

Resignation of General Washington as President of the
United States of America. — Philadelphia, 5th March 1797.

Yesterday ^{General} Washington voluntarily resigned his
Office of Chief Magistrate of the United States of America;
Mr. Adams was sworn in President as his successor, carry-
ing the Election by a Majority of three Votes over his
opponent, Jefferson. — who, at the same time, took the
oath as Vice President.

On the third of March, — it being the last
day of General Washington's power as President, — he
gave a publick dinner to the officers of State, Foreign
Ministers, principal Senators, & to their respective Ladies.

I had, as usual, the gratification of being handed to
Table & of sitting by the President. — Had I never before
considered the character of Washington, — I should certainly
have joined the general voice, & pronounced him,
greater in this voluntary retreat, & in the resignation
of power over an immense country, — than when,
having by his conduct as a Soldier, been the principal
means of rendering his Country independent, he became
by the universal suffrage of the people, its ruler & director.
I should have repeated with others — Washington is
the first of Men — wise, great & good, whereas he is in
truth & reality — honest, prudent & fortunate, & wonderful
to say almost without ambition: these words are less
dignified but not less strong.

Emperors & Kings are generally born to
exalted Stations, bred up in luxury & fed by flattery.
When Charles the fifth abdicated his Crown it was

as I now
view him

perhaps from ostentation & vanity, possibly from caprice or superstition, - & could he afterwards have ^{reassumed} ~~recalled~~ his power it is likely he had done so. He had been born a Monarch. - Washington, to whose fame every thing conspired, was born a private individual, a needy man, but one period of his life followed the employment of a land surveyor, & this perhaps gave him - or at least increased in early life - a taste for the country. - his business led to long rides, in which he acquired a knowledge of the quality of land & the different modes of farming. - He afterwards became a Soldier - under Great Britain, & studied the profession as one by which he was to gain his bread. Naturally grave & silent, his mode of life had rendered him frugal & temperate. - Vanity in him was a very limited passion, & prudence his striking trait. - Most people say too much. Washington, partly from constitutional reserve, but still more from natural sagacity & careful observation, never fell into this common error. - Nature had been liberal to him. His majestic figure was graced a native unaffected gracefulness of deportment, & dignity of manner, which was rather improved by a liking - I will not say fondness for dress. - To all this was joined, man acquired Heaven knows, a perfect good breeding, & a correct knowledge of even the etiquette of a Court. His graceful figure had rather assisted his command as a General when in the Army - & his dignified manners excited involuntary respect when he appeared as the President of a Great Country. -

His education had been confined, he knew no language but his own, & expressed himself in that, rather forcibly than elegantly. - Though neither a Man of learning, nor of much acquired knowledge, he possessed, not only great

good sense & sound judgement, but was a man of observation
 & of deep reflection. ^{letters} Writing seemed in him a peculiar
 talent. His style was plain correct & nervous. - all manner
 people said that Washington did not write his own
 publick letters, answers to addresses &c. This is not true. - I have
 known him to write in his usual impressive
 manner when no person was near to aid him, &
 what may seem conclusive, he has always written
 better than the gentleman to whom the merit of
 his letters was ascribed.

Character.

Naturally hot-tempered, cold hearted, & quarrelsome, he
 acquired a uniform command over his passions
 on publick occasions, - but in private & particularly
 with his servants, its violence sometimes broke out. His
 countenance was peculiarly pleasant when he laughed,
 which he apparently did with good humour at
 the jests of others, & he told his own occasionally with
 gaiety, but it was the flash of a moment; gaiety
 was not natural to him.

He rose at all seasons early. It was his constant
 practice to reply to every letter he received, whether
 the contents were more or less important, agreeable
 or otherwise. - His first & last pleasure appeared
 to be farming; on that theme he always talked
 freely - being on other topics extremely cautious not to
 commit himself & never spoke on any subject of
 which he was not master.

When I happened, for the first time, to converse
 with Washington upon his determination to resign
 the government of this Country, - I expressed how much
 Mr. Ligonier had wished for his continuance four years
 longer, (being the probable term of our stay) he smiling

asked if I remembered Gil Blas's story of the Archbishop of Grenada. I feared, said he, that the same might happen to me. — About ten days ^{before} his quitting his situation, I congratulated him on his approaching happiness. — Yes, said he, like a child within view of the Holydays, I have counted the Months, then the weeks, & I now reckon the days previous to my release. I observed that his countenance indicated the pleasure to which he looked forward. — you are wrong replied he; — my countenance never yet betrayed my feelings, (an anecdote indeed is told of him, that while in the Army he once bit his lip entirely through to restrain his passion at the conduct of an officer;) & this was the only weak or vain thing I ever heard Washington utter. — for I had myself once witnessed his extreme paleness & agitation while delivering a publick speech, at a moment when he thought his Country ~~likely~~ ^{likely} ~~to be~~ ill used by the French Government.

The World gives General Washington more credit for his retirement from publick life than I am disposed to do. — He had for eight years sacrificed his natural taste, first habits, & early propensities, — I really believe we may truly say — solely to what he thought the good of his Country. — But he was become tired of his situation, fretted by the opposition often made to his measures, & his pride revolted against the ingratitude he experienced, and he was also disgusted by the surreptitious abuse lavished upon him by his political enemies.

Written 1st Month
after —

Mr. Lister & I have repeatedly visited General Washington at his Seat of Mount Vernon, & have always found him improved by retirement. He now converses with more ease & is guarded than when in public life. His hospitality is no way diminished, though the Splendour of his Table is considerably lessened for towards the magnificence with which he lived while President, the allowance of five thousand pounds yearly went but a little way. His private fortune is great, the Lady he married was rich. Mrs. Washington told me herself that the General spent almost his whole income in addition to the ~~profit~~ sum allowed by Government in order to support the rank of first Magistrate of this Country as he thought it ought to be supported.

Washington's fame appears to have been the peculiar care of Fortune. — From the first Soldier in America he became the first Magistrate. He is now the most extensive Farmer — of his great landed property he holds four thousand acres in his own hands — He has five hundred slaves —
~~and is the~~ his negroes.

Philadelphia 29th November 1799

A week or two ago We paid another longer visit to Mount Vernon than we usually do. - Mr. History having asked leave to return to England, we thought it might not be in our power to repeat it.

The General & his amiable Wife received us with much kindness. - The pleasing change we had on former occasions remarked in Washington's manners continued; but I was sorry to observe that a late fit of illness seemed to have somewhat altered his looks. - his figure appeared less & an approaching deafness had a little affected his spirits: - we found him still devoted to his Farm, - & saw with regret that he was also occupied in repairing the family Vault. -

He from time to time attempts to beautify this favourite spot, but he is rather deficient in point of taste. - The new City of Washington likewise shares his attention & care, & he seems to look forward with much pleasure to the removal of the Government thence in eighteenthundred.

At our departure he kissed me, & kindly shaking hands with Mr. History, ordered his Horse & escorted us on to his own boundaries. -

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Philadelphia 29th Nov. 1799.

A week or two ago We paid another & longer visit to Mount-Vernon than we usually do for Mr. Landon having asked leave of the King to return to England We may not have it in our power to repeat it. —

General Washington & his amiable Wife received us with much kindness — The pleasing change in the General's manners which we had remarked since his resigning the Presidency — still continued, but I was sorry to observe that a late fit of illness seemed to have somewhat altered his looks a little. His figure — always noble appeared less & an approaching decrepescence had in some degree affected his spirits.

We found him still devoted to his Farm — & he had of late busied himself in repairing his family Vault — He from time to time attempts to beautify his Seat of Mount-Vernon — though not with much taste.

The City of Washington shares his attention, & she seemed to look forward with pleasure to the removal of the Government there in October 1800. — At our departure he bade me & kindly shaking hands with Mr. Landon — said he had ordered his Horse to wait to escort us to his own boundaries — which are pretty extensive. —

Death of Washington

Philadelphia 18th Decr 1799

An express arrived this day from Mount Vernon with the melancholy accounts of the death of Washington. An inflammatory sore throat carried him off in 24 hours. He had complained some days of a cold; rose on Friday morning, the 11th, but becoming ~~worse~~ worse, returned to bed, & although every assistance was immediately called, - He died between Saturday & Sunday, at the age of sixty seven. Perfectly sensible & resigned.

At no time could the death of Washington have been matter of indifference to the people of America, but at this moment, - when a rupture with France is apprehended, it is critical & unfortunate. He was appointed Commander in Chief of the Army by President Adams & with much diffidence was prevailed upon to accept on condition of choosing his general officers & the major attached to his name - a major greater perhaps than can ever be attached to any other in this Country, was deemed necessary to help the parties united. The marks of public respect proper to be shown to his memory are now under the consideration of the Senate & House of Representatives.

Mr. Liston & I greatly esteemed & admired the Man & felt grateful for his uniform attention & kindness to us; & it is with satisfaction we reflect on having visited him so lately & parted from him so affectionately.

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Congress has decreed that a funeral oration should be pronounced upon him, & General Lee, an old & worthy officer, was chosen for this performance. General Lee said ten days were sufficient for preparation. On Thursday the 16th he delivered an Eulogium in the large Methodist Church.

to a vast concourse of people, - admitted by tickets issued by a Committee appointed to arrange the Ceremony.

The President, Vice President, Senators & House of Representatives, - Foreign Ministers, - the Military, & all the different Trades &c - paraded in proper order. - A Bier was placed near the Pulpit decorated with Military Ensigns - Bishop White read the Prayers Washington was an Episcopalian. General Lee delivered his Oration - pleading rather than brilliant. - We were satisfied by his expressing himself handsomely of the British Nation, - for in enumerating the great deeds of his Hero, a successful opposition to Great Britain naturally became the principal theme. - A Band of Singers from the Theatre accompanied the Organ & all was conducted with decency & decorum. - A general mourning had been ordered & commenced that day. The President afterwards gave a public dinner certainly the ^{most} sumptuous of which we had ever partaken.

Notice has been given that ~~on~~ the 22. of February - The Birth Day of Washington, - will be held as a solemn Fast - with ~~persuasion~~ for sermons & orations &c. -

Philadelphia

22. February

The most remarkable performance of this day was an Oration by Major Jackson a Member of the Cincinnati, of which institution Washington was the Head.

Major Jackson's Elogium was heard by great numbers & in the same Church as the Oration of General Lee, but with music more appropriate. The Choir of the Church - otherwise the same arrangements took place. - Major Jackson's Elogium was certainly more correct & gave more general satisfaction than that of General Lee.

The Catholics also produced their specimens of Elogium, & the Masonic order of the French had an Oration in a room completely decorated for a Latapalque.

In the autumn of this year, before M. Lister & I were to bid a final adieu to the United States of America, - We paid a melancholy visit to poor M^{rs} Washington at Mount Vernon.

Washington was more a respectful than a tender Husband certainly; - Yet we found this excellent Woman grieving incessantly. - She repeatedly told me, during the few days we had it in our power to stay with her, - that all comfort had fled with her Husband, & that she waited anxiously her dissolution. - Indeed it was evident that her health was fast declining & her heart breaking. - We parted with much tenderness on all sides, never alas! to meet again. -
 A few Months after our departure we heard of her Death. -

Washington never had any Children. ~~But~~ His Wife was, when he married her, the rich & beautiful Widow of a M. Leslie, a respectable Gentleman of very great fortune, in the State of Virginia. - by him she had had a Son, who at his death left three Daughters & one Son. - of these Children General Washington & his Wife took charge. - When we reached America the two eldest Ladies were married, the youngest, a most beautiful Girl, & the Son, made part of the General's family (as did at that moment the Son of the Marquis de Lafayette & his French Tutor,) & were treated like his own Children.

Washington left his Fortune to his nephews. They were all by Sisters, except one, George Washington one of the Judges of the United States; to him he left Mount Vernon & the greater part of his property. -

In the testimony of this year, before Mr. Justice, I was
his final claim to the United States of America - I was
a remarkably rich man, Mr. Justice, at the time
Washington was more a respect than a
large husband certainly. - I was found the
person of strong independence. - the separated
during the first days we had no conversation to
with that - that all comfort had been lost for
that the man was entirely for the day of
was evident that his health was fast declining & he
had brooding - the patient with much
on all sides, dear wife! I never again
it for months after our separation in
of her death.

Washington never had any children.
His life was a long one, but the last
years of a Mr. Justice, a respectable position in
great fortune, in the State of Virginia, where he
had had a long and a successful life. He was
over four of these children, for the Washingtons
his life had changed. When you reached the
the old days were over. The young man
beautiful girl, but a very good part of the
a bit of that government the day of the
his death, I was found the day of the
Washington's life was a long one, but the
they were all of the same family, the
over of the day of the Washingtons, the
I was the first of his family.

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