no recommendations to Congress, but expressed his confidence in their wisdom and patriotism, adjured them to remember that the success of republican government would probably be finally settled by the success of their experiment, reminded them that amendments to the Constitution were to be considered, and informed them that he could not receive any pecuniary compensation for his services, and expected only that his expenses should be paid as in the Revolution. This was all. The first inaugural of the first President expressed only one thought, but that thought was pressed home with force. Washington wished the Congress to understand as he understood the weight and meaning of the task which had been imposed upon them, for he felt that if he could do this all would be well.

How far he succeeded it would be impossible to say, but there can be no doubt as to the wisdom of his position. To have attempted to direct the first movements of Congress before he had really grasped the reins of the government would have given rise, very probably, to jealousy and opposition at the outset. When he had developed a policy, then it would be time to advise the senators and representatives how to carry it out. Meanwhile it was better to arouse their patriotism, awaken their sense of responsibility, and leave them free to begin their work under the guidance of these impressions.

As for himself, his feelings remained unchanged. He had accepted the great post with solemn anxiety, and when the prayers had all been said, and the last guns fired, when the music had ceased and the cheers had died away, and the illuminations had flickered and gone out, he wrote that in taking office he had given up all expectation of private happiness, but that he was encouraged by the popular affection, as well as by the belief that his motives were appreciated, and that, thus supported, he would do his best. In a few words, written some months later, he tersely stated what his office meant to him, and what grave difficulties surrounded his path.

"The establishment of our new government," he said, "seemed to be the last great experiment for promoting human happiness by a reasonable compact in civil society. It was to be, in the first instance, in a considerable degree, a government of accommodation as well as a government of laws. Much was to be



done by prudence, much by conciliation, much by firmness. Few who are not philosophical spectators can realize the difficult and delicate part which a man in my situation had to act. All see, and most admire, the glare which hovers round the external happiness of elevated office. To me there is nothing in it beyond the lustre which may be reflected from its connection with a power of promoting human felicity. In our progress towards political happiness my station is new, and, if I may use the expression, I walk on untrodden ground. There is scarcely an action the motive of which may not be subject to a double interpretation. There is scarcely any part of my conduct which may not hereafter be drawn into precedent. If, after all my humble but faithful endeavors to advance the felicity of my country and mankind, I may indulge a hope that my labors have not been altogether without success, it will be the only real compensation I can receive in the closing scenes of life."

There is nothing very stimulating to the imagination in this soberness of mind and calmness of utterance. The military conquerors and the saviors of society, with epigrammatic sayings, dramatic effects and rhythmic proclamations, are much more exciting and dazzle the fancy much better. But it is this seriousness of mind, coupled with intensity of purpose and grim persistence, which has made the English-speaking race spread over the world and carry successful government in its train. The personal empire of Napoleon had crumbled before he died an exile in St. Helena, but the work of Washington still endures.

Just what that work was, and how it was achieved, is all that still remains to be considered.

The policies set on foot and carried through under the first federal administration were so brilliant and so successful that we are apt to forget that months elapsed before the first of them was even announced. When Washington, on May 1, 1789, began his duties, there was absolutely nothing of the government of the United States in existence but a President and a Congress. The imperfect and broken machinery of the confederation still moved feebly, and performed some of the absolutely necessary functions of government. But the new organization had nothing to work with except these outworn remnants of a discarded system. There were no departments, and no arrangements for the collection of revenue or the management of the postal service. A few scattered soldiers formed the army, and no navy existed. There were no funds and no financial resources. There were not even traditions and forms of government, and, slight as these things may seem, settled methods of doing public business are essential to its prompt and proper transaction. These forms had to be devised and adopted first, and although they seem matters of course now, after a century of use, they were the subject of much thought and of some sharp controversy in 1789. The manner in which the President was to be addressed caused some heated discussion even before the inauguration. America had but just emerged from the colonial condition, and the colonial habits were still unbroken. In private letters we

find Washington referred to as "His Highness," and in some newspapers as "His Highness the President-General," while the Senate committee reported in favor of addressing him as "His Highness the President of the United States and Protector of their Liberties." In the House, however, the democratic spirit was strong, there was a fierce attack upon the proposed titles, and that body ended by addressing Washington simply as the "President of the United States," which, as it happened, settled the question finally. Washington personally cared little for titles, although, as John Adams wrote to Mrs. Warren, he thought them appropriate to high office. But in this case he saw that there was a real danger lurking in the empty name, and so he was pleased by the decision of the House. Another matter was the relation between the President and the Senate. Should he communicate with them in writing or orally, being present during their deliberations as if they formed an executive council? It was promptly decided that nominations should be made in writing; but as to treaties, it was at first thought best that the President should deliver them to the Senate in person, and it was arranged with minute care where he should sit, beside the Vice-President, while the matter was under discussion. This arrangement, however, was abandoned after a single trial, and it was agreed that treaties, like nominations, should come with written messages.

Last and most important of all was the question of the mode of conduct and the etiquette to be established with regard to the President himself. In this, as in the matter of titles, Washington

saw a real importance in what many persons might esteem only empty forms, and he proceeded with his customary thoroughness in dealing with the subject. What he did would be a precedent for the future as well as a target for present criticism, and he determined to devise a scheme which would resist attack, and be worthy to stand as an example for his successors. He therefore wrote to Madison: "The true medium, I conceive, must lie in pursuing such a course as will allow him (the President) time for all the official duties of his station. This should be the primary object. The next, to avoid as much as may be the charge of superciliousness, and seclusion from information, by too much reserve and too great a withdrawal of himself from company on the one hand, and the inconveniences, as well as a diminution of respectability, from too free an intercourse and too much familiarity on the other." This letter, with a set of queries, was also sent to the Vice-President, to Jay, and to Hamilton. They all agreed in the general views outlined by Washington. Adams, fresh from Europe, was inclined to surround the office, of which he justly had a lofty conception, with a good deal of ceremony, because he felt that these things were necessary in our relations with foreign nations. In the main, however, the advice of all who were consulted was in favor of keeping the nice line between too much reserve and too much familiarity, and this line, after all the advising, Washington of course drew for himself. He did it in this way. He decided that he would return no calls, and that he would receive no general visits except on specified

days, and official visitors at fixed hours. The third point was in regard to dinner parties. The presidents of Congress hitherto had asked every one to dine, and had ended by keeping a sort of public table, to the waste of both time and dignity. Many persons, disgusted with this system, thought that the President ought not to ask anybody to dinner. But Washington, never given to extremes, decided that he would invite to dinner persons of official rank and strangers of distinction, but no one else, and that he would accept no invitations for himself. After a time he arranged to have a reception every Tuesday, from three to four in the afternoon, and Mrs. Washington held a similar levee on Fridays. These receptions, with a public dinner every week, were all the social entertainments for which the President had either time or health.

By these sensible and apparently unimportant arrangements, Washington managed to give free access to every one who was entitled to it, and yet preserved the dignity and reserve due to his office. It was one of the real although unmarked services which he rendered to the new government, and which contributed so much to its establishment, for it would have been very easy to have lowered the presidential office by a false idea of republican simplicity. It would have been equally easy to have made it odious by a cold seclusion on the one hand, or by pomp and ostentation on the other. With his usual good judgment and perfect taste, Washington steered between the opposing dangers, and yet notwithstanding the wisdom of his arrangements, and in

spite of their simplicity, he did not escape calumny on account of them. One criticism was that at his reception every one stood, which was thought to savor of incipient monarchy. To this Washington replied, with the directness of which he was always capable, that it was not usual to sit on such occasions, and, if it were, he had no room large enough for the number of chairs that would be required, and that, as the whole thing was perfectly unceremonious, every one could come and go as he pleased. Fault was also found with the manner in which he bowed, an accusation to which he answered with an irony not untinged with bitterness and contempt: "That I have not been able to make bows to the taste of poor Colonel B. (who, by the by, I believe never saw one of them) is to be regretted, especially too, as, upon those occasions, they were indiscriminately bestowed, and the best I was master of. Would it not have been better to throw the veil of charity over them, ascribing their stiffness to the effects of age, or to the unskillfulness of my teacher, rather than to pride and dignity of office, which God knows has no charms for me?"

As party hostility developed, these attacks passed from the region of private conversation to the columns of newspapers and the declamation of mob orators, and an especial snarl was raised over the circumstance that at some public ball the President and Mrs. Washington were escorted to a sofa on a raised platform, and that guests passed before them and bowed. Much monarchy and aristocracy were perceived in this little matter, and Jefferson carefully set it down in that collection

of withered slanders which he gave to an admiring posterity, after the grave had safely covered both him and those whom he feared and hated in his lifetime. This incident, however, was but an example of the political capital which was sought for in the conduct of the presidential office. The celebration of the birthday, the proposition to put Washington's head upon the coins, and many other similar trifles, were all twisted to the same purpose. The dynasty of Cleon has been a long one, so long that even the succession of the Popes seems temporary beside it, and it flourished in Washington's time as rankly as it did in Athens, or as it does to-day. The object of the assault varies, but the motives and the purpose are as old and as lasting as human nature. Envy and malice will always find a convenient shelter in pretended devotion to the public weal, and will seek revenge for their own lack of success by putting on the cloak of the tribune of the people, and perverting the noblest of offices to the basest uses.

But time sets all things even. The demagogues and the critics who assailed Washington's demeanor and behavior are forgotten, while the wise and simple customs which he established and framed for the great office that he honored, still prevail by virtue of their good sense. We part gladly with all remembrance of those bold defenders of liberty who saw in these slight forms forerunners of monarchy. We would even consent to drop into oblivion the precious legacy of Jefferson. But we will never part with the picture drawn by a loving hand of that stately figure, clad in black velvet, with the hand on the hilt of the sword, standing at

one of Mrs. Washington's levees, and receiving with gentle and quiet dignity, full of kindness but untinged by cheap familiarity, the crowd that came to pay their respects. It was well for the republic that at the threshold of its existence it had for President a man who, by the kindness of his heart, by his good sense, good manners, and fine breeding, gave to the office which he held and the government he founded the simple dignity which was part of himself and of his own high character.

Thus the forms and shows, important in their way, were dealt with, while behind them came the sterner realities of government, demanding regulation and settlement. At the outset Washington knew about the affairs of the government, especially for the last six years, only in a general way. He felt it to be his first duty, therefore, to familiarize himself with all these matters, and, although he was in the midst of the stir and bustle of a new government, he nevertheless sent for all the papers of each department of the confederation since the signature of the treaty of peace, went through them systematically, and made notes and summaries of their contents. This habit he continued throughout his presidency in dealing with all official documents. The natural result followed. He knew more at the start about the facts in each and every department of the public business than any other one man, and he continued to know more throughout his administration. In this method and this capacity for taking infinite pains is to be found a partial explanation at least of the easy mastery of affairs which he always showed, whether on the



plantation, in the camp, or in the cabinet. It was in truth a striking instance of that "long patience" which the great French naturalist said was genius.

While he was thus regulating forms of business, and familiarizing himself with public questions, it became necessary to fix the manner of dealing with foreign powers. There were not many representatives of foreign nations present at the birth of the republic, but there was one who felt, and perhaps not without reason, that he was entitled to peculiar privileges. The Count de Moustier, minister of France, desired to have private access to the President, and even to discuss matters of business with him. Washington's reply to this demand was, in its way, a model. After saying that the only matter which could come up would relate to commerce, with which he was unfamiliar, he continued: "Every one, who has any knowledge of my manner of acting in public life, will be persuaded that I am not accustomed to impede the dispatch or frustrate the success of business by a ceremonious attention to idle forms. Any person of that description will also be satisfied that I should not readily consent to lose one of the most important functions of my office for the sake of preserving an imaginary dignity. But perhaps, if there are rules of proceeding which have originated from the wisdom of statesmen, and are sanctioned by the common consent of nations, it would not be prudent for a young state to dispense with them altogether, at least without some substantial cause for so doing. I have myself been induced to think, possibly from habits of experience, that

in general the best mode of conducting negotiations, the detail and progress of which might be liable to accidental mistakes or unintentional misrepresentations, is by writing. This mode, if I was obliged by myself to negotiate with any one, I should still pursue. I have, however, been taught to believe that there is in most polished nations a system established with regard to the foreign as well as the other great departments, which, from the utility, the necessity, and the reason of the thing, provides that business should be digested and prepared by the heads of those departments."

The Count de Moustier hastened to excuse himself on the ground that he expressed himself badly in English, which was over-modest, for he expressed himself extremely well. He also explained and defended his original propositions by trying to show that they were reasonable and usual; but it was labor lost. Washington's letter was final, and the French minister knew it. The count was aware that he was dealing with a good soldier, but in statecraft he probably felt he had to do with a novice. His intention was to take advantage of the position of France, secure for her peculiar privileges, and put her in the attitude of patronizing inoffensively but effectively the new government founded by the people she had helped to free. He found himself turned aside quietly, almost deferentially, and yet so firmly and decidedly that there was no appeal. No nation, he discovered, was to have especial privileges. France was the good friend and ally of the United States, but she was an equal, not a superior. It was also

fixed by this correspondence that the President, representing the sovereignty of the people, was to have the respect to which that sovereignty was entitled. The pomp and pageant of diplomacy in the old world were neither desired nor sought in America; yet the President was not to be approached in person, but through the proper cabinet officer, and all diplomatic communications after the fashion of civilized governments were to be in writing. Thus within a month France, and in consequence other nations, were quietly given to understand that the new republic was to be treated like other free and independent governments, and that there was to be nothing colonial or subservient in her attitude to foreign nations, whether those nations had been friends or foes in the past.

It required tact, firmness, and a sure judgment to establish proper relations with foreign ministers. But once done, it was done for all time. This was not the case with another and far more important class of people, whose relation to the new administration had to be determined at the very first hour of its existence. Indeed, before Washington left Mount Vernon he had begun to receive letters from persons who considered themselves peculiarly well fitted to serve the government in return for a small but certain salary. In a letter to Mrs. Wooster, for whom as the widow of an old soldier he felt the tenderest sympathy, he wrote soon after his arrival in New York: "As a public man acting only with reference to the public good, I must be allowed to decide upon all points of my duty, without consulting my

private inclinations and wishes. I must be permitted, with the best lights I can obtain, and upon a general view of characters and circumstances, to nominate such persons alone to offices as in my judgment shall be the best qualified to discharge the functions of the departments to which they shall be appointed." This sentiment in varying forms has been declared since 1789 by many Presidents and many parties. Washington, however, lived up exactly to his declarations. At the same time he did not by any means attempt to act merely as an examining board.

Great political organizations, as we have known them since, did not exist at the beginning of the government, but there were nevertheless two parties, divided by the issue which had been settled by the adoption of the Constitution. Washington took, and purposed to take, his appointees so far as he could from those who had favored the Constitution and were friends of the new system. It is also clear that he made every effort to give the preference to the soldiers and officers of the army, toward whom his affectionate thought ever turned. Beyond this it can only be said that he was almost nervously anxious to avoid any appearance of personal feeling in making appointments, as was shown in the letter refusing to make his nephew Bushrod a district attorney, and that he resented personal pressure of any kind. He preferred always to reach his conclusions so far as possible from a careful study of written testimony. These principles, rigidly adhered to, his own keen perception of character, and his knowledge of men, resulted in a series of appointments running

through eight years which were really marvelously successful. The only rejection, outside the special case of John Rutledge, was that of Benjamin Fishbourn for naval officer of the port of Savannah, which was due apparently to the personal hostility of the Georgia senators. Washington, conscious of his own painstaking, was not a little provoked by this setting aside of an old soldier. He sent in a sharp message on the subject, pointing out the trouble he took to make sure of the fitness of an appointment, and intimated that the same effort would not come amiss in the Senate when they rejected one of his nominees. In view of the fact that it was a new government, the absence of mistakes in the appointments is quite extraordinary, and the value of such success can be realized by considering the disastrous consequences which would have come from inefficient officers or malfeasance in office when the great experiment was just put on trial, and was surrounded by doubters and critics ready and eager to pick flaws and find faults.

The general tone of the government and its reputation at widely scattered points depended largely on the persons appointed to the smaller executive offices. Important, however, as these were, the fate of the republic under the new Constitution was infinitely more involved in the men whom Washington called about him in his cabinet, to decide with him as to the policies which were to be begun, and on which the living vital government was to be founded. Congress, troubled about many things, and struggling with questions of revenue and taxation, managed in the

course of the summer to establish and provide for three executive departments and for an attorney-general. To the selection of the men to fill these high offices Washington gave, of course, the most careful thought, and succeeded in forming a cabinet which, in its aggregate ability, never has been equaled in this country.

Edmund Randolph was appointed attorney-general. Losing his father at an early age, and entering the army, he had been watched over and protected by Washington with an almost paternal care, and at the time of his appointment he was one of the most conspicuous men in public life, as well as a leading lawyer at the bar of Virginia. He came from one of the oldest and strongest of the Virginian families, and had been governor of his State, and a leader in the constitutional convention, where he had introduced what was known as the Virginian plan. He had refused to sign the Constitution, but had come round finally to its support, largely through Washington's influence. There was then, and there can be now, no question as to Randolph's really fine talents, or as to his fitness for his post. His defect was a lack of force of character and strength of will, which was manifested by a certain timidity of action, and by an infirmity of purpose, such as had appeared in his course about the Constitution. He performed the duties of his office admirably, but in the decision of the momentous questions which came before the cabinet he showed an uncertainty of opinion which was felt by all his colleagues.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This passage was written before the recent appearance of Mr. Conway's *Life of Randolph*. That ample biography, in my opinion, confirms the view of Randolph here

Henry Knox of Massachusetts was head of the War Department under the confederacy, and was continued in office by Washington, who appointed him secretary of war under the new arrangement. It was a natural and excellent selection. Knox was a distinguished soldier, he had served well through the Revolution, and Washington was warmly attached to him. He was not a statesman by training or habit of mind, nor was he possessed of commanding talents. But he was an able man, sound in his views and diligent in his office, devoted to his chief and unswerving in his loyalty to the administration and all its measures. There was never any doubt as to the attitude of Henry Knox, and Washington found him as faithful and efficient in the cabinet as he had always been in the field.

Second in rank, but first in importance, was the secretaryship of the treasury. "Finance! Ah, my friend, all that remains of the American Revolution grounds there." So Gouverneur Morris had written to Jay. So might he have written again of the American Union, for the fate of the experiment rested at the outset on the Treasury Department. Yet there was probably less hesitation as to the proper man for this place than for any other. Washington no doubt would have been glad to give it to Robert Morris, whose

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given. If, in the light of this new material, I have erred at all, it is, I think, on the charitable side. Mr. Conway, in order to vindicate Randolph, has sacrificed so far as he could nearly every conspicuous public man of that period. From Washington, whom he charges with senility, down, there is hardly a man who ever crossed Randolph's path whom he has not assailed. Yet he presents no reason, so far as I can see, to alter the present opinion of Randolph.

great services in the Revolution he could never forget. But this could not be, and acting on his own judgment, fortified by that of Morris himself, he made Alexander Hamilton secretary of the treasury.

It is one of the familiar marks of greatness to know how to choose the right men to perform the tasks which no man, either in war or peace, can complete single-handed. Napoleon's marshals were conspicuous proofs of his genius, and Washington had a similar power of selection. The generals whom he trusted were the best generals, the statesmen whom he consulted stand highest in history. He was fallible, as other mortals are fallible. He, too, had his Varus, and the time was coming when he could echo the bitter cry of the great emperor for his lost legions. But the mistakes were the exceptions. He chose with the sureness of a strong and penetrating mind, and the most signal example of this capacity was his secretary of the treasury. He knew Hamilton well. He had known him as his staff officer, active, accomplished, and efficient. He had seen him leave his side in a tempest of boyish rage, and he had watched him charging with splendid gallantry the Yorktown redoubts. He was familiar with Hamilton's extraordinary mastery of financial and political problems, and he had found him a powerful leader in the work of forming the Constitution. He understood Hamilton's strength, and he knew where his dangers lay. Now he called him to his cabinet, and gave into his hands the department on which the immediate success of the government hinged. It was a brilliant



choice. The mark in his lifetime for all the assaults of his political opponents, the leader and the victim of the schism which rent his own party, Hamilton, after his death, was made the target for attack and reprobation by his political foes, who for nearly sixty years, with few intermissions, controlled the government. His work, however, could not be undone, and as passions have subsided his fame has proved to be of that highest and rarest kind which broadens and rises with the lapse of years, until in the light of history it overtops that of any of our statesmen, except of his own great chief and Abraham Lincoln. The work to which he was called was that of organizing a national government, and in the performance of this work he showed that he belonged to the highest type of constructive statesmen, and was one of the rare men who build, and whose building stands the test of time.

Last to be mentioned, but first in rank, was the Department of State. For this high place Washington chose Thomas Jefferson, who was then our minister in Paris, and who did not return to take up his official duties until the following March. Of the four cabinet offices, this was the only one where Washington proceeded entirely on public grounds. He took Jefferson on account of his wide reputation, his unquestioned ability, his standing before the country, and his experience in our foreign relations. With the other three there was a strong element of personal friendship and familiarity. With the secretary of state his intercourse had been, so far as we can judge, almost wholly of a public character, and, so far as can be inferred from an

expression of some years before, the selection was made by Washington in deference simply to what he believed to be the public interest. The only allusion to Jefferson in all the printed volumes of correspondence prior to 1789 occurs in a letter to Robert Livingston, of January 8, 1783. He there said: "What office is Mr. Jefferson appointed to that he has, you say, lately accepted? If it is that of commissioner of peace, I hope he will arrive too late to have any hand in it." There is no indication that their personal relations were then or afterwards other than pleasant. Yet this brief sentence is a strong expression of distrust, and especially so from the fact that Washington was not at all given to criticising other people in his letters. What he distrusted was not Jefferson's ability, for that no man could doubt, still less his patriotism. But Washington read character well, and he felt that Jefferson might be lacking in the qualities of boldness and determination, so needful in a negotiation like that which resulted in the acknowledgment of our independence.

The truth was that the two men were radically different, and never could have been sympathetic. Washington was strong, direct, masculine, and at times fierce in anger. Jefferson was adroit, subtle, and feminine in his sensitiveness. Washington was essentially a fighting man, tamed by a stern self-control from the recklessness of his early days, but always a fighter. Jefferson was a lover of peace, given to quiet, hating quarrels and bloodshed, and at times timid in dealing with public questions. Washington was deliberate and conservative, after the fashion

of his race. Jefferson was quick, impressionable, and always fascinated by new notions, even if they were somewhat fantastic. A thoroughly liberal and open-minded man, Washington never turned a deaf ear to any new suggestion, whether it was a public policy or a mechanical invention, but to all alike he gave careful consideration before he adopted them. To Jefferson, on the other hand, mere novelty had a peculiar charm, and he jumped at any device, either to govern a state or improve a plough, provided that it had the flavor of ingenuity. The two men might easily have thought the same concerning the republic, but they started from opposite poles, and no full communion of thought and feeling was possible between them. That Washington chose fitly from purely public and outside considerations can not be questioned, but he made a mistake when he put next to himself a man for whom he did not have the personal regard and sympathy which he felt for his other advisers. The necessary result finally came, after many troubles in the cabinet, in dislike and distrust, if not positive alienation.

Looking at the cabinet, however, as it stood in the beginning, we can only admire the wisdom of the selection and the high abilities which were thus brought together for the administration and construction of a great national government. It has always been the fashion to speak of this first cabinet as made up without reference to party, but the idea is a mistaken one from any point of view. Washington himself gave it color, for he felt very rightly that he was the choice of the whole people and not of a party.

He wished to rise above party, and in fact to have no party, but a devotion of all to the good of the country. The time came when he sorrowed for and censured party bitterness and party strife, but it is to be observed that the party feeling which he most deplored was that which grew up against his own policies and his own administration. The fact was that Washington, who rose above party more than any other statesman in our history, was nevertheless, like most men of strong will and robust mind, and like all great political leaders, a party man, as we shall have occasion to see further on. It is true that his cabinet contained the chiefs and founders of two great schools of political thought, which have ever since divided the country; but when these parties were once fairly developed, the cabinet became a scene of conflict and went to pieces, only to be reformed on party lines. When it was first made up, the two parties of our subsequent history, with which we are familiar, did not exist, and it was in the administration of Washington that they were developed. Yet the cabinet of 1789 was, so far as there were parties, a partisan body. The only political struggle that we had had was over the adoption of the Constitution. The parties of the first Congress were the Federalists and the anti-Federalists, the friends and the enemies of the Constitution. Among those who opposed the Constitution were many able and distinguished men, but Washington did not invite Sam Adams, or George Mason, or Patrick Henry, or George Clinton to enter his cabinet. On the contrary, he took only friends and supporters of the Constitution. Hamilton was

its most illustrious advocate. Randolph, after some vacillation, had done very much to turn the wavering scale in Virginia in its favor. Knox was its devoted friend; and Jefferson, although he had carped at it and criticised it in his letters, was not known to have done so, and was considered, and rightly considered, to be friendly to the new system. In other words, the cabinet was made up exclusively of the party of the Constitution, which was the victorious party of the moment. This was of course wholly right, and Washington was too great and wise a leader to have done anything else. The cabinet was formed with regard to existing divisions, and, when those divisions changed, the cabinet which gave birth to them changed too.

Outside the cabinet, the most weighty appointments were those of the Supreme Court. No one then quite appreciated, probably, the vast importance which this branch of the government was destined to assume, or the great part it was to play in the history of the country and the development of our institutions. At the same time no one could fail to see that much depended on the composition of the body which was to be the ultimate interpreter of the Constitution. The safety of the entire scheme might easily have been imperiled by the selection of men as judges who were lacking in ability or character. Washington chose with his wonted sureness. At the head of the court he placed John Jay, one of the most distinguished of the public men of the day, who gave to the office at once the impress of his own high character and spotless reputation. With him were

associated Wilson of Pennsylvania, Cushing of Massachusetts, Blair of Virginia, Iredell of North Carolina, and Rutledge of South Carolina. They were all able and well-known men, sound lawyers, and also, be it noted, warm friends of the Constitution.

Thus the business of organizing the government in the first great and essential points was completed. It was the work of the President, and, anxious and arduous as it was, it is worth remembering, too, that it was done, and thoroughly done, in the midst of severe physical suffering. Just after the inauguration, Washington was laid up with an anthrax or carbuncle in his thigh, which brought him at one time very near death. For six weeks he could lie only on one side, endured the most constant and acute pain, and was almost incapable of motion. He referred to his illness at the time in a casual and perfectly simple way, and mind and will so prevailed over the bodily suffering that the great task of organizing the government was never suspended nor interrupted.

When the work was done and Congress had adjourned, Washington, feeling that he had earned a little rest and recreation, proceeded to carry out a purpose, which he had formed very early in his presidency, of visiting the Eastern States. This was the first part of a general plan which he had conceived of visiting while in office all portions of the Union. The personal appearance of the President, representing the whole people, would serve to bring home to the public mind the existence and reality of a central government, which to many if not to most

persons in the outlying States seemed shadowy and distant. But General Washington was neither shadowy nor distant to any one. Every man, woman, and child had heard of and loved the leader of the Revolution. To his countrymen everywhere, his name meant political freedom and victory in battle; and when he came among them as the head of a new government, that government took on in some measure the character of its chief. His journey was a well-calculated appeal, not for himself but for his cause, to the warm human interest which a man readily excites, but which only gathers slowly around constitutions and forms of government. The world owes a good deal to the right kind of hero-worship, and the United States have been no exception.

The journey itself was uneventful, and was carried out with Washington's usual precision. It served its purpose, too, and brought out a popular enthusiasm which spoke well for the prospects of the federal government, and which was the first promise of the loyal support which New England gave to the President, as she had already given it to the general. In the succession of crowds and processions and celebrations which marked the public rejoicing, one incident of this journey stands out as still memorable, and possessed of real meaning. Mr. John Hancock was governor of Massachusetts. There is no need to dwell upon him. He was a man of slender abilities, large wealth, and ready patriotism, with a great sense of his own importance, and a fine taste for impressive display. Every external thing about him, from his handsome house and his Copley portrait to

his imposing gout and his immortal signature, was showy and effective. He was governor of Massachusetts, and very proud of that proud old commonwealth as well as of her governor. Within her bounds he was the representative of her sovereignty, and he felt that deference was due to him from the President of the United States when they both stood on the soil of Massachusetts. He did not meet Washington on his arrival, and Washington thereupon did not dine with the governor as he had agreed to do. It looked a little stormy. Here was evidently a man with some new views as to the sovereignty of States and the standing of the union of States. It might have done for Governor Hancock to allow the President of Congress to pass out of Massachusetts without seeing its governor, and thereby learn a valuable lesson, but it would never do to have such a thing happen in the case of George Washington, no matter what office he might hold. A little after noon on Sunday, October 26, therefore, the governor wrote a note to the President, apologizing for not calling before, and asking if he might call in half an hour, even though it was at the hazard of his health. Washington answered at once, expressing his pleasure at the prospect of seeing his excellency, but begging him, with a touch of irony, not to do anything to endanger his health. So in half an hour Hancock appeared. Picturesque, even if defeated, he was borne up-stairs on men's shoulders, swathed in flannels, and then and there made his call. The old house in Boston where this happened has had since then a series of successors, but the ground on which it stood



has been duly remembered and commemorated. It is a more important spot than we are wont to think; for there it was settled, on that autumn Sunday, that the idea that the States were able to own and to bully the Union they had formed was dead, and that the President of the new United States was henceforth to be regarded as the official superior of every governor in the land. It was a mere question of etiquette, nothing more. But how the general government would have sunk in popular estimation if the President had not asserted, with perfect dignity and yet entire firmness, its position! Men are governed very largely by impressions, and Washington knew it. Hence his settling at once and forever the question of precedence between the Union and the States. Everywhere and at all times, according to his doctrine, the nation was to be first.<sup>4</sup>

So the President traveled on to the North, and then back by another road to New York, and that excellent bit of work in familiarizing the people with their federal government was accomplished. Meantime the wheels had started, the machine was in motion, and the chief officers were at their places. The preliminary work had been done, and the next step was to determine what policies should be adopted, and to find out if the new system could really perform the task for which it had been created.

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<sup>4</sup> The most lately published contemporary account of this affair with Hancock can be found in the *Magazine of American History*, June, 1888, p. 508, entitled "Incidents in the Life of John Hancock, as related by Dorothy Quincy Hancock Scott (from the Diary of Gen. W.H. Sumner)."

## CHAPTER III

# DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

To trace in detail the events of Washington's administration would be to write the history of the country during that period. It is only possible here to show, without much regard to chronological sequence, the part of the President in developing the policy of the government at home, and his attitude toward each question as it arose. We are concerned here merely with the influence and effect of Washington in our history, and not with the history itself. What did he do, and what light do we get on the man himself from his words and deeds? These are the only questions that a brief study of a career so far-reaching can attempt to answer.

Congress came together for the first time with the government actually organized on January 4, 1790. On the day when the session opened, Washington drove down to the hall where the Congress met, alone in his own coach drawn by four horses. He was preceded by Colonel Humphreys and Major Jackson, mounted on his two white horses, while immediately behind came his chariot with his private secretaries, and Mr. Lewis on horseback. Then followed in their own coaches the chief justice and the secretaries of war and of the treasury. When the President reached the hall he was met at the entrance by

the doorkeeper of the Congress, and was escorted to the Senate chamber. There he passed between the members of each branch, drawn up on either hand, and took his seat by the Vice-President. When order and silence were obtained, he rose and spoke to the assembled representatives of the people standing before him. Having concluded his speech, he bowed and withdrew with his suite as he had come. Jefferson killed this simple ceremonial, and substituted for it the written message, sent by a secretary and read by a clerk in the midst of talk and bustle, which is the form we have to-day. Jefferson's change was made, of course, in the name of liberty, and also because he was averse to public speaking. From the latter point of view, it was reasonable enough, but the ostensible cause was as hollow and meaningless as any of the French notions to which it was close akin. It is well for the head of the state to meet face to face the representatives of the same people who elected him. For more than a century this has been the practice in Massachusetts, to take a single instance, and liberty in that commonwealth has not been imperiled, nor has the State been obliged to ask Federal aid to secure to her a republican form of government because of her adherence to this ancient custom.

The forms adopted by Washington had the grave and simple dignity which marked all he did, and it was senseless to abandon what his faultless taste and patriotic feeling approved. Forms are in their way important things: they may conceal perils to liberty, or they may lend dignity and call forth respect to all that

liberty holds most dear. The net result of all this business has been very curious. Jefferson's written message prevails; and yet at the same time we inaugurate our Presidents with a pomp and parade to which those of the dreaded Federalists seem poor and quiet, and which would make the hero of the message-in-writing fancy that the air was darkened by the shadows of monarchy and despotism. The author of the Declaration of Independence was a patriotic man and lover of freedom, but he who fought out the Revolution in the field was quite as safe a guardian of American liberty; and his clear mind was never confused by the fantasies of that Parisian liberty which confused facts with names, and ended in the Terror and the first Empire. The people of the United States to-day surround the first office of the land with a respect and dignity which they deem equal to the mighty sovereignty that it represents, and in this is to be found the genuine American feeling expressed by Washington in the plain and simple ceremonial which he adopted for his meetings with the Congress.

In this first speech, thus delivered, Washington indicated the subjects to which he wished Congress to direct their attention, and which in their development formed the policies of his administration. His first recommendation was to provide for the common defense by a proper military establishment. His last and most elaborate was in behalf of education, for which he invoked the aid of Congress and urged the foundation of a national university, a scheme he had much at heart, and to which he

constantly returned. The history of these two recommendations is soon told. Provision was made for the army, inadequate enough, as Washington thought, but still without dispute, and such additional provision was afterwards made from time to time as the passing exigency of the moment demanded. For education nothing was done, and the national university has never advanced beyond the recommendation of the first President.

He also advised the adoption of a uniform standard of coinage, weights, and measures. In two years a mint was duly established after an able report from Hamilton, and out of his efforts and those of Jefferson came our decimal system. There was debate over the devices on the coins in which the ever-vigilant Jeffersonians scented monarchical dangers, but with this exception the country got its uniform coinage peacefully enough. The weights and measures did not fare so well. They obtained a long report from Jefferson, and a still longer and more learned disquisition from John Quincy Adams thirty years later. But that was all. We still use the rule of thumb systems inherited from our English ancestors, and Washington's uniform standard, except for the two reports, has gone no further than the national university.

Another recommendation to the effect that invention ought to be encouraged and protected bore fruit in this same year in patent and copyright laws, which became the foundation of our present system. The same good fortune befell the recommendation for a uniform rule for naturalization, and the law of 1790 was quietly

enacted, no one then imagining that its alteration less than ten years later was destined to form part of a policy which, after a fierce struggle, settled the fate of parties and decided the control of the government. The post-office was also commended to the care of Congress, and for that, as for the army, provision was duly made, insufficient at the outset, but growing steadily from this small beginning, as it was called upon to meet the spread and increase of population.

Provision was also made gradually, and with much occasional conflict, for a diplomatic service such as the President advised. But this was merely the machinery to carry out our foreign policy on which, in a few years, our political history largely turned, and which will demand a chapter by itself.

A paragraph devoted to Indian affairs informed Congress that measures were on foot to establish pacific relations with our savage neighbors, but that it would be well to be prepared to use force. This brief sentence was the beginning of an important policy, which, in its consequences and effects, played a large part in the history of the next eight years.

These various matters thus disposed of, there remained only the request to the House to provide for the revenue and the public credit. From this came Hamilton's financial policy which created parties, and with it was interwoven in the body of the speech the general recommendation to make all proper effort for the advancement of manufactures, commerce, and agriculture.

The speech as a whole, short though it was, drew the outline

of a vigorous system, which aimed at the establishment of a strong government with enlarged powers. It cut at a blow all ties between the new government and the feeble strivings of the dead confederation. It displayed a broad conception of the duties of the government under the Constitution, and in every paragraph it breathed the spirit of a robust nationality, calculated to touch the people directly in every State of the Union.

Before taking up the financial question, which became the great issue in our domestic affairs, it will be well to trace briefly the story of our relations with the Indians. The policy of the new administration in this respect was peculiarly Washington's own, and, although it affected more or less the general course of events at that period, it did not directly become the subject of party differences. The "Indian problem" is still with us, but it is now a very mild problem indeed. Within a few years, it is true, we have had Indian wars, conducted by the forces of the United States, and ever-recurring outbreaks between savages and frontiersmen. But it has been a very distant business. To the great mass of the American people it has been little more than interesting news, to be leisurely scanned in the newspaper without any sense of immediate and personal concern. Moreover, the popular conception of the Indian has for a long time been wildly inaccurate. We have known him in various capacities, as the innocent victim of corrupt agents and traders, and as the brutal robber and murderer with the vices and force of the Western frontiersman, but without any of the latter's redeeming

virtues. Last and most important of all, we have known him as the rare hero and the conventional villain of romance, ranging from the admirable stories of Cooper to the last production of the "penny dreadful." The result has been to create in the public mind a being who probably never existed anywhere except in the popular imagination, and who certainly is not the North American Indian.

We are always loath to admit that our conceptions are formed by fiction, but in the case of people remote from our daily observation it plays in nine instances out of ten a leading part, and it has certainly done so here. In this way we have been provided with two types simple and well defined, which represent the abnormally good on the one hand and the inconceivably bad on the other. The Indian hero is a person of phenomenal nobility of character, and of an ability which would do credit to the training of a highly refined civilization. He is the product of the orator, the novelist, or the philanthropist, and has but slight and distant relation to facts. The usual type, however, and the one which has entered most largely into the popular mind, is the Indian villain. He is portrayed invariably as cunning, treacherous, cruel, and cowardly, without any relieving quality. In this there is of course much truth. As a matter of fact, Indians are cunning, treacherous, and cruel, but they are also bold fighters. The leading idea of the Indian that has come down from Cooper's time, and which depicts him as a "cowardly redskin," unable to stand for a moment against a white man in fair fight, is a complete



delusion designed to flatter the superior race. It has been in a large measure dissipated by Parkman's masterly histories, but the ideas born of popular fiction die hard. They are due in part to the theory that cruelty implies cowardice, just as we say that a bully must be a coward, another mistaken bit of proverbial wisdom.

As a matter of fact, the records show that the North American Indian is one of the most remarkable savage warriors of whom we have any knowledge; and the number of white men killed for each Indian slain in war exhibits an astonishing disproportion of loss. Captain James Smith, for many years a captive, and who figured in most of the campaigns of the last century, estimated that fifty of our people were killed to one of theirs. This of course includes women and children; and yet even in the battle of the Big Kanawha, the Virginia riflemen, although they defeated the Indians with an inferior force, lost two to one, and a similar disproportion seems to have continued to the present day.

The Indian, moreover, not only fought well and to the death, if surrounded, but he had a discipline and plan of battle which were most effective for the wilderness. It seems probable that, if the experiment had been properly tried, the Indians might have been turned into better soldiers than the famous Sikhs; and the French, who used the red men skillfully, if without much discipline, found them formidable and effective allies. They cut off more than one English and American army, and the fact that they resorted to ambush and surprise does not detract from their exploits. It was a legitimate mode of warfare, and was

used by them with terrible effect. They have fought more than one pitched battle against superior numbers when the victory hung long in the balance, and they have carried on guerrilla wars for years against overwhelming forces with extraordinary persistence and success. There is no savage, except the Zulu or Maori, who has begun to exhibit the natural fighting quality of the American Indian; and although the Zulu appears to have displayed greater dash, the Indian, by his mastery of the tactics of surprise, has shown a far better head. In a word, the Indian has always been a formidable savage, treacherous, cruel, and cunning to an extreme degree, no doubt, but a desperate and dogged fighter, with a natural instinct for war. It must be remembered, too, that he was far more formidable in 1790 than he is to-day, with the ever-rising tide of civilized population flowing upon him and hemming him in. When the Constitution came into being, the Indians were pretty well out of the Atlantic States, but beyond the Alleghanies all was theirs, and they had the unbroken wilderness as their ally and their refuge. There they lay like a dark line on the near frontier, threatening war and pillage and severe check to the westward advance of our people. They were a serious matter to a new government, limited in resources and representing only three millions of people.

Fortunately the President was of all men best fitted to deal with this grave question, for he knew the Indians thoroughly. His earliest public service had been to negotiate with them, and from that time on he had been familiar with them in peace and in

diplomacy, while he had fought with them in war over and over again. He was not in the least confused in his notions about them, but saw them, as he did most facts, exactly as they were. He had none of the false sentimentality about the noble and injured red man, which in later days has been at times highly mischievous, nor on the other hand did he take the purely brutal view of the fighting scout or backwoodsman. He knew the Indian as he was, and understood him as a dangerous, treacherous, fighting savage. Better than any one else he appreciated the difficulties of Indian warfare when an army had to be launched into the wilderness and cut off from a base of supplies. He was well aware, too, that the western tribes were a constant temptation to England and Spain on either border, and might be used against us with terrible effect. In taking up the question for solution, he believed first, as was his nature, in justice, and he resolved to push every pacific measure, and strive unremittingly by fair dealing and binding treaties to keep a peace which was of great moment to the young republic. But he also felt that pacific measures were an uncertain reliance, and that sharp, decisive blows were often the only means of maintaining peace and quiet on the frontier, and of warding off English and Spanish intrigue. This was the policy he indicated in the brief sentences of his first speech, and it only remains to see how he carried it out.

The outlook in regard to the Indians, when Washington assumed the presidency, was threatening enough. The Continental Congress had shown in this respect most honorable

intention and some vigor, but their honest purposes had been in large measure thwarted by the action of the various States, which they were unable to control. In New York peace reigned, despite some grumbling; for the Six Nations had made a general treaty, and also two special treaties, not long before, which were on the whole just and satisfactory. At the same time a general treaty had been made with the western Indians, which modified some of the injustices of the treaties of 1785, and which were also fair and reasonable. In this treaty, however, the tribes of the Wabash were not included, and they therefore were engaged in war with the Kentucky people. Those hardy backwoodsmen were quick enough to retaliate, and they generally proceeded on the simple backwoods principle that tribal distinctions were futile, and that every Indian was an enemy. This view, it must be admitted, saved a good deal of thought, but it led the Kentuckians in their raids to kill many Indians who did not belong to the Wabash tribes, but to those protected by treaty. The result of this impartiality was, that, besides the chronic Wabash troubles, there was every probability that a general war with all the western and northwestern tribes might break out at any moment.

South of the Ohio, matters were even worse. The Choctaws, it is true, owing to their distance from our frontier settlements, were on excellent terms with our government. But the Cherokees had just been beaten and driven back by Sevier and his followers from the short-lived state of Franklin, and had taken refuge with the Creeks. These last were a formidable people. Not only were

they good fighters, but they were also well armed, thanks to their alliance with the Spaniards, from whom they obtained not only countenance, but guns, ammunition, and supplies. They were led also by a chief of remarkable ability, a Scotch half-breed, educated at Charlestown, and named Alexander McGillivray. With a tribe so constituted and commanded, it was not difficult to bring on trouble, as soon proved to be the case. Georgia had claimed and seized certain lands under treaties which she alleged had been made, whereupon the Creeks denied the validity of these treaties and went to war, in which they were highly successful. The Georgians had already asked assistance from their neighbors, and they now demanded it from the new general government. Thereupon, under an act of Congress, Washington appointed as commissioners to arrange the difficulties General Lincoln, Colonel Humphrey, and David Griffin of Virginia, all remote from the scene of conflict, and all judicious selections. The Creeks readily met the new commissioners, but when they found that no lands were to be given up, they declined to treat further, and said they would await a new negotiation.

Washington attributed this failure, and no doubt correctly, to the intrigues and influence of Spain. On the day the report of the commissioners went to Congress, he wrote to Governor Pinckney of South Carolina: "For my own part I am entirely persuaded that the present general government will endeavor to lay the foundations for its proceedings in national justice, faith, and honor. But should the government, after having attempted

in vain every reasonable pacific measure, be obliged to have recourse to arms for the defense of its citizens, I am also of opinion that sound policy and good economy will point to a prompt and decisive effort, rather than to defensive and lingering operations." "Lingering" had been the curse of our Indian policy, and it was this above all things that Washington was determined to be rid of. Whether peace or war, there was to be quick and decisive action. He therefore, in this spirit, at once sent southward another commissioner, Colonel Willett, who very shrewdly succeeded in getting McGillivray and his chiefs to agree to accompany him to New York. Thither they accordingly came in due time, the Scotch half-breed and twenty-eight of his chiefs. They were entertained and well treated at the seat of government, and there, with Knox acting for the United States, they made a treaty which involved concessions on both sides. The Creeks gave up all claims to lands north and east of the Oconee, and the United States, under a recent general act regulating trade and intercourse with the Indians, gave up all lands south and west of the same river, and agreed to make the tribes an annual present. Then Washington gave them wampum and tobacco, and shook hands with them, and the chiefs went home. There was grumbling on both sides, especially among the Georgians, but nevertheless the treaty held for a time at least, and there was peace.

Washington's policy of justice had succeeded, and the Indians got an idea of the power and fair dealing of the new government, which was of real value. More valuable still was the lesson to the

people of the United States that this central government meant to deal justly with the Indians, and would try to prevent any single State from frustrating by bad faith the policy designed to benefit the whole country. Trouble soon began again in this direction, and in later days States inflated with state-right doctrines carried this resistance in Indian affairs to a much greater extent, and flouted the acts of the federal government. This, however, does not detract from the wisdom of the President, who inaugurated the policy of acting justly toward the Indians, and of overruling the selfish injustice of the State immediately affected. If the policy of justice and firmness adopted by Washington had never been abandoned, it would have been better for the honor and the interest both of the nation and the separate States.

The same pacific policy which had succeeded in the south was tried in the west and failed. The English, with their usual thoughtfulness, incited the Indians to claim the Ohio as their boundary, which meant war and murderous assaults on all our people traveling on the river. Retaliation, of course, followed, and in April, 1790, Colonel Harmer with a body of Kentucky militia invaded the Indian country, burned a deserted village, and returned without having accomplished anything substantial. The desultory warfare of murder and pillage went on for a time, and then Washington felt that the moment had come for the other branch of his policy. At all events there should be no lingering, and there should be action. Peaceful measures having failed, there should be war and a settlement in some fashion.

Accordingly, in the fall of 1790, soon after his successful Creek negotiation, he ordered out some three hundred regulars and eleven hundred militia from Pennsylvania and Kentucky, and sent them under Harmer into the Miami country. The expedition burned a village on the Scioto; and then Colonel Hardin, detached with some hundred and fifty men in pursuit of the Indians, was caught in an ambush and his regulars cut off, the militia running away apparently quite successfully. Thereupon Harmer retreated; but, changing his mind in a day or two, advanced again, and again sent out Hardin with a larger force than before. Then the advance was again surprised, and the regulars nearly all killed, while the militia, who stood their ground better this time, lost about a hundred men. The end was the repulse of the whites after a pretty savage fight. Then Harmer withdrew altogether, declaring, with a strange absence of humor, if of no more important quality, that he had won a victory. After reaching home, this mismanaged expedition caused much crimination and heart-burning, followed by courts-martial on Hardin and Harmer, who were both acquitted, and by the resignation of the latter.

This defeat of course simply made worse the state of affairs in general, and the Six Nations, who had hitherto been quiet, became uneasy and were kept so by the ever-kind incitement of the English. Various mediations with these powerful tribes failed; but Colonel Pickering, appointed a special commissioner, managed at last to appease their discontents. To the southward



also the Cherokees began to move and threaten, but were pacified by the exertions of Governor Blount of the Southwest Territory. Meantime an act had been passed to increase the army, and Arthur St. Clair was appointed major-general. Washington, who had been greatly disturbed by the failure of Harmer, was both angered and disheartened by the conduct of the States and of the frontier settlers. "Land-jobbing, the intermeddling of the States, and the disorderly conduct of the borderers, who were indifferent as to the killing of an Indian," were in his opinion the great obstacles in the way of success. Yet these very men who shot Indians at sight and plundered them of their lands, as well as the States immediately concerned, were the first to cry out for aid from the general government when a war, brought about usually by their own violation of the treaties of the United States, was upon them. On the other hand, the Indians themselves were warlike and quarrelsome, and they were spurred on by England and Spain in a way difficult to understand at the present day.

In all this perplexity, however, one thing was now clear to Washington. There could not longer be any doubt that the western troubles must be put down vigorously and by the armed hand. Even while he was negotiating in the north and south, therefore, he threw himself heart and soul into the preparation of St. Clair's expedition, pushing forward all necessary arrangements, and planning the campaign with a care and foresight made possible by his military ability and by his experience as an Indian fighter. While the main army was thus

getting ready, two lesser expeditions, one under Scott and one under Wilkinson, were sent into the Indian country; but beyond burning some deserted villages and killing a few stray savages both were fruitless.

At last all was ready. St. Clair had an interview with Washington, in which the whole plan of campaign was gone over, and especial warning given against ambuscades. He then took his departure at once for the west, and late in September left Cincinnati with some two thousand men. The plan of campaign was to build a line of forts, and accordingly one named Fort Hamilton was erected twenty-four miles north on the Miami, and then Fort Jefferson was built forty-four miles north of that point. Thence St. Clair pushed slowly on for twenty-nine miles until he reached the head-waters of the Wabash. He had been joined on the march by some Kentucky militia, who were disorderly and undisciplined. Sixty of them promptly deserted, and it became necessary to send a regiment after them to prevent their plundering the baggage trains. At the same time some Chickasaw auxiliaries, with the true rat instinct, deserted and went home. Nevertheless St. Clair kept on, and finally reached what proved to be his last camp, with about fourteen hundred men. The militia were on one side of the stream, the regulars on the other. At sunrise the next day the Indians surprised the militia, drove them back on the other camp, and shattered the first line of the regulars. The second line stood their ground, and a desperate fight ensued; but it was all in vain. The Indians charged up to

the guns, and, though they were repulsed by the bayonet, St. Clair, who was ill in his tent, was at last forced to order a retreat. The retreat soon became a rout, and the broken army, leaving their artillery and throwing away their arms, fled back to Fort Jefferson, where they left their wounded, and hurried on to their starting-point at Fort Washington. It was Braddock over again. General Butler, the second in command, was killed on the field, while the total loss reached nine hundred men and fifty-nine officers, and of these six hundred were killed. The Indians do not appear to have numbered much more than a thousand. No excuse for such a disaster and such murderous slaughter is possible, for nothing but the grossest carelessness could have permitted a surprise of that nature upon an established camp. The troops, too, were not only surprised, but apparently utterly unprepared to fight, and the battle was merely a wild struggle for life.

Washington was above all things a soldier, and his heart was always with his armies whenever he had one in the field. In this case particularly he hoped much, for he looked to this powerful expedition to settle the Indian troubles for a time, and give room for that great western movement which always was in his thoughts. He therefore awaited reports from St. Clair with keen anxiety, but in this case the ill tidings did not attain their proverbial speed. The battle was fought on November 4, and it was not until the close of a December day that the officer carrying dispatches from the frontier reached Philadelphia. He rode at once to the President's house, and Washington was called

out from dinner, where he had company. He remained away some time, and on returning to the table said nothing as to what he had heard, talked with every one at Mrs. Washington's reception afterwards, and gave no sign. Through all the weary evening he was as calm and courteous as ever. When the last guest had gone he walked up and down the room for a few minutes and then suddenly broke out: "It's all over—St. Clair's defeated—routed; the officers nearly all killed, the men by wholesale; the rout complete—too shocking to think of—and a surprise into the bargain." He paused and strode up and down the room; stopped again and burst forth in a torrent of indignant wrath: "Here on this very spot I took leave of him; I wished him success and honor; 'You have your instructions,' I said, 'from the secretary of war; I had a strict eye to them, and will add but one word—Beware of a surprise! I repeat it—*beware of a surprise!* You know how the Indians fight us.' He went off with that as my last solemn warning thrown into his ears. And yet, to suffer that army to be cut to pieces, hacked, butchered, tomahawked, by a surprise, the very thing I guarded him against! O God, O God, he's worse than a murderer! How can he answer it to his country! The blood of the slain is upon him, the curse of widows and orphans, the curse of Heaven!"

His secretary was appalled and silent, while Washington again strode fiercely up and down the room. Then he sat down, collected himself, and said, "This must not go beyond this room." Then a long silence. Then, "General St. Clair shall have justice.

I looked hastily through the dispatches, saw the whole disaster, but not all the particulars; I will receive him without displeasure; I will hear him without prejudice; he shall have full justice." The description of this scene by an eye-witness has been in print for many years, and yet we find people who say that Washington was cold of heart and lacking in human sympathy. What could be more intensely human than this? What a warm heart is here, and what a lightning glimpse of a passionate nature bursting through silence into burning speech! Then comes the iron will which has mastered all the problems of his life. "He shall have full justice;" and St. Clair had justice. He had been an unfortunate choice, but as a Revolutionary soldier and governor of the Northwest Territory his selection had been natural. He had never been a successful general, for it was not in him to be so. Something he lacked, energy, decision, foresight, it matters not what. But at least he was brave. Broken by sickness, he had displayed the utmost personal courage on that stricken field; and for this Washington would always forgive much. He received the unfortunate general kindly. He could not order a court martial, for there were no officers of sufficient rank to form one; but he gave St. Clair every opportunity for vindication, and a committee of Congress investigated the campaign and exculpated the leader. His personal bravery saved him and his reputation, but nothing can alter the fact that the surprise was unpardonable and the disaster awful.

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