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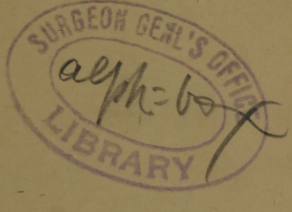
An eulogy on
Lafayette xxxxxx



AN EULOGY

ON

LAFAYETTE,

DELIVERED

IN BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA,

ON THE

NINTH OF MAY, 1835,

AT THE REQUEST OF

THE CITIZENS AND STUDENTS.

BY ANDREW WYLIE, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF INDIANA COLLEGE.

CINCINNATI:

TAYLOR AND TRACY.

1835.

CINCINNATI:
PRINTED BY F. S. BENTON.

CORRESPONDENCE.

PRESIDENT WYLIE:

SIR,—At a meeting of the citizens of Bloomington and students of Indiana college, on Saturday, the sixteenth instant, the undersigned were appointed a committee, to request for publication, a copy of an address delivered by yourself, a week previously, on the life and character of General Gilbert Mortier de Lafayette. A compliance with this request will be highly gratifying to our citizens, and to none more so than

Your obedient humble servants,

DAVID H. MAXWELL,
BEAUMONT PARKS,
PARIS C. DUNNING,
JOSEPH G. McPHEETERS,
} *Committee.*

BLOOMINGTON, *May 18th*, 1835.

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MESSRS. D. H. MAXWELL, BEAUMONT PARKS, PARIS C. DUNNING, and JOSEPH G. McPHEETERS:

GENTLEMEN,—A copy of the address requested for publication, in your note of this morning, is at your disposal. A desire to cherish the remembrance of one to whom our country and the world are so deeply indebted, and a wish to comply with your request, must be my apology for submitting to public inspection a performance so far below the merits of the subject whom it presumes to celebrate.

With due sense of that kind feeling to which, rather than the merits of the address, I know, I am indebted for your favorable opinion of it,

I remain, gentlemen, your humble servant,

ANDREW WYLIE.

AN EULOGY

ON

LAFAYETTE.

Friends and Fellow-Citizens,

The virtues of Lafayette deserve to be celebrated. His sacrifices and services in the cause of civil liberty, merit the gratitude of all the friends of the rights of man, in both hemispheres. By the citizens of these United States especially, they should be held in everlasting remembrance. Every individual of our whole republic, however obscure may be his condition in life, should be again and again reminded of the debt of gratitude which we all owe to the great and good Lafayette. The rising generation should be taught to love and revere the name, and commemorate the virtues of their country's benefactor. His bright example should be ever before their eyes. To show to what a pitch of exalted excellence our nature may be elevated, when its powers are animated by generous sentiments, and devoted to honorable ends, a specimen should be shown in the life of Lafayette, to the delight and admiration of all future ages. Such a specimen is, indeed, of rare occurrence in the annals of mankind. The conjuncture of trying circumstances which formed the occasion of its display, was itself a rare phenomenon; and it ought not to pass over without making such use of it as wisdom dictates. Like the conjunctions of the heavenly bodies, the occasion may furnish an opportunity for such observations as may give to mankind a more perfect insight into that sublime economy which governs their destinies. Sure I am, that, if any one can contemplate such a character of singular and exalted excel-

lence as the one we are now called upon to celebrate, without being made better by it—without being refreshed and exhilarated by the comtemplation of so many, and such noble virtues; without finding himself silently and pleasantly beguiled into better and higher thoughts of the human species and their destiny; without feeling, as it were, exalted by the company and presence of such a man; without becoming more reconciled to the world, brightened as it has been by a new lustre; without, in fine, having his own virtue inspired with new vigor, by having brought in contact with him, an object so worthy of love and admiration—the fault must be his own.

I feel deeply sensible, fellow-citizens, how inadequate I am to the present occasion. Since the appearance of the oration of our distinguished fellow-citizen, John Quincy Adams, on the life and character of Lafayette, this feeling has been greatly increased, since that has left me no hope of saying any thing on the subject which has not already been better said. I, indeed, most sincerely regret that I suffered myself to be committed on the subject. It might have been better honored by another. But it is too late for regret. You know the press of duties that are constantly upon me, and which have been peculiarly heavy since I came under the engagement which I have now come before you to discharge. Let this pass, with your kind indulgence, for my apology, in part, for the very imperfect manner of discharging it.

In the remarks which are to follow, I shall not attempt to trace in detail the events which distinguished the career of our departed friend and benefactor. This has been done by an abler hand. To sketch, imperfectly, a few only of the traits which adorned his character, without entering at all into the particulars of his biography, is all that I shall even attempt. In doing this, I shall, however, pay some regard to the order of events.

The occasion which first brought Lafayette upon the stage of public action, and in the view of the world, was furnished by one of the earliest scenes of our revolution. By the glorious consequences which followed, it has since challenged and obtained the admiration of the world. But at the time when

it attracted the eye and fired the heart of Lafayette, there was nothing great or brilliant about it. A colony had risen in arms against the parent country. They were a handful of men, scattered over the half-cultivated districts of an ample territory, which, with hard and persevering toil, amidst perils and sufferings the most appalling, they had begun to reclaim from the wilds of nature and the dominion of savage beasts, and more savage men. To appearance, their attempt would have been considered, and by all ordinary observers was actually considered, as wild in its origin as it was likely to prove abortive in its issue. Of the elements of war, except prudent heads, stout hearts, and sinews hardened by toil, they had none. The mother country, now their implacable enemy, wielded a power more formidable than that of any other single nation on the globe, and which, in a recent contest, had come off proudly victorious over two great nations combined. To the ruling powers of Europe, the cause of the colonists was in itself odious, as well as contemptible. It was the cause of subjects rebelling against legitimate authority; of the weak inconsiderately rising against the mighty; of upstart pretension presuming to interrogate privileged prescription on his right to rule. Lafayette belonged, by birth, to that class of men with whom these views and feelings were habitual and familiar—handed down from age to age. Born a peer of the realm of France, and of one of its most distinguished families, and heir to a princely inheritance, he was secluded by fortune from all participation in the feelings and experiences of that part of society whose only concern with government, according to the received doctrine, was to hear and to obey; to suffer and be silent. To this class we belonged; a class, which in France, is known by an epithet too opprobrious to be even translated into our language. We were, besides, foreigners to Frenchmen. A vast ocean rolled between us. More still: we were of a race between whom and them war had raged from age to age, and from century to century, almost without cessation or respite, or even truce. Their armies and ours had often met in deadly conflict on this very soil. Besides, in religion, manners, language, temper, every thing, we were a

different people. Like oil and water, our bloods would not commingle.

Besides all this, at the time to which I refer, Lafayette was in the bloom of youth; his affections to home, kindred and country increased and strengthened by the marriage tie, contracted recently with a young lady in rank, fortune and accomplishments, entirely worthy of his choice. Add to all these considerations, the fact, that the government of France was apprized of Lafayette's intentions in coming to our aid—for, the slightest movement of a person so conspicuous could not escape the jealous eye of power—and had taken measures to prevent their execution. Yet, bound as he was by so many silken bonds, fascinated by so many enchantments, and blessed, substantially blessed, with every thing which could render home delightful—so powerful was the impulse which moved his generous nature, that from the first moment when he heard the story of our cause, our wrongs and our magnanimous appeal for redress 'to arms and to the God of hosts,' he could not rest: the call of humanity oppressed, and of weakness and innocence likely to be overpowered and borne down by the ruthless hand of power, tingled in his ears like the notes of the war trumpet, and he broke away from all—wife, friends, country, rank, wealth, honor, life itself: every thing he put in jeopardy; and eluding the vigilance of his government, he got ready a vessel in one of the ports of Spain, from which he set sail, and on the twenty-fifth of April, in the year seventeen hundred and seventy-seven, he arrived safe in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina.

Such, fellow-citizens, is a brief recital of the first decisive movement made by the youthful hero in our behalf. What were his motives? This is a question which cannot always be answered with certainty. Most of human actions result from different inducements united, and tending to the same point—some more, some less pure. But there are cases wherein all ignoble influences lead in one direction; and but the single motive of the great, the good, the noble points in the opposite direction. It was clearly so here. Lafayette would have been just; he might have been virtuous; he might

have been generous and brave, had he remained in France: but he would not have raised his name for these virtues, above the level of ordinary attainment. But the course he actually adopted and pursued, showed him to be possessed of virtue of no ordinary grade, and placed his name on high amongst the brightest constellations in the firmament of the world's history, where it shall remain, as long as time endures, a luminary of the first magnitude, shedding its beams of glory on the most distant ages and nations. Others have nobly done and nobly suffered in the cabinet and in the field, for their own country. Some have even been moved by sympathy for their brethren of the human family, suffering in foreign lands, and have generously ventured life and fortune in their behalf. To Lafayette belongs the peculiar glory of devoting himself to the deliverance from foreign domination, of a people and a country to whom he was not only bound by no ties of interest or obligation, but who were not, as yet, acknowledged as a nation, but stigmatized as a confederacy of traitors and rebels, and of putting to hazard in their cause the splendor of youth, rank and affluence, the favor of his government, and the attractions of power. Magnanimous philanthropist! our warmest expressions of admiration fall below thy praise!

If envy itself could fix upon a circumstance that might be considered, in the smallest degree, derogatory from the merit of so much generosity, a spot in a disk of such overpowering brightness—that circumstance, that spot, it may be supposed, would be found in the fact, that Lafayette belonged to that class of the French people, with whom the virtues of chivalry might almost be considered as hereditary, and whose rank in society would suffer degradation in the person of that individual, belonging to it by birth, who should fail to illustrate the line of his genealogy, by new displays of virtue added to its hereditary glory. And since their rank and wealth gave them the power of distinguishing themselves by generous deeds, and as such deeds passed with them as no more than the ordinary doings of their every-day life, it may be imagined that Lafayette, in espousing our cause, was moved, not chiefly, or, at least, solely, by moral considerations, but by the impulses of

that spirit of chivalry, and thirst for fame and deeds of arms, which, from time immemorial, had distinguished the noblesse of France, and may be considered as resulting from the genius of the feudal systems of Europe, to whose nobility it belongs, as one of the prerogatives of their rank, as well as a permanent trait in their character, to seek the post of danger in the front ranks of war.

All that is contained in this suggestion, may be frankly granted, without detracting in the slightest degree from the merit of Lafayette. Not only so, but if properly considered, it will redound to his glory.

We, indeed, are strongly prejudiced against a class of men of whom so much evil has been said, and whose hereditary prerogatives of wealth and power are so foreign from the genius of our free institutions, and so revolting to our generous feelings of republican equality. Yet, with all the evils of hereditary greatness, it is not without strong tendencies of an opposite character. An exalted grade in society more exposes the one who occupies it, to the observation of the world, and consequently renders him more sensible to considerations of reputation and honor. The stock of glory derived from ancestors, as it is committed, successively, to the keeping of each heir to the distinctions of noble birth, must be preserved with a care and fidelity becoming the depositary of such a trust. Disgrace falls with blasting effect upon the miscreant who suffers himself to forget from what lineage he derives his origin and titles of respectability. But if the peer is necessarily subjected to the salutary influence of such considerations as these, let it not be overlooked, on the other hand, that he is exposed to temptations which the frailty of our nature finds it difficult to resist. His wealth lays open before him the avenues of refined sensuality. His condition exempts him from toil and trouble, and exposes him, on the one hand, to the calls of lawless ambition; on the other, to the solicitations of inglorious ease; into the one or the other of which, he will be in danger of falling, according as his constitutional temperament may be inclined. A circle of flatterers continually surround him, eager to offer incense to his vanity, and

to basely cater to his appetites. When all these corrupting influences are duly considered, we should perhaps be rather surprized, that the ranks of the nobly born should have furnished instances of men whose virtues were no less exalted than their condition, than that they should have abounded in characters who have degraded themselves below the level of ordinary insignificance, or sunk below the depths of vulgar baseness. That the descendants of the ancient nobility of France, at the period to which our remarks refer, were not preeminent for those virtues which are peculiarly appropriate to their order, is undeniable. To philanthropy, to a disinterested and generous zeal for the rights and liberties of man, they made, in general, no pretensions. These considerations serve to *enhance* the merit of Lafayette; as they show, that, in his zeal for liberty, and his sympathy for the rights of men belonging neither to his own order nor even to his own nation, he has the praise of being not only first among his peers, but singular among them. And if the weight of influence and wealth, which Lafayette brought with him to our cause, be ascribed wholly, and the spirit of chivalrous enterprise which actuated him, be ascribed, in part, to his condition and rank; still, the merit of directing these powers and this fiery spirit into a worthy channel, is due entirely to the man. And this merit is the greater, because all selfish considerations lead in a direction opposite to the course which he adopted. Had not Lafayette been a peer of France, his interposition at the critical moment would have been of no avail; had not the peer of France been Lafayette, he would not have interposed at all.

In the same point of light, it is proper to consider the pecuniary aid so opportunely rendered by Lafayette to our country during the struggle for independence. The funds he expended in furnishing the vessel which first transported him to our shores, in raising and equipping for service an entire regiment in the early part of the war, and of procuring the necessary supplies for the destitute and dispirited troops that followed his standard in Virginia, during the campaign of 1781, at a time when Lord Cornwallis, with an overwhelming force

was spreading devastation and terror through the South, were the avails, it is true, of a princely estate, which, without any merit on his part, had fallen to his inheritance. But shall the amount and efficiency of services so promptly rendered, detract from the praises of him who rendered them? Absurd idea! Who does not know, that it does not belong to rank and affluence to generate liberality and generosity? Their tendency is to produce selfishness and avarice. Men are generally found to be tenacious of their possessions, and even anxious to extend them, in proportion to their amount. High rank loves to set itself off in a style of corresponding magnificence, and to dazzle the eye of vulgar admiration, by a vainglorious display of pomp and equipage. Immense revenues are requisite to keep up the show and parade of fetes and balls and entertainments, with a dissolute retinue of liveried servants, retainers, dependents and flatterers, which are usually thought necessary to compose the state of pampered greatness. Hence it is, that profligacy and rapacity usually go together, qualities which, generally speaking, have been quite as conspicuous as generosity and beneficence in the lives and conduct of the nobility of Europe. Be it remembered, that Lafayette, though he could vie with the proudest of his compeers in wealth, and all those gaudy distinctions which gratify the taste, and pamper the pride of vulgar greatness, chose rather to expend his treasures in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and arming and cheering the dispirited and feeble bands of patriot militia, who were fighting the battles of an oppressed and wasted country. This was true glory.

But this was not all. Though it is enough to raise him above the grade of ordinary merit, and far more than enough to give him preeminence above his fellows in rank and station, and even above what the majority of them could adequately conceive, yet it is but the beginning of the praise of Lafayette. For, he not only expended his wealth, as I have said, in relieving the necessities and encouraging the hearts of the destitute and half-famished patriots of our revolution, but he shared their toils, their privations and their dangers, fought

a volunteer in their ranks, and shed his blood in their defence. His money he might have contributed to their relief, though he had remained at home in the quietude of La Grange, and the bosom of his family. But such a course did not satisfy his generous zeal. He knew that his presence *here*, in the midst of the scene of conflict, was needed, to inspire fresh vigor into the languishing cause of liberty, and that his personal efforts in the field of battle would strike terror into the ranks of her enemies, and do something effectual towards diminishing their numbers, and disappointing their hopes. Or, if he should fail in this, he knew—for he had sounded the depths of his resolution—his was no inconsiderate undertaking—it is impossible that such a man should have adopted the choice he did, without deliberately weighing alternatives—he knew he could die—die by the fire, or the bayonet of the foe—die, far from his country and his home, and leave his lifeless body in a foreign field, to be trampled by the hoofs of insulting cavalry; and his name to be scoffed at by the minions of arbitrary power.

The space which I have prescribed for these remarks leave room for but little to be said as to the military virtues of Lafayette. These have attracted the less notice, because they are surrounded, if not eclipsed, by other shining qualities in a character which is all over luminous. In this respect he resembles our own Washington, who though justly pronounced 'first in war,' has been on this account the less admired, because he was also 'first in peace.' But if Lafayette were not entitled to our highest veneration for the other great qualities which adorn his character, his military talents and conduct alone, employed as they always were on the side of justice and humanity, would entitle him to a conspicuous place among the names of those who have been distinguished in war. During the war for independence, the superiority in numerical force and all the various resources subsidiary to war, especially in that skill and patient endurance which veteran troops necessarily possess over militia, and in the many advantages resulting from the possession, on our coast, of a numerous and well-appointed navy, giving them the command

of all our bays and inlets, belonged to the enemy. The policy on our part, was, whenever it was possible, to avoid pitched battles; and to harass and weaken the enemy by minor operations. In such a state of things, true military talent will as often display itself in retreating as in fighting. In both these respects Lafayette, during the five years which he spent in arms in our cause, was eminently distinguished. The retreats of Napoleon, unquestionably the first name on the scroll of military fame, were always disastrous. Lafayette always effected his retreat in safety and good order. In the attack he was prompt, resolute and daring. I cannot enter into a detail of historical facts to illustrate the truth of these remarks. Let the retreat of our troops after the defeat at Brandywine, which he conducted so ably, although suffering from a severe wound received at the time from a musket ball; and that series of skilful movements in Virginia during the campaign of '81, by which he outmanœuvred and baffled the veteran Cornwallis, who said 'the boy could not escape him'—let these serve, by way of specimen, to justify the first of the foregoing remarks. Let his intrepid boldness and good conduct at Monmouth, and in various other actions throughout the war, especially in heading one of the divisions of the army which took by storm the fortified camp of Cornwallis at Yorktown, justify the second.

It is sufficient for our present purpose, and sufficient for the military reputation of Lafayette, to say, that during the five years' service, in which the good fortune of our rising country and his own choice employed him in arms, he was always found equal to the occasion; that he never incurred the imputation of having neglected his duty, or committed an oversight; that he always proved himself, whether acting as the assailant or on the defensive, superior to the enemy; and that to the end of his brilliant career, he continued to enjoy the increasing confidence of his commander-in-chief.

A circumstance intimately connected with that part of the life of Lafayette to which the foregoing remarks are particularly intended to apply, in this place specially demands our notice, as it is calculated to give us additional insight into his

character, and new cause of admiration for his virtues. At the commencement of our struggle for independence, the king of France, and those who with him directed the councils of the nation, would not by any act, or even by any connivance, commit themselves to our cause. We were rebels and unfriended. They would not provoke the jealousy of the mother country by any thing which might look like partiality to our interests. Consequently Lafayette, as we have before seen, incurred the displeasure of his government by embarking for our shores in 1777. But in the course of that year, the rebel colonies, through the blessing of Heaven in calling men of spirit and foresight to take the lead in our affairs, had been transformed into the United States, *declared* free and independent. And the capture of Burgoyne and his army at Saratoga, an event which took place near the close of the year, stamped the declaration with the promise of fulfilment. What effect these things produced upon the court of Versailles we may easily imagine. A treaty of commerce with the United States and France followed in February of the ensuing year, soon after the news of the brilliant affair of Saratoga reached the hitherto dull ears of Lewis and his court; and this treaty of commerce eventuated in a treaty of defensive alliance in war. The sharp twang of yankee rifles, we see, was prompt and effectual in the drowsy ear of majesty, and added persuasive force to the eloquence of Silas Deane and Benjamin Franklin. Now mark the conduct of Lafayette, and see how, in the high character of the philanthropist and the friend of liberty, in which hitherto we have viewed him, there shine forth the virtues of the patriot and the milder lustre of the domestic affections. He seizes the first bright interval, which the events just noticed had given to our affairs, and obtains leave of congress to return to France, now, in consequence of her alliance with us, involved in war, urged by a sense of his duty (I use his own words) as well as a love of his country, to present himself before the king that he might know in what manner he should think proper to employ his services. Enthusiasm and even fanaticism may sometimes, in their wild and irregular impulses, propel a man for awhile along the path of noble

actions. But in the conduct which originates in these vagaries of a heated imagination, we never see that beautiful proportion, that steady consistency, that nicely adjusted propriety which is the result of virtuous principle. One duty will be neglected, and one interest sacrificed for the sake of another. Sometimes the most flagrant enormities will be perpetrated under the imposing sanction of the one engrossing passion, which, under the guise of some sacred name, has taken exclusive possession of the soul. Such was not the character of the man whom we are contemplating. He was no weak enthusiast, whom some freak of fancy had captivated and impelled into the society of men embarked in a noble enterprise, no wayward renegado, who, while assisting in the deliverance of a people from oppression on one continent, could forget that he had on another, a country, a home and a government, to which his affections and allegiance were primarily due. The claims of country and kindred, as they are nearer, so in general they should be more strongly felt, than those which lie remote in the wider circle of our relations to the human race. But when suffering, which itself imposes an obligation on foreign aid, is added to the latter, an exigency is created which inverts this order, and while it lasts gives to them the precedence before the former. Lafayette acted on this maxim. He gave to our cause the weight of his wealth, name and personal efforts, when that cause was at its utmost need; but when he saw it begin to preponderate, he obeyed the voice of nature and duty and returned to his native country. But during the year which he spent there he was still assiduous and untiring in his zeal for our cause. After his return to the scenes of war in 1780, he continued, as is well known, to display the same gallantry and good conduct for which he had been before distinguished, till the last campaign of the revolution was closed by the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, his bravery on that occasion adding new lustre to his brilliant career. It remains that we view the character of Lafayette as it was displayed in the scenes of that revolution in the government of his own country, which followed so closely the one which he had exerted so great an influence in bringing to a successful and glorious issue in ours.

The view which I shall endeavor, as briefly as possible, to present to you, of the part acted by Lafayette in the course of that wonderful, and in some respects atrocious revolution, is one which, I must confess, has left upon my own mind a deeper impression and a higher admiration both of his talents and virtues, than have resulted from that portion of his history which has just passed swiftly under review; rich though it is, in the display of generosity, humanity, patriotism, philanthropy and military virtue. In this I may be singular, but my honest conviction is, that the theatre, emphatically *the theatre* of Lafayette's greatest glory, is the French revolution. Here he will, in the eye of posterity, stand in the most amiable as well as the most commanding attitude. I speak of him in a moral, not in a political sense. In this last respect another figure will seem more gigantic than his. But, as seen through the pure medium of reason and truth, Napoleon will bear no more proportion to Lafayette than a pigmy to a colossus.

Even a summary of the causes which lead to the French revolution cannot now be given. Did even time permit, the speaker would hardly presume to undertake such a task. In order to gain such a view of the person and position of Lafayette as may answer our purpose at present, it will be only necessary to glance at the state of things in France at the time when Lafayette was placed at the head of the militia, or as they were called, the national guards of that kingdom.

The first impulse of the revolution gave rise to the assembly of notables, composed of men distinguished for their rank and wealth. This assembly determined on two important measures, which had a powerful influence in directing the course of events. The first was, that a convocation of the states general should be called: and the second settled the ratio of representation which should be adopted by the people in choosing delegates to compose that body; by which it was provided, that the delegation from the tiers etât should equal, in point of numbers, the representatives of the other two estates of the kingdom: the nobility and clergy. Thus was composed that famous assembly, which, among other matters decisive in their character and consequences, finally

matured and adopted the new constitution, by which France in future was to be governed. The state of parties at this crisis, for it was the crisis of the revolution, stood thus. First, there was the party of the royalists, who were in favor of the government as it formerly existed, and consequently of a counter revolution. Second, the constitutionalists, so called because they were in favor of the new constitution; a constitution based on the rights of man and embracing all the essentials of civil liberty, but retaining, under the name of a king, Louis the reigning monarch, but shorn of his regal power, and swaying instead of his broken sceptre, an executive influence really less important than that which the constitution of the United States confers on our chief magistrate. Third, the republicans. These were for abolishing monarchy entirely with all its appendages, root and branch, leaving not a vestige of the ancient form of government. Fourth, the jacobins, who seemed to have no ultimate or well-defined object in view. They were for the most part men daring and reckless in character, bankrupt in fame and fortune, and who, as they had nothing to lose, looked to the scenes of confusion which attended the revolution and in which they were the principal actors, for the means of supporting their profligacy and gratifying their thirst for rapine and blood. Besides these parties there lurked through France, and especially in the alleys and fauxbourgs of its capital, the partisans of the faction of the Duke of Orleans. These were mostly assassins, gamblers, rakes and desperadoes of all sorts, whom that infamous prince had kept in pay, as the ready and willing instruments of his horrible purposes. Lafayette attached himself to the second of these parties, the constitutionalists, of which indeed he was the leader; and in this capacity he continued to act with firmness and discretion, till the tumultuous violence of the revolution dissolved the constitution, and involved the nation in anarchy; from which, after passing through the unparalleled atrocities of the reign of terror, it was rescued, at length, by the strong hand of a military despotism, seizing it with a grasp so suddenly and powerfully compressive, that the hydra monster which had astonished and terrified the nations of the

earth with its frightful bulk and hideous hissings, and maddened the multitude everywhere with its poisonous breath, expired instantly and without a struggle. Liberty and the constitution had been destroyed before, and Lafayette their friend, and for the time, unsuccessful champion, had been, at the same time, forced to seek safety in foreign lands.

To us, in whose conceptions a republican form of government is identified with liberty, and whose successful experience, for now half a century, has tested its superior excellence, the question will naturally occur, why did not Lafayette attach himself to the republican party in France, rather than to that of the constitutionalists?

Our ignorance of the precise state of things, as they were when Lafayette declared himself, disqualifies us from deciding too peremptorily on the propriety of his choice; but from all that we know, and especially from the light which subsequent events have cast on the subject, we may safely affirm that the considerations which determined his choice in this matter, and the course of conduct to which it lead, are the very things which give to his character the impress of true greatness; as they show not only the goodness of heart and the genuineness of his patriotism, but his firmness and force of principle—his wisdom, fortitude, and magnanimity. There is no one point perhaps in which we are more liable to mistake in our opinions of men than in regard to what is called decision of character. Where parties are violent, he generally gets the praise of decision of character, who goes to the furthest extreme of the party to which he is attached. In vulgar apprehensions, violence is always considered a proof of strength; and moderation an object of scorn, because it is taken for an evidence of weakness or indecision. But, is there no way of exhibiting strength of character, but by running to the poles? Is a rock less a rock, because at the equator? When the storm of party violence rages, is it the chaff which rests in a middle position? Is it the man of weak mind, or weak principles, who exposes himself to the cross fire of poltrons, lurking behind the hedgerows of bigotry and fanaticism, on the extreme right or left, during scenes of civil or

religious discord? The man who does not think for himself, and who, indeed, all things considered, is least likely to err in not thinking for himself, of course, goes with a leader. The timid take shelter behind the shield of the brave. The selfish go where there is the greatest show of numbers and strength. All these herd with a party, and go to extremes. The slow, from indecision; the temporizing, from interest, may, at the same time, with the man of integrity and firmness occupy an intermediate position. But mark the difference: the former do not declare themselves till the issue seems no longer doubtful; the latter takes his position while difficulty and danger surround it. Besides, we are deceived by names. When a party changes ground, it still retains the name; and often denounces those who now stand where once it stood.

The party in France calling themselves republicans, were not the same in character and views with those so denominated here. They were, as a party, violent, visionary, extravagant in their notions, and too little under the influence of justice and humanity. They were, in short, but jacobins of a lighter complexion. Between Regniaud and Robespierre; Lameth and Danton; Petion and Marat, the difference was only specific. They were of the same genus—the same brotherhood. Both parties, in fact, acted in concert at first. Both tampered with the mob. Lafayette was in favor of allowing to the people, as their just right, the direction of government affairs, through the channels of constituted authority, the action of a free press, and the operation of the representative principle. But, on all occasions, he exerted himself to repress every attempt by demagogues to impede, or accelerate, or affect in any way the steady and calm operation of the constitution and laws, by the demonstration of insurgent violence. He studied and pursued, in short, the real and permanent good of his country, observing, with the utmost caution, the narrow path which separates liberty from licentiousness. In such times, beset as he was, on the one hand by the jealousy of the king—'*vultus instantis tyranni*'—and on the other by the inconsiderate impetuosity of a people unaccustomed to liberty, and goaded to phrenzy by unprin-

cipled agitators—'*civium ardor prava jubentium*'—to have attempted such a course, was proof enough of the strength and depth of his moral courage; to have succeeded in it, as he ultimately did, is sufficient evidence of his capacity.

Lafayette possessed ample means of correct information as to the spirit and ultimate views of the different parties in the state. It could not, therefore, have escaped his penetration, that the leaders of the jacobins, who, on account of the complete organization of the affiliated societies, extending throughout the realm, as well as by reason of the numbers and character of those under their influence, were the most formidable, meditated not only the overthrow of the existing government and dynasty, but proscription, confiscation, exile and massacre, to all who should offer resistance to their absurd and impractical design of reducing every thing to a perfect equality. He felt, therefore, under the strongest obligations, from motives of patriotism as well as humanity, to do every thing in his power to prevent these violent and bloody measures. It was not the fault of Louis XVI, that he had the misfortune to be born of a race of kings, who by the will of the nation had for centuries filled the throne of France, nor that he should have been destined to reign in a period so dark and portentous. The vices of the government belonged to the system, and not to the man who, unfortunately for himself, was placed at its head. For Louis, in temper and in the tone of his administration, was one of the mildest and most lenient of rulers. Why, then, in a change which was to bring so many advantages to the nation at large, should it be thought necessary to involve him and his family in ruin? Why should the first offering to be presented by the French nation, in their newly built temple of liberty, be in the form of a libation composed of the blood of the innocent?

Besides, it is doubtful whether, supposing the jacobins possessed of skill sufficient, with all the aid to be derived from such a bloody offering, to construct a republic, France contained the proper materials requisite for its construction. Republican simplicity does not suit the French taste. At the time of the revolution, a corrupt system of religion had

debauched the minds of the common people; and a species of atheism, the result of this, had deplorably weakened all sense of moral obligation in the higher orders. The plenary power of the pope, in spirituals, was an article of their creed: that man is a machine, obedient to the laws of *necessity*, was a dogma of their philosophy. The actual state of public morals was such as might be expected from such principles—but I shall spare you and myself the pain of a recital. Republican liberty cannot exist where there is so much corruption. In densely peopled countries, such as was France at the time of which we speak, and such as it is now, a degree of energy, scarcely compatible with liberty, such as republics only can fully enjoy, is necessary for the maintenance of order and public tranquility.

Besides all this, the relative state of France, with respect to the adjoining kingdoms of Europe, was to be taken into view. The Bourbon dynasty had, on each of the thrones of these kingdoms, except that of Great Britain, either an ally or a prince of its blood. Violence done to the reigning family in France, would be likely to involve it in war with these kingdoms, if not with the whole of Europe. Every body in France expected this. The jacobins distinctly foresaw it. I call the party by this name, because they were in fact the only efficient party, except the royalists, (and *they* were weakened by emigration and massacre) which opposed Lafayette and the constitution. The republicans, or girondists, could do nothing without their concurrence. The jacobins, I say, distinctly foresaw the coming storm which threatened them from abroad. And, to provide for it, they trusted to a scheme, which shows of what stuff they were composed. Their scheme was, by means of their emissaries and publications, and the agency of secret societies, to foment and organize rebellion against every government of Europe, in the expectation, that being severally engaged in quelling insurrection at home, they would not have the means of molesting *them* in their attempts to *regenerate* France—for this was their favorite phrase—and the world—a work to be performed by the pistol and dagger of the sansculotte, the pike and musket of

the gens d'armes, their own favorite instrument of persuasion, the guillotine, and other such means of reformation. Many philosophers, men of great name—for the bigoted theorist, as well as the stupidly ignorant, can believe any thing—thought this a plausible scheme. To the honor of Lafayette's philosophy, he did not. His practical habits, if nothing else, (joined to his native goodness) would have kept him from such extravagance. There is, as Burke has well said, a wisdom of the heart—a better guide than that of the head—which is the crowning excellence in the character of Lafayette. Through the sanguinary scenes of a revolution, characterized throughout by party violence and deeds of atrocity, he passed with skirts unstained with innocent blood. Nor would he suffer his honor to be sullied by connexion with any—whether party or individuals—who had polluted themselves by the blood of their fellow-citizens.

The constitutionalists, as a party, were dissolved by the flight of Lafayette. Soon after this event was publicly known, the duke of Orleans returned from his exile in England—that citizen, Egalité, (Equality!) who, it is agreed on all hands, was the basest man in these times, when ordinary villany might have been esteemed a virtue. This man's return was an omen of direful presage to France; and I mention it here with the flight of Lafayette, and the fall of his party, as the connexion of these events serves to show in what light the character of the latter stood in the view of all parties at the time. The most effective guardian of the public weal had been compelled to fly; the spirits of the friends of constitutional liberty and social order sank at once; and the dogs and vultures, who for awhile had been held in abeyance, returned, with sharpened appetite, to scenes of anticipated carnage.

Whether his flight from France was an act entirely worthy of Lafayette, may perhaps admit of some slight degree of doubt. It is a question, which, had we the time, we have not now the light necessary to solve. All that we know compel us to justify, if not to commend, the course he adopted. Indeed, he had scarcely another alternative left, unless, to be sure, he chose to perish, a useless death, by the hand of an assassin.

On the 20th of June, 1792, he was engaged, on the frontiers of France, in fighting the allied forces of Austria and Prussia, who had invaded the country, with the view—instigated as they were by emigrants of the royal party, and their own fears of revolution—to restore Louis, by force of arms, to the possession of those dangerous powers, of which, by the new constitution, he had been deprived. On the same day, the mob of Paris, amounting to fifty thousand men, paraded the streets, broke into the hall of the national assembly, with arms in their hands, and thence proceeded to the palace of the Tuilleries, where they perpetrated all manner of outrage short of actual murder. Lafayette, in company with a few officers of his staff, hastened to restore order to Paris, which having done, he returned to the army. 'The poor people—the virtuous people,' as Robespierre was wont to call the rabble of Paris, had been prevented from accomplishing their violent purposes, and Lafayette, who had stood firm for the constitution and social order, in opposition to their sanguinary tumults, was secretly, by their leaders and instigators, devoted to destruction. An impeachment was urged against him in the assembly by these men—selfstyled republicans. But his friends were firm, and it did not pass into a decree. With the mob, their attempts were not so easily defeated. A mob accordingly was raised on the famous 10th of August. The issue of this decisive movement was, that the commander of the militia of Paris, and hundreds besides, were assassinated; the Swiss guards, the body guard of the king, publicly massacred, and the king and royal family imprisoned, and ultimately, with the exception of a young female, the whole of them—king, queen, princess Elizabeth, the princess Lamballe, and the dauphin—murdered: the two former, by the guillotine, after undergoing the mockery of a trial; the two princesses, by the pikes of the mob; and the dauphin, a tender youth, by the abuse of an inhuman jailer, acting by direction of the more inhuman assembly. The same mob, which now ruled Paris, the assembly, and France, with despotic sway, proceeded to the halls of the assembly, which they entered, 'band after band,' their faces blackened with powder, their hands and

weapons streaming with blood from the recent slaughter, and demanded—no: *petitioned*—the assembly to abolish the constitution. The petition, offered thus modestly, and by such worthy hands, was *graciously* granted by the assembly, and three of their number were sent in triumph, to exact, in their name, submission to their decrees, from Lafayette and his army. Could Lafayette hesitate a moment, whether to submit to an order requiring him to acknowledge the acts and doings of an assembly, which had, at a blow, demolished the constitution, the fruit of so much labor, and so many patriotic sacrifices; a constitution, which they and he had sworn to support, and which was the only remaining bulwark to protect the liberties and lives of the citizens, from the pikes of confederated ruffians, who had turned murder into a trade, and who expected to support themselves in riot and debauchery, by the price of blood? No: but resolving instantly to organize a force, from the army under his command, sufficient to quell the atrocious banditti of the capital, as soon as he began to sound his troops and their officers on the subject, he found that the jacobins had planted their spies, friends and agents, in the very heart of those companies and battalions, which he esteemed the most faithful, and by this means had brought them over to their interests. In short, the whole army was infected, and as completely under the control of the assembly, as the assembly itself was under the control of the mob, or they under that of their jacobin leaders. Danton, Robespierre and Marat, a triumvirate of fiends, were the absolute rulers of France. For Lafayette, there was little hope of safety except in flight.

In attempting his escape, he fell into the hands of the Austrians, and was subsequently treated as a prisoner of state. During his confinement in a dungeon at Olmutz, where he was treated with unusual rigor, solicitations were urged, with great interest, not only by Washington, and by the friends and family of Lafayette, but even by individuals of high standing in the British government, for his deliverance. But in vain. The emperor of Austria was inexorable; and, in violation of the law of nations, and the rights of humanity, Lafayette

continued to languish in his confinement. Two generous and enterprising individuals, whose names will be repeated with gratitude, whenever the story of Lafayette's sufferings in the cause of rational liberty is rehearsed, resolved to effect his deliverance. The one was a citizen of the United States, Francis Huger; the other a Hanoverian, Erick Bollman; whose nephew was a student in our college, and is now a respected citizen of Bloomington. Their plan was well devised, and partly executed. But, though entitled to the credit of doing whatever prudence, patient perseverance, and boldness could accomplish in their hazardous attempt, they had not the gratification of that complete success which they had fondly expected, and well nigh achieved. Lafayette was pursued, overtaken, and remanded to the walls of his prison; from which at length the victorious sword of Napoleon opened the way to his deliverance. For this deliverance, Lafayette ever after cherished, and on all proper occasions, expressed his gratitude, to the wonderful man who had been, under the auspicies of the directory, the instrument of effecting it. But, though warmly and repeatedly invited to such a course, he never acknowledged the right of Napoleon to rule over France, by consenting to take part in his administration. Thus he afforded a new and almost singular proof of the firmness of his principles, and of the sincerity of that stand in favor of liberty and the rights of man, which he had so early and so nobly taken, and which, through all the labors and vicissitudes of his eventful career, he had so strenuously and zealously maintained.

The rule of the directory was of short duration, and France was hurried rapidly through the eddies of the succeeding consular government, into the vortex of a military despotism, in which the fragments of the old monarchy, the constitutional republic, and the shortlived and illcompacted forms that followed—scarcely deserving the name of government—which had been in quick succession wrecked by the fury of the revolutionary whirlwind, were engulphed together. In the mean time, the public mind in France was seized by a new species of frenzy, produced by the splendid campaigns of

Napoleon. Under the guidance of his daring and fruitful genius, victory followed victory, in such close succession; achievments, before deemed impossible, were performed with such celerity and ease; the power of the great nation, wielded by his hand, discharged its bolts upon the armies and the capitals of the trembling potentates of Europe, with such sure and destructive effect; that the French people began to think themselves omnipotent. Intoxicated with success, and dazzled by false glory, they lost sight of that boasted liberty for which such immense sacrifices had been made, and so much blood had been cruelly spilt. Now, let us contemplate Lafayette. His mind is not carried away by the epidemic delirium. He is not misled by phantoms. His thoughts are still bent on the real interests of his country. Fortune has no power over him. He remains in quietude at La Grange, and comes not out from his retirement to join his voice to the cry of the giddy throng, who are shouting after the gilded car of the fickle goddess; nor will he bow the knee to the proud minion whom she has raised from the dust to trample on the necks of humbled kings, and sport himself with their glittering emblems of power.

A regularly constructed government has been compared to a cone; of which the apex represents the highest constituted authority—the base, the lower orders of the people, and its body the intermediate ranks. If I might speak in language borrowed from such an emblem, I would say that power, during the progress of the French revolution, not only descended rapidly along the cone from the apex to the base, but, as if by reiterated explosions, burst and shivered to atoms each separate section of the cone, which, in its descent it had left behind. First went the hereditary ranks of royalty and nobility; next the limited monarchy of the moderés, (which indeed existed only in design); next the constitutional republic with the king as chief magistrate; next exploded the pure republic of the philosophic girondists, bespattering with their blood and brains not only the streets of Paris but the fields of France. After this nothing remained but the lowest frustrum, and this was soon calcined to ashes by the fires of faction. The structure,

now dissolved to its elements, was rebuilt by the daring genius and mighty hand of the man of destiny. It rose with diminished base but towering height—not a pyramid but an obelisk, its lofty summit terminating in the dominion of one will, and glaring over Europe with the lurid lustre of some angry and portentous meteor, shedding disastrous twilight over half the nations, and with fear of change perplexing monarchs. In the shock of nations, which took place at Leipzig, it fell; and its architect was banished to Elba. After the lapse of one short year, during which the Bourbon dynasty was restored in France, Europe beheld with amazement the prodigious effort of those hundred days, which was made to erect again the fallen fortunes of Napoleon. Waterloo ended it. And the Bourbon dynasty, supported by the force of twelve hundred thousand foreign bayonets, was once more replaced on the throne of France. The spirit of Napoleon, lofty and daring as it was, was quelled and broken. Lafayette, the champion of liberty, stood erect. Against the arbitrary proceedings of the members of the holy alliance in placing Louis the eighteenth on the throne of France, and in the face of their armed force he had made his solemn protest. Now he takes his stand in the chamber of deputies, the only strong hold of liberty which arbitrary power had left in the possession of the people. And when, in 1830, Charles the tenth, by four tyrannical decrees, attempted, as at a blow, to destroy this strong hold, we see this ever-watchful guardian of the people's rights, forgetting the infirmities which age and so many laborious services had brought upon him, girding on his sword with the alacrity of youth—the alacrity which he displayed at Brandywine and Yorktown—and repairing to Paris to resist the tyrant! He puts himself for the last time, at the head of the national guards, whom his presence and voice had, as it were, recalled to life; and thus by his welltimed energy, having brought to a successful issue the glorious revolution of the three days, establishes in France a government, in its essential features the very same with that of the constitution which he had so zealously advocated in the early stages

of the first revolution, and with the dissolution of which he had been compelled to fly from his native country!

The principles of Lafayette were purely republican. In politics he avowed himself of the American school. But he submitted to compromise his principles, both when he advocated and most strenuously supported and defended the government under the constitution in the early periods of the French revolution, and when near the close of his consistent career, he recommended to his countrymen the same form of government as finally settled and established after the three glorious days revolution in 1830—a form of government having an hereditary officer for its supreme executive. This is no derogation from the merit of Lafayette, but the contrary; as it shows that he preferred the enjoyment of a great deal of liberty to having none at all. A bigoted tenacity to abstract principles in matters of expedience—and those pertaining to forms of government, however important, are no more than such—is no mark of wisdom. He who would make a coat on abstract principles, that is, without reference to the shape and size of the wearer, may have the credit of making a very sightly garment. But as, in the language of a shrewd politician of ancient time, that is a well-proportioned garment which is made to fit the wearer, so that is the best form of government which is best suited to the genius and condition of the nation which adopts it, and which possesses the further property of selfadjustment and selfpreservation; like the seamless garment which nature makes for all her children, which expands with their growth, and repairs itself when severed or bruised by violence or accidental injury. A great change must take place in France before she will be prepared to enjoy the benefits of a pure republic—such a change as never was effected, and in the nature of things never can be effected by revolutionary violence. And it may be well for us to bear in mind, that this truth has its counterpart, and that whenever a corresponding change, though in an opposite direction, shall take place in our own character as a people, a republican form of government will not be found the best for these United States. Let the country but revert to gothic super-

stition and gothic manners*—may it never be!—and gothic institutions must, and ought to follow.

As despotism itself is preferable to anarchy, so the tyranny of one will is infinitely more tolerable than that of many. The sultan is immediately responsible to his subjects, the fear of whose cimeters is a check upon the operation of his bow-string. But what resource is left to the oppressed, when the spirit of ignorance and vice has infected with frenzy the minds of a lawless majority? The women and children who were baked in ovens at Pillau; the heaps of dead bodies which choked the Seine and the Loire; the city of Lyons, the second in France, depopulated, and its very houses razed to their foundations; and the capital itself so often the scene of massacre and consternation during the reign of terror, may answer that question. To the immortal honor of Lafayette be it remembered—and surely this is no common praise—that he was almost the only person of note in the entire nation of France, who, throughout the trying scenes of the revolution, pursued a course which was equally opposed to the tyranny of the government and the tyranny of the mob, and who was honored through life with *the hatred* of both.

To conclude, we may safely pronounce Lafayette not only one of the greatest, wisest, and best men that ever lived, but also—though this praise is due rather to Providence than to the man—the most fortunate and happy. The present, indeed, is not a state of retribution: yet, there are periods in the history of this world wherein, even during the lifetime of individuals, moral causes, owing to the quick motion of events, are hastened to their appropriate results. That invisible hand which is upon the machinery of the world then whirls it round with unusual velocity, for the twofold purpose, as it would seem, of shortening to miserable mortals the days of evil, and of exhibiting, on this side the impenetrable veil which hides the great future from our eyes, a specimen of that just retribution which, we may hence the more readily conclude, will

* Note.—'The Catholic Sentinel' speaking of Lafayette, says, 'his memory is abhorred by all good and patriotic Frenchmen, as the *ingrate* betrayer of the heroic Napoleon, and the *parasite* and elevater of the regal poltron, nicknamed the citizen king.'

be found in the end to have marked all the divine dispensation. Never, perhaps, since the world began, was this truth more strikingly demonstrated than in that period through which the life of Lafayette was extended. The sons of violence who, for their brief day, figured amidst the bloody scenes of the revolution, had sown the wind, and they reaped the whirlwind. A horde of infidels, calling themselves republicans, taught the populace of France to renounce their God and make a jest of an hereafter; and by the rabid fury of that very populace, whom their doctrines had converted into wild beasts, they themselves were torn to pieces. The monster Marat was poignarded by a woman. Napoleon took the sword, and by the sword he perished. Toulon saw him first in arms against a portion of his countrymen, goaded by violence into rebellion; and the weapons of assembled Europe struck him down at Waterloo. The same course of retributive justice we may clearly discern—though manifested in a different manner, as his merits were different—in that series of events, which, at last, conducted Lafayette to the consummation of his patriotic wishes and plans. In his youth we see him in this land, a bold adventurer, come to plant the tree of liberty in our soil and to water it with his blood; and when but little past the meridian of life, he returns to witness its majestic growth, refresh himself under its shadow and taste its mellowed fruits. The experiment which he assisted in making in the new world with so much promise of success, he had also repeated in the old. There, by the course he adopted, he was personally beset with the most unheard of difficulties. But it was the only course which offered a rational prospect of freedom and peace to his oppressed and distracted country. For awhile disappointment baffles his efforts. The dungeon of a foreign prison holds his person, while the liberties of his country expire in the talons of a harpy faction. But the drama is not yet closed. The man of destiny mounts the stage which trembles beneath his tread. The prison doors which had confined Lafayette, fly open. But liberty is not restored to France. It lies crushed beneath the throne of the emperor. That throne is demolished. That of the Bourbon rises in its

stead—is removed—rebuilt—again removed, and in the revolution of the three days is demolished—demolished by the hands of Lafayette, and by the same hands a government, securing constitutional liberty to the people, is reared in its stead—a government, in all its essential ingredients, identical with that which he had so zealously labored to establish at an early period of the revolution. His life is prolonged long enough to see its successful operation, and France, under it, contented and happy—but not so long as to see (what would have embittered the close of life had he seen it) the country of his birth and that of his adoption—the two countries rendered, partly by his labors, (one of them *principally* by his labors) the freest and most powerful on earth—and united too by his labors in the bands of mutual friendship and alliance—not so long as to see these countries involved—but here we must stop. The future is unknown—God avert the illomen that flits dimly before our eyes! He dies—full of days and full of honors—with the blessings of the civilized world and the everlasting gratitude of two great nations settled on his memory!

In virtue, usefulness, honor and felicity, what name of mortal man is furnished by the annals of our race, which can vie with the beloved and revered name of Gilbert Motier de Lafayette!