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Essay on the character and influence of Washington in the revolution of the United States of America

Auteurs : Guizot, François (1787-1874) ; Hillard, George Stillman (1808-1879) ; Joseph Meredith Toner Collection (Library of Congress)

Les folios

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- - Tr. by G.S. Hillard. French original appeared as an introduction to the "Vie, correspondance et écrits de Washington," Paris, 1840. It was also pub. separately, Paris, 1841, under title: Washington.
- Also available in digital form.
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George Stillman Hillard (September 22, 1808 – January 21, 1879) was an American lawyer and author. Besides developing his Boston legal practice (with Charles Sumner as a partner), he served in the Massachusetts legislature, edited several Boston journals, and wrote on literature, politics and travel.

No signs of direct contact as meeting, talks, letters.

Hillard was a Democrat who opposed slavery and supported the Union during the American Civil War. He was a member of the Massachusetts legislature: the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1836, and the Massachusetts Senate in 1850.

There he was conspicuous as an orator, and his policies were praised by Daniel Webster. Hillard was a member of the Boston Common Council and served as its president in from July 1, 1846, through July 1, 1847. He was a member of the Massachusetts constitutional convention of 1853, city solicitor for Boston from 1854 until 1856, and in 1866–70 was United States district attorney for Massachusetts.

Hillard devoted a large portion of his time to literature. With George Ripley, he edited the *Christian Register*, a Unitarian weekly, beginning in 1833; in 1834, in association with Sumner, he became editor of *The American Jurist* (1829–1843), a legal journal to which Sumner, Simon Greenleaf and Theron Metcalf contributed; and from 1856 to 1861 he was an associate editor of the *Boston Courier*.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Stillman_Hillard

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ESSAY
ON THE
CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE
OF
WASHINGTON
IN THE
REVOLUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

By M. GUIZOT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH. —



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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE following Essay is a translation of the Introduction, by M. Guizot, to a French version of Sparks's Life of Washington, and of selected portions of Washington's Writings, which has recently appeared in Paris, in six octavo volumes. M. Guizot is well known, not only as the author of many valuable historical works, but as a practical statesman himself, and therefore peculiarly qualified to appreciate the character of Washington, and to estimate his claims to the gratitude of his country, and the admiration of mankind. The Essay can hardly fail to be read with interest by every countryman of the illustrious man, who forms its subject. It is a per-

formance remarkable for the knowledge which it evinces of our own history, for its great political wisdom, its elevated moral tone, and its just discrimination in regard to the character of Washington. Every American citizen must be highly gratified to find his own veneration for the name of Washington confirmed by this unbiased tribute from a foreigner so distinguished in literature and politics, as M. Guizot. Nothing has ever been written concerning him in Europe, so accurate, so just, and so profound as this ; and it will serve to justify and strengthen that admiration, which has been accorded to him in foreign countries, hardly less than in his own.

Boston, June, 1840.

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OF THE FRENCH PUBLISHERS.

No foreign event occurring at a distance ever awakened so lively a sympathy in France, as the Revolution of the United States of America. No great man who was a foreigner has ever, in this country, been the object of general admiration to such an extent as Washington. He has had the applause of both the court and the people, of the old *régime* and the new nation. During his life, testimonials of respect were heaped upon him by Louis the Sixteenth; and, at his death, Napoleon directed a public mourning for him, and a funeral oration.*

* "Bonaparte rendered unusual honors to the name of Washington, not long after the event of his death was made known in France. By what motives he was prompted, it is needless to inquire. At any rate, both the act itself and his

It is now forty years since this great man has been reposing, to use his own expression, "in the mansions of rest," at Mount Vernon, by the side of his fathers. But his country has recently reared to him the noblest of monuments, in the publication of his *Works*, consisting of his Letters, Discourses, and Messages,

manner of performing it are somewhat remarkable, when regarded in connexion with his subsequent career. He was then First Consul. On the 9th of February, he issued the following order of the day to the army. "Washington is dead! This great man fought against tyranny; he established the liberty of his country. His memory will always be dear to the French people, as it will be to all free men of the two worlds; and especially to French soldiers, who, like him and the American soldiers, have combated for liberty and equality." The First Consul likewise ordered, that, during ten days, black crape should be suspended from all the standards and flags throughout the Republic. On the same day a splendid ceremony took place in the Champ de Mars, and the trophies brought by the army from Egypt were displayed with great pomp. Immediately after this ceremony was over, a funeral oration, in honor of Washington (*Eloge Funèbre de Washington*) was pronounced by M. de Fontanes, in the Hôtel des Invalides, then called the Temple of Mars. The First Consul, and all the civil and military authorities of the capital, were present." — *Sparks's Life of Washington*, pp. 531, 532, note.

comprising what was written and spoken by him in the midst of his active career, and forming indeed his lively image and the true history of his life.

These are, in truth, his *Works*. Washington preserved with scrupulous care, either a first draft or an exact copy of every letter he wrote, whether as a public man or a private individual, and whether they related to his own concerns, the management and culture of his farms, or to the interests of the state. During the period from 1783 to 1787, in his retirement at Mount Vernon, he arranged the first part of this correspondence, containing, among other things, whatever had been written by him during the war of independence ; and, at his death, he bequeathed all his papers, together with his estate at Mount Vernon, to his nephew, Bushrod Washington, who was for thirty years one of the justices of the Supreme Court of the United States. The entire collection, comprising the letters written by Washington himself, and those addressed to him, filled more than two hundred folio volumes.

The Congress of the United States has recently purchased these precious papers, and caused them to be deposited in the national archives. An able editor, Mr. Sparks, already well known by his important historical labors, and especially by editing the "Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States during the War of Independence," (printed at Boston in twelve octavo volumes,) has examined these papers and made selections and extracts from them. The family of Washington, his surviving friends, and various intelligent and distinguished persons favored his efforts in executing this patriotic task. Mr. Sparks has not remained content with this collection of materials, already so ample, which was in his possession ; he travelled over America and Europe, and the public and private collections of France and England were liberally opened to him. He has sought out, and brought together from all quarters, the documents necessary to illustrate and complete this authentic biography of a great man, which is the history of the infant years of a great people ; and a work in twelve large octavo volumes, adorned with

portraits, plates, and *fac-similes*, under the title of "The Writings of George Washington," has been the result of this labor, which has been performed in all its parts with scrupulous fidelity, patriotism, and a love of the subject.

The work is divided into several parts.

The First Volume contains a Life of Washington, written by Mr. Sparks.

The Second Volume, entitled Part First, contains the Official and Private Letters of Washington, prior to the American Revolution, (from the 9th of March, 1754, to the 31st of May, 1775.) The official letters relate to the war of 1754 – 1768, between France and England, for the possession of the territories lying west of the English colonies.

The Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Volumes (being the Second Part) comprise the Correspondence and the various papers relating to the American Revolution and the War of Independence, (from the 16th of June, 1775, to the 23d of December, 1783.)

The Ninth Volume (being the Third Part) is composed of the Private Letters written by

Washington from the end of 1783 to the spring of 1789, in the interval between his return to Mount Vernon, after the peace of Versailles, and his elevation to the Presidency of the United States, (from the 28th of December, 1783, to the 14th of April, 1789.)

The Tenth and Eleventh Volumes (being the Fourth Part) comprise the Official and Private Correspondence of Washington from his elevation to the Presidency to the close of his life, (from the 5th of May, 1789, to the 12th of December, 1799.)

The Twelfth Volume (being the Fifth Part) contains the Documents and Messages addressed by Washington to Congress, as President of the United States, and also his Proclamations and Addresses to the American people in general, or to particular classes of citizens.

Each volume is terminated by an Appendix, in which the Editor has collected a variety of historical documents of great interest, and, generally speaking, hitherto unpublished, which illustrate the principal events of the period, and the most important parts of the life and character of Washington.

Finally, numerous and accurate Notes, scattered through the work, give all the information necessary for the complete understanding of the letters and incidents to which they relate.

Viewed as a whole and in its details, in its literary execution and in its outward form, the edition is worthy of the great name to which it is consecrated.

In 1838, when the work had been just completed, the American Editor, desirous that Washington should be as well known in France as in his own country, applied to M. Guizot, requesting him to make a selection, from the voluminous correspondence, of such portions as seemed most calculated to awaken an interest in the French public, and to superintend their publication in the French language. M. Guizot has made this selection ; upon the principle of taking, especially, First, the letters concerning the relations of France and the United States at that period, and the distinguished part which our country acted in that great event ; Secondly, those which develop the political views of Washington in the formation of the constitution and the organiza-

tion of the government of the United States, — views full of valuable instruction ; Thirdly, those which exhibit in the clearest light the character, the turn of mind, and the manners of the great man from whom they proceeded.

In order to accomplish fully the honorable task which he undertook, M. Guizot was desirous of presenting his own views of the character of Washington, and of his influence in the revolution which founded the United States of America ; and these are contained in the Introduction, which is prefixed to our edition.

We have spared no pains to make its external appearance worthy of the intrinsic value of its contents. We are indebted to the kindness of General Cass, the minister of the United States in France, for most useful assistance and information ; and he has afforded them with a kindness, at once so enlightened and so generous, that we feel it our duty to make a public acknowledgment of our obligations to him.

CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE
OF
WASHINGTON.

Two difficult and important duties are assigned to man, and may constitute his true glory ; to support misfortune and resign himself to it with firmness ; to believe in goodness and trust himself to it with unbroken confidence.

There is a spectacle not less noble or less improving, than that of a virtuous man struggling with adversity ; it is that of a virtuous man at the head of a good cause, and giving assurance of its triumph.

If there were ever a just cause, and one

which deserved success, it was that of the English colonies in their struggle to become the United States of America. In their case, open insurrection had been preceded by resistance. This resistance was founded upon historical right and upon facts, upon natural right and upon opinions.

It is the honorable distinction of England to have given to her colonies, in their infancy, the seminal principle of their liberty. Almost all of them, either at the time of their being planted or shortly after, received charters which conferred upon the colonists the rights of the mother country. And these charters were not a mere deceptive form, a dead letter, for they either established or recognised those powerful institutions, which impelled the colonists to defend their liberties and to control power by dividing it; such as the laying of taxes by vote, the election of the principal public bodies, trial by jury,