

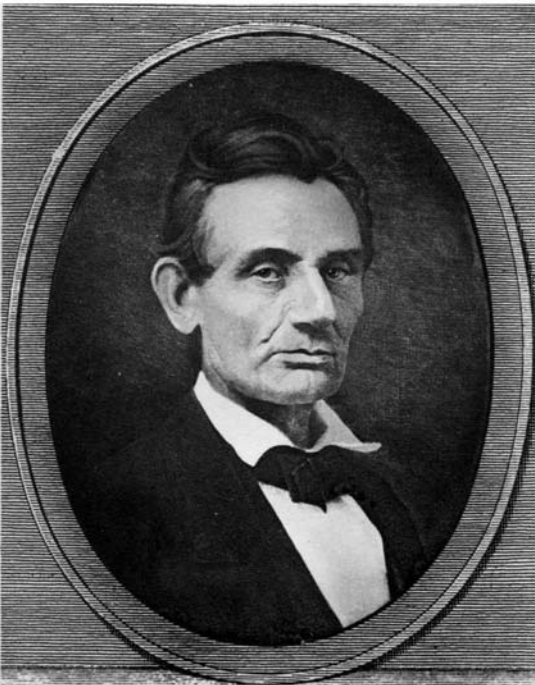
LITTLE  
MASTER  
PIECES

AUTHOR'S  
RAPID

31



Library of  
Little Masterpieces



A. Lincoln

Library of  
**Little Masterpieces**  
In Forty-four Volumes

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

Edited by  
**GEORGE ILES**



**VOLUME XXXI**

PUBLISHED BY  
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY  
FOR  
THE REVIEW OF REVIEWS COMPANY  
1909



Copyright, 1885, 1893, by G. P. Putnam's Sons

Copyright, 1890, by Century Company

Copyright, 1904, by Francis D. Tandy & Company

Copyright, 1908, by Doubleday, Page & Company

## PREFACE

SUPREME in the regard of their countrymen stand Washington and Jefferson, Hamilton and Marshall, as founders of the Republic. It was they who won victory for the Revolution, who created and interpreted the Constitution. They speak to us, and all too briefly, in this book. Had its bounds permitted, Franklin, their friend and peer, would have been included. He has a volume of his own in the series of "Little Masterpieces," edited by Bliss Perry, and published by Doubleday, Page & Co., New York.

In talent and temperament, in purpose and achievement, Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, and Marshall differed widely. Washington surrounded himself with lieutenants who individually excelled him in eloquence, in economic insight, or logical acumen; and yet his sound judgment and sterling sense made his voice decisive at the council table. Washington was a patrician with democratic sympathies. Jefferson was a democrat, with no patrician leanings whatever. He had unbounded faith in the people, and that they might the better execute their difficult tasks of self-rule, he laboured all his life in the cause of education. Jefferson was convinced that the several states should jealously guard against the encroachment of Federal authority. In this he was

## Preface

firmly opposed by Hamilton. Their arguments, here given in a few typical utterances, have never been more clearly put. Kindred with Hamilton in spirit stood Marshall, one of the great jurists of the world. His decisions as Chief Justice virtually created the Constitution, and long served as a bulwark against the assaults of disruption.

These assaults, never intermitted from the day the nation was born, culminated in the firing on Fort Sumter. To Lincoln came the duty of overcoming the Confederacy and re-establishing the Union. The pages filled by Lincoln in this book, few though they are, make clear why he steadily gains in the veneration and love of the American people. Born and reared in utter poverty, he understood common folk as no man can who has not shared their struggles and suffered their wants. By sheer native genius, and a teachableness as rare, he mastered the intricate case of National Sovereignty *versus* States Rights. His arguments as he faced Douglas, his addresses, state papers and letters, all show him to have been a great statesman because he was first of all a great man, wise, sympathetic, and just. He led the nation because he always remained close to it, and in his guidance appealed as much to its heart as to its mind and conscience.

# CONTENTS

## GREATEST AMERICANS

	PAGE
GEORGE WASHINGTON . . . . .	3
Takes command of the army. Only extant letter to his wife.	
To his brother, John Augustine.	
" General Gage, protesting against cruelty to prisoners.	
" Colonel Joseph Reed, asking aid in the field.	
" General William Howe, pleading for Ethan Allen.	
" Colonel Joseph Reed, expressing anxiety regarding his army.	
" Colonel Joseph Reed, regarding criticisms of his generalship.	
" the President of Congress, telling of the distress of his soldiers.	
" his brother, disclosing perplexity and apprehension.	
" a Congressional Committee, on receiving enlarged power as commander.	
" General Schuyler, a word of courage in defeat.	
" Patrick Henry, showing his freedom from jealousy.	
" Governor Clinton, recounting the misery of Valley Forge.	
" Bryan Fairfax, declaring respect for convictions opposed to his own.	
" General Burgoyne, expressing sympathy.	
" Count D'Estaing, whose plans for a victory came to naught.	
" Benjamin Harrison, pleading for help.	
" General Lafayette, in congratulation.	
" Colonel John Laurens, almost in despair.	
" General Henry Knox, as to his suffering troops.	
" William Goddard, asking that only truth about himself be told.	

# Contents

PAGE

## GEORGE WASHINGTON (Continued)

To John Jay, on the political perils of 1786.

" Colonel Harry Lee, on his nomination as first President of the United States.

" General Henry Knox, on the same subject.

" Arthur Young, on his delight in agriculture.

" Thomas Jefferson, pleading for peace in the national councils.

" General Henry Knox, on retiring from office.

" Eleanor Parke Custis, on love and marriage.

## THOMAS JEFFERSON . . . . 43

How the Declaration of Independence was written.

Against a landed aristocracy.

Too much talk in Congress.

At fifty-seven reviews his achievements.

To M. Dupont de Nemours, on the Louisiana Purchase.

" John Adams, on aristocracies, real and unreal.

" John Adams, on education.

" David Williams, on education for the farmer.

" John Adams, declaring his optimism at seventy-three.

" Dr. Walter Jones, on the character of Washington.

" W. B. Giles, on States Rights.

As to the Judiciary.

Counsel to a grandson.

## ALEXANDER HAMILTON . . . . 71

Sketches his life.

To Washington, a plea for the army.

" " disruptive forces deplored.

" " the Federal Union must be strong.

" " urging his acceptance of the presidency.

" " on weakness of the Federal Government.

" " on the art of putting things.

" " with regard to a post in the army.

" Oliver Wolcott, on Jefferson and Burr.

" General Anthony Wayne, asking a place for a chaplain.

# Contents

	PAGE
ALEXANDER HAMILTON (Continued)	
To John Laurens, on the Declaration of Peace.	
" Oliver Wolcott, a tactful bit of advice.	
Rules for his son Philip.	
To his wife, on the eve of the duel with Burr.	
 JOHN MARSHALL . . . . .	92
Sketches his life.	
To Washington, contradicting a harmful rumour.	
" President John Adams, accepting the Chief-Justiceship.	
Courage on the bench.	
To James Monroe, on the outbreak of war, 1812.	
Gives his portrait to Story.	
To Story, on the Indians; also, a word on women.	
" " on the teaching of law.	
" " why a devoted Unionist.	
" " opposed to Jefferson.	
" " fears for the Union.	
Story dedicates his Commentaries to him.	
The Constitution not a league but a government.	
Aids in revising the Constitution of Virginia.	
The judiciary of Virginia.	
On slavery.	
Would return the Negroes to Africa.	
A humorous letter to Justice Stuart.	
Always raining somewhere in the United States.	
To his wife, recalling his courtship.	
Grief when bereaved of his wife.	
Fortitude in pain.	
To his son, E. C. Marshall.	
To a grandson, on the art of writing.	
 ABRAHAM LINCOLN . . . . .	123
Ancestry.	
Homes in Kentucky and Indiana.	
Schooling.	
Trip to New Orleans.	
Removal to Illinois.	

# Contents

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN (Continued)

Clerk in a store and mill.  
Enlists as a soldier.  
Keeps a store.  
Elected to the Illinois Legislature.  
Elected to Congress.  
Votes in Congress explained.  
Law practice, speeches and debates.  
Studies law.  
On the practice of law.  
Why he could explain so well.  
Habits of composition.  
To an idler, his step-brother, John D. Johnston.  
A Jeffersonian.  
Read as a boy the "Life of Washington."  
On Slavery, to Alexander H. Stephens.  
In response to Greeley's criticisms.  
A remonstrance to General Banks.  
A rebuke to General Hooker.  
A hint to General Hooker.  
Draft of a letter, not sent, to General Meade in censure.  
Hope in the midst of war: to J. C. Conkling.  
Address at Gettysburg.  
On Negro Suffrage, to General Wadsworth.  
Plea to Secretary Stanton for a soldier in trouble.  
On Slavery and Emancipation: to A. G. Hodges.  
To a bereaved mother, Mrs. Bixby.  
Second Inaugural Address.  
A few hours before his death, a note to General Van Alen.  
Lincoln's Favourite Poem.  
Lincoln (Poem), by James Russell Lowell.

# Introduction



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

OUR heroes grow upon us all our lives long. At school we read of Washington at Valley Forge, of Lincoln at Gettysburg. We soon wish to know how they lived as boys, who their fathers and mothers and playmates were. We pass to manhood and our sense of debt to these great men deepens, as we assume our duties in upholding the institutions they founded and preserved. We take up the biographies which fully recount how Washington and Lincoln came to their supreme opportunities, and grasped them with strong hands. As the years follow one another, our interest widens to embrace the life-stories not only of leaders in government, but also the chieftains of art, science and literature. To the lives of Hamilton and Jefferson on our shelves, we add biographies of Darwin and Story, Hawthorne and Dickens.

Biography includes not only many great books, it intimately reveals the springs of great work. To learn the struggles of Wagner through half a life-time, and to find how inspiring a friend he had in Liszt, is to double our enjoyment of the music dramas which Liszt was the first to acclaim. And on the high plane of history a clear understanding of events depends upon our seeing how rulers and reformers, soldiers and jurists, bore themselves at home as well

## General Introduction

as under the public eye; how their courage and ambition were buttressed by family affection, by the unswerving loyalty of comrades.

Fortunately some great men, as notably Franklin and Scott, have written their own lives. Of all biographies these are the best because the most nearly true. And nobody who was anybody ever fell into dulness as he told the story of his life, and for good reasons. He had a theme of the very first interest to himself, on which, for the most part, he was the sole authority. Who but Grant could tell us how Grant felt on the eve of battle? Who but Peary could make us understand Peary's dismay when wreck threatened his ship? It is of equal interest to hear from Edison's own lips how he fashioned his first incandescent lamps; and to listen to Story as he recalls how a great statue took form in his brain long before a chisel was lifted to shape its marble. It is just as delightful to have Tennyson describe the simple observations of sea and shore which flowered in his verse; and follow the successive revisions which brought "The Raven," by Poe, and "Excelsior," by Longfellow, to their final perfection. Unique, perhaps, in the sister art of tone is the retracing every step taken by Haydn as, from a simple Croatian folk tune, he developed the music of the Austrian national hymn.

Every autobiography tells us more than its writer meant us to know: sometimes what we

## General Introduction

read between the lines is the best part of a story. Franklin's chapters uncover his keen sense of propriety with a fulness of which he seems unaware. And apart from the formal revelations of such a book as his, a man's letters may often open windows into his very heart. Many of President Lincoln's hours were occupied in dealing with requests for pardons and reprieves; his responses form a goodly part of his writings. Yet we cannot imagine him setting forth in an autobiography, or a diary, a fact so sacred that mercy had the first place in his soul.

In the six little books here offered the reader, letters form the chief part. Next in extent are passages from famous autobiographies, with here and there pages from diaries such as those in which Longfellow mirrored his mind. The series comprises Greatest Americans, Soldiers and Explorers, Men of Science, Writers, Painters and Composers, Actors. Within the appointed limits of each volume, only a brief selection is presented. The sources laid under tribute are always mentioned, so that a reader may pass from slight acquaintance with his hero to any degree of intimacy that he desires.

GEORGE ILES.

# GREATEST AMERICANS

## WASHINGTON

[In the veneration of his countrymen, Washington holds the loftiest place. The Revolution found him a wealthy man, cultivating his large plantations with enjoyment and success. He accepted the generalship of the army, and for eight years endured incessant toil, anxiety and privation, embittered by unsparing censure. In victory or defeat, facing a traitor or with his hand in the grasp of a friend, he had the courage and magnanimity of the soldier at his best. When at last the Republic was securely founded, with one voice Washington was chosen as its first President. In that great office he stands forth a model unapproached. His ability and wisdom, his judgment and forbearance, stamp him as one of the supremely great rulers of all time.

Many biographies of Washington have been written, but his best portrait has been painted by himself in his own writings. These, in the scholarly edition of Mr. Worthington C. Ford, have been published in fourteen volumes by G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York. By their courtesy the following selection is presented. It reveals characteristic phases of Washington as a husband and guardian, a soldier and patriot, a farmer and a host.

A side-light of much interest is afforded the reader of "Washington's Letters and Recollections: Correspondence with Tobias Lear, His Confidential Secretary, and Others," published by Doubleday, Page & Co., New York. — Ed.]

### TAKES COMMAND OF THE ARMY

[On the 18th of June, 1775, Washington received from the President of Congress his commission as commander-in-chief of the army. He writes to his wife, the only letter from him to her extant:]

PHILADELPHIA, June 18, 1775.

MY DEAREST:

I am now set down to write you on a subject which fills me with inexpressible concern, and

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

this concern is greatly aggravated and increased, when I reflect upon the uneasiness I know it will give you. It has been determined in Congress, that the whole army raised for the defence of the American cause shall be put under my care, and that it is necessary for me to proceed immediately to Boston to take upon me the command of it.

You may believe me my dear Patsy, when I assure you, in the most solemn manner, that, so far from seeking this appointment, I have used every endeavour in my power to avoid it, not only from my unwillingness to part with you and the family, but from a consciousness of its being a trust too great for my capacity; and that I should enjoy more real happiness in one month with you at home, than I have the most distant prospect of finding abroad, if my stay were to be seven times seven years. But as it has been a kind of destiny that has thrown me upon this service, I shall hope that my undertaking it is designed to answer some good purpose. . . .

You might, and I suppose did perceive, from the tenor of my letters, that I was apprehensive I could not avoid this appointment, as I did not pretend to intimate when I should return. That was the case. It was utterly out of my power to refuse this appointment, without exposing my character to such censures as would reflect dishonour upon myself, and give pain to my friends. This, I am sure, could not, and ought not, to be

# Washington

pleasing to you, and must have lessened me considerably in my own esteem. . . .

I shall rely confidently on that Providence which has heretofore preserved and been bountiful to me, not doubting but that I shall return safe to you in the fall. I shall feel no pain from the toil or danger of the campaign; my unhappiness will flow from the uneasiness I know you will feel from being left alone. I therefore beg that you will summon your whole fortitude, and pass your time as agreeably as possible. Nothing will give me so much sincere satisfaction as to hear this, and to hear it from your own pen.

## TAKES COMMAND OF THE ARMY

[To his brother, John Augustine Washington, he writes:]

PHILADELPHIA, June 20, 1775.

. . . I am now to bid adieu to you, and to every kind of domestic ease, for a while. I am embarked on a wide ocean, boundless in its prospect, and in which, perhaps, no safe harbour is to be found. I have been called upon by the unanimous voice of the Colonies to take the command of the Continental army; an honour I neither sought after, nor desired, as I am thoroughly convinced that it requires great abilities, and much more experience, than I am master of, to conduct a business so extensive in its nature, and arduous in the execution. [And referring to his wife] I shall hope that my friends will visit, and endeavour to keep up the spirits of my wife, as much as they can, for my

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

departure will, I know, be a cutting stroke upon her; and on this account alone I have many disagreeable sensations.

## PROTESTS AGAINST CRUELTY TO PRISONERS

[During the summer of 1775 the prisoners captured by General Gage were cruelly treated. Washington at once addressed to him this remonstrance:]

HEADQUARTERS, CAMBRIDGE,

August 11, 1775.

I understand that the officers engaged in the cause of liberty and their country, who by the fortune of war have fallen into your hands, have been thrown indiscriminately into a common jail, appropriated to felons; that no consideration has been had for those of the most respectable rank when languishing with wounds and sickness, and that some have been amputated in this unworthy situation.

Let your opinion, sir, of the principle which actuates them, be what it may, they suppose they act from the noblest of all principles, love of freedom and their country. But political principles, I conceive, are foreign to this point. The obligations arising from the rights of humanity and claims of rank are universally binding and extensive, (except in case of retaliation.) These, I should have hoped, would have dictated a more tender treatment of those individuals whom chance or war had put in your power. Nor can I forbear suggesting its fatal tendency to widen that unhappy breach which



# Washington

you, and those ministers under whom you act have repeatedly declared your wish to see forever closed.

My duty now makes it necessary to apprise you that, for the future, I shall regulate all my conduct toward those gentlemen who are, or may be, in your possession, exactly by the rule you shall observe toward those of ours, now in your custody.

If severity and hardships mark the line of your conduct (painful as it may be to me), your prisoners will feel its effects. But if kindness and humanity are shown to ours, I shall with pleasure consider those in our hands only as unfortunate, and they shall receive from me that treatment to which the unfortunate are ever entitled.

## ASKS FOR AID

[Again and again throughout his campaigns, Washington had to deplore the denial of sorely needed aid. No trait in his character was more severely tested than his patience with the apathy — and worse — of men who should have sprung to his standard. He writes to Colonel Joseph Reed:]

CAMBRIDGE, November 28, 1775.

. . . Such a dearth of public spirit, and want of virtue; such stock-jobbing, and fertility in all the low arts to obtain advantage of one kind or another in this great change of military arrangement, I never saw before, and I pray God I may never be witness to again. What will be the end of these manœuvres is beyond my scan. I tremble at the prospect. We have been till this time enlisting about three thousand five hundred men. To engage these, I have been

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

obliged to allow furloughs as far as fifty men a regiment, and the officers I am persuaded indulge as many more. The Connecticut troops will not be prevailed upon to stay longer than their term, (saving those who have enlisted for the next campaign, and are mostly on furlough;) and such a dirty mercenary spirit pervades the whole that I should not be surprised at any disaster that may happen. In short, after the last of this month our lines will be so weakened, that the minute-men and militia must be called in for their defence; these, being under no kind of government themselves will destroy the little subordination I have been labouring to establish, and run me into one evil while I am trying to avoid another; but the lesser must be chosen.

. . . Could I have foreseen what I have experienced and am likely to experience, no consideration upon earth should have induced me to accept this command. A regiment or any subordinate department would have been accompanied with ten times the satisfaction, and perhaps the honour.

## A PLEA FOR ETHAN ALLEN

[Colonel Ethan Allen, at the head of the Green Mountain Boys, invaded Canada and was captured by British troops. He was so badly treated as to call forth from Washington this note to General William Howe:]

HEADQUARTERS, CAMBRIDGE,

December 18, 1777.

We have just been informed of a circumstance which, were it not so well authenticated, I should

scarcely think credible. It is that Colonel Allen, who, with his small party, was defeated and made prisoner near Montreal, has been treated without regard to decency, humanity, or the rules of war; that he has been thrown into irons, and suffers all the hardships inflicted upon common felons.

I think it my duty, sir, to demand, and do expect from you, an eclaircissement [enlightenment] on this subject. At the same time, I flatter myself, from the character which Mr. Howe bears as a man of honour, gentleman and soldier, that my demand will meet with his approbation. I must take the liberty, also, of informing you that I shall consider your silence as a confirmation of the report; and further assuring you, that whatever treatment Colonel Allen receives, whatever fate he undergoes, such exactly shall be the treatment and fate of Brigadier Prescott, now in our hands. The law of retaliation is not only justifiable in the eyes of God and man, but absolutely a duty, which, in our present circumstances, we owe to our relations, friends and fellow-citizens.

Permit me to add, sir, that we have all here the highest regard and reverence for your great personal qualities and attainments, and the Americans in general esteem it as not the least of their misfortunes, that the name of Howe, a name so dear to them, should appear at the head of the catalogue of the instru-

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

ments employed by a wicked ministry for their destruction.

## ANXIETY IN THE FIELD

[On New Year's Day, 1776, Washington's army numbered fewer than ten thousand men. They lacked arms, ammunition and proper clothing. On January 4, he thus expresses his anxiety to Colonel Joseph Reed:]

. . . It is easier to conceive than to describe the situation of my mind for some time past, and my feelings under our present circumstances. Search the vast volumes of history through, and I much question whether a case similar to ours is to be found; namely, to maintain a post against the flower of the British troops for six months together, without powder, and at the end of them to have one army disbanded and another raised within the same distance (musket shot) of a reinforced enemy. It is too much to attempt. What may be the issue of the last manœuvre, time only can unfold. I wish this month were well over our head. . . . We are now left with a good deal less than half-raised regiments, and about five thousand militia, who only stand engaged to the middle of this month; when, according to custom, they will depart, let the necessity of their stay be never so urgent. Thus it is, for more than two months past, I have scarcely emerged from one difficulty before I have been plunged in another. How it will end, God, in His great goodness, will direct. I am thankful for His protection to this

# Washington

time. We are told that we shall soon get the army completed, but I have been told so many things which have never come to pass, that I distrust everything.

## AS TO CRITICISMS OF HIS GENERALSHIP

[Colonel Joseph Reed, a friend of Washington, wrote him freely regarding the censures passed upon his generalship. Washington responded:]

HEADQUARTERS, CAMBRIDGE,

January 14, 1776.

. . . The hints you have communicated from time to time not only deserve, but do most sincerely and cordially meet with my thanks. You cannot render a more acceptable service, nor in my estimation give a more convincing proof of your friendship, than by a free, open, and undisguised account of every matter relative to myself or conduct. The man who wishes to stand well in the opinion of others must do this; because he is thereby enabled to correct his faults, or remove prejudices which are imbibed against him. For this reason, I shall thank you for giving me the opinion of the world upon such points as you know me to be interested in; for, as I have but one capital object in view, I could wish to make my conduct coincide with the wishes of mankind, as far as I can consistently, I mean without departing from that great line of duty, which though hid under a cloud for some time, from a peculiarity of circumstances,

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

may nevertheless bear a scrutiny. My constant attention to the great and perplexing objects which continually rise to my view, absorbs all lesser considerations, and indeed scarcely allows me time to reflect that there is such a body in existence as the General Court of this colony, but when I am reminded of it by a committee; nor can I, upon recollection, discover in what instances (I wish they would be more explicit) I have been inattentive to, or slighted them. They could not, surely, conceive that there was a propriety in unbosoming the secrets of an army to them; that it was necessary to ask their opinion of throwing up an intrenchment, forming a battalion, etc. . . .

## ANXIETY DEEPENED

[The quality of many of his soldiers is plainly described in a letter to the President of Congress:]

NEW YORK, September 2, 1776.

. . . Our situation is truly distressing. The check our detachment sustained on the 27th ultimo has dispirited too great a proportion of our troops, and filled their minds with apprehension and despair. The militia, instead of calling forth their utmost efforts to a brave and manly opposition in order to repair our losses, are dismayed, intractable, and impatient to return. Great numbers of them have gone off; in some instances, almost by whole regiments, by half ones, and by companies, at a time.

# Washington

. . . With the deepest concern, I am obliged to confess my want of confidence in the generality of the troops. . . . Our number of men at present fit for duty is under twenty thousand. . . . I have ordered General Mercer to send the men intended for the Flying Camp to this place, about a thousand in number, and to try with the militia, if practicable, to make a diversion upon Staten Island. Till of late I had no doubt in my own mind of defending this place; nor should I have yet, if the men would do their duty, but this I despair of. It is painful and extremely grating to me, to give such unfavourable accounts; but it would be criminal to conceal the truth in so critical a juncture. Every power I possess shall be exerted to serve the cause; and my first wish is that whatever may be the event, the Congress will do me the justice to think so.

## PERPLEXITY AND APPREHENSION

[Shortly after the surrender of Fort Lee on the Hudson River, and the capture of 2,818 soldiers by General Howe, Washington sent word to his brother, John Augustine:]

HACKENSACK, November 19, 1776.

. . . In ten days from this date, there will not be above two thousand men, if that number, of the fixed established regiments on this side of Hudson's River, to oppose Howe's whole army, and very little more on the other, to secure the eastern colonies, and the important passes

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

leading through the Highlands to Albany, and the country about the lakes. In short, it is impossible for me, in the compass of a letter, to give you any idea of our situation, of my difficulties, and of the constant perplexities and mortifications I meet with, derived from the unhappy policy of short enlistments, and delaying them too long. Last fall, or winter, before the army, which was then to be raised, was set about, I represented in clear and explicit terms the evils which would arise from short enlistments, the expense which must attend the raising an army every year, the futility of such an army when raised; and if I had spoken with a prophetic spirit, I could not have foretold the evils with more accuracy than I did. All the year since, I have been pressing Congress to delay no time in engaging men upon such terms as would insure success, telling them that the longer it was delayed, the more difficult it would prove. But the measure was not commenced until it was too late to be effected. . . . I am wearied almost to death with the retrograde motion of things; and I solemnly protest, that a pecuniary reward of twenty thousand pounds a year would not induce me to undergo what I do, and, after all, perhaps to lose my character; as it is impossible, under such a variety of distressing circumstances, to conduct matters agreeably to public expectation, or even to the expectation of those who employ me, as they will not make proper



# Washington

allowances for the difficulties their own errors have occasioned. . . .

## RECEIVES NEW POWERS AS COMMANDER

[On December 27, 1776, a committee of Congress (Robert Morris, George Clymer, and George Walton) convinced that Washington should wield extended powers, conferred upon him an authority all but absolute. They said:]

. . . Happy is it for this country that the general of their forces can safely be intrusted with the most unlimited power, and neither personal security, liberty, or property, be in the least degree endangered thereby.

[Washington's acknowledgment was characteristic:]

TRENTON, January 1, 1777.

Yours of the 31st ultimo enclosed to me sundry resolves of Congress, by which I find they have done me the honour to intrust me with powers, in my military capacity, of the highest nature and almost unlimited extent. Instead of thinking myself freed from all *civil* obligations by this mark of their confidence, I shall constantly bear in mind that, as the sword was the last resort for the preservation of our liberties, so it ought to be the first thing laid aside when those liberties are firmly established.

## COURAGE IN DEFEAT

[In the summer of 1777, the American troops met with defeat on Lake Champlain. Washington faces the situation with an unfaltering heart. He writes to General Schuyler:]

CLOVE, July 15, 1777.

. . . Amid the unfortunate reverse that has taken place in our affairs, I am happy to

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

hear that General St. Clair and his army are not in the hands of the enemy. I really feared they had become prisoners. The evacuation of Ticonderoga and Mount Independence is an event of chagrin and surprise not apprehended, nor within the compass of my reasoning. . . . This stroke is severe indeed, and has distressed us much.

Notwithstanding things at present have a dark and gloomy aspect, I hope a spirited opposition will check the progress of General Burgoyne's Arms, and that the confidence derived from his success, will hurry him into measures, that will in their consequences be favourable to us. We should never despair. Our situation before has been unpromising and has changed for the better, so I trust it will again. If new difficulties arise, we must only put forth new exertions, and proportion our efforts to the exigency of the times.

## WITHOUT JEALOUSY

[General Horatio Gates, in command of the northern troops, was in 1777 making a better record than Washington, so far as his own soldiers were concerned. The outspoken comparisons by the friends of Gates, drew this letter from Washington to Governor Patrick Henry of Virginia:]

WHITEMARSH (12 miles from Philadelphia)

November 13, 1777.

. . . The design of this is only to inform you, and with great truth I can do it, strange as it may seem, that the army which I have had

under my immediate command, has not, at any one time, since General Howe's landing at the Head of Elk, been equal in point of numbers to his. In ascertaining this I do not confine myself to Continental troops, but comprehend militia.

The disaffected and lukewarm in this state, in whom unhappily it too much abounds, taking advantage of the distraction in the government, prevented those vigorous exertions, which an invaded State ought to have yielded. . . I was left to fight two battles, in order, if possible, to save Philadelphia, with less numbers than composed the army of my antagonist, whilst the world has given us at least double. This impression, though mortifying in some points of view, I have been obliged to encourage; because, next to being strong, it is best to be thought so by the enemy; and to this cause, principally I think is to be attributed the slow movements of General Howe.

How different the case in the Northern Department! There the states of New York and New England, resolving to crush Burgoyne, continued pouring in their troops, till the surrender of that army; at which time not less than fourteen thousand militia, as I have been informed, were actually in General Gates's camp, and those composed, for the most part, of the best yeomanry in the country, well armed, and in many instances supplied with provisions of their own carrying. Had the same spirit pervaded the people of this and the neighbouring states, we might before this time have had General

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

Howe nearly in the situation of General Burgoyne. . . .

My own difficulties, in the course of the campaign, have been not a little increased by the extra aid of Continental troops, which the gloomy prospect of our affairs in the North, immediately after the reduction of Ticonderoga, induced me to spare from this army. But it is to be hoped that all will yet end well. If the cause is advanced, indifferent is it to me where or in what quarter it happens.

## THE DREADFUL WINTER AT VALLEY FORGE

[During the winter of 1777-78, the sufferings of Washington and his army at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, are thus pictured in a memorable appeal to Governor George Clinton, of New York:]

VALLEY FORGE, February 16, 1778.

It is with great reluctance I trouble you on a subject that does not properly fall within your province; but it is a subject that occasions me more distress than I have felt since the commencement of the war; and which loudly demands most zealous exertions of every person of weight and authority who is interested in the success of our affairs. I mean the miserable prospects before us with respect to futurity. It is more alarming than you will probably conceive; for, to form a just idea, it were necessary to be on the spot. For some days past there has been little less than a famine in camp. A part of the army has been a week without any kind of flesh, and the rest three or four days. Naked

## Washington

and starving as they are, we cannot enough admire the incomparable patience and fidelity of the soldiery, that they have not been ere this excited by their suffering to a general mutiny and dispersion. Strong symptoms, however, of discontent have appeared in particular instances; and nothing but the most active efforts everywhere can long avert so shocking a catastrophe.

Our present sufferings are not all. There is no foundation laid for any adequate relief hereafter. All the magazines provided in the states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland, and all the immediate additional supplies they seem capable of affording, will not be sufficient to support the army more than a month longer, if so long. Very little has been done at the eastward, and as little to the southward; and whatever we have a right to expect from those quarters must necessarily be very remote, and is, indeed, more precarious than could be wished. When the before-mentioned supplies are exhausted, what a terrible crisis must ensue, unless all the energy of the continent shall be exerted to provide a timely remedy!

Impressed with this idea, I am, on my part, putting every engine at work that I can possibly think of to prevent the fatal consequences which we have so much reason to apprehend. I am calling upon all those whose stations and influence enable them to contribute their aid upon so important an occasion; and, from your well-known zeal, I expect everything within the

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

compass of your power, and that the abilities and resources of the state over which you preside will admit. I am sensible of the disadvantages it labours under from having so long been the scene of war, and that it must be exceedingly drained by the great demands to which it has been subject. But, though you may not be able to contribute materially to our relief, you can perhaps do something towards it; and any assistance, however trifling in itself, will be of great moment in so critical a juncture, and will conduce to the keeping the army together, till the commissary's department can be put upon a better footing, and effectual measures concerted to secure a permanent and competent supply. What measures you can take, you will be the best judge of; but if you can devise any means to procure a quantity of cattle, or other kind of flesh, for the use of this army to be at the camp in the course of a month, you will render a most essential service to the common cause.

## RESPECT FOR CONVICTIONS OPPOSED TO HIS OWN

[Bryan Fairfax, a friend and neighbour of Washington, remained a supporter of the British connection. He continued residing in Virginia, where he died in 1802, at seventy-five years of age. He wrote Washington a grateful acknowledgment for acts of friendship continued despite their differences in political conviction. Washington replied, in the midst of the distresses of his camp:]

VALLEY FORGE, March 1, 1778.

. . . The friendship which I ever professed and felt for you, met with no diminution from

# Washington

the difference in our political sentiments. I know the rectitude of my own intentions, and believing in the sincerity of yours, lamented, though I did not condemn, your renunciation of the creed I had adopted. Nor do I think any person or power ought to do it, whilst your conduct is not opposed to the general interest of the people and the measures they are pursuing; the latter, that is our actions, depending upon ourselves, may be controlled; while the powers of thinking, originating in higher causes cannot always be moulded to our wishes.

## MAGNANIMITY TO A CAPTURED FOE

[General Burgoyne, when taken prisoner, addressed himself to Washington in terms of profound personal respect. Washington responded:]

HEADQUARTERS, March 11, 1778.

I was only two days since honoured with your very obliging letter of the 11th of February. Your indulgent opinion of my character, and the polite terms in which you are pleased to express it, are peculiarly flattering; and I take pleasure in the opportunity you have afforded me of assuring you that, far from suffering the views of national opposition to be embittered and debased by personal animosity, I am ever ready to do justice to the man and soldier, and to esteem where esteem is due, however the idea of a public enemy may interpose. You will not think it the language of un-

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

meaning ceremony, if I add, that sentiments of personal respect, in the present instance are reciprocal.

Viewing you in the light of an officer, contending against what I conceive to be the rights of my country, the reverses of fortune you experienced in the field cannot be unacceptable to me; but, abstracted from considerations of national advantage, I can sincerely sympathise with your feelings as a soldier, the unavoidable difficulties of whose situation forbid his success; and as a man, whose lot combines the calamity of ill health, the anxieties of captivity, and the painful sensibility for a reputation exposed, where he most values it, to the assaults of malice and detraction . . . .\*

## SYMPATHY WITH A COMPANION IN ARMS

[In August, 1778, a storm dispersed the French fleet under Count D'Estaing, whose carefully laid plans for a victory were thus brought to naught. Washington thus expressed his sympathy with the mortified commander:]

HEADQUARTERS, September 11, 1778.

. . . If the deepest regret, that the best concerted enterprise and bravest exertions should have been rendered fruitless by a disaster, which human prudence was incapable of foreseeing or preventing, can alleviate disappointment,

---

\*General Burgoyne at once acknowledged this note, concluding: "I should have few greater private gratifications in seeing our melancholy contest at an end, than in cultivating your friendship."



# Washington

you may be assured that the whole continent sympathises with you. It will be a consolation to you to reflect, that the thinking part of mankind do not form their judgment from events; and that their equity will ever attach equal glory to those actions which deserve success, and those which have been crowned with it. It is in the trying circumstances to which your excellency has been exposed, that the virtues of a great mind are displayed in their brightest lustre, and that a general's character is better known than in the moment of victory. It was yours, by every title which can give it; and the adverse element, which robbed you of your prize, can never deprive you of the glory due to you.

## IN SORE NEED OF HELP

[At the close of 1778 so grievous was the plight of Washington that utter defeat seemed imminent. He besought aid at the hands of Colonel Benjamin Harrison, Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates:]

HEADQUARTERS, December 30, 1778.

. . . Our affairs are in a more distressed, ruinous, and deplorable condition than they have been since the commencement of the war. By a faithful labourer, then, in the cause; by a man who is daily injuring his private estate without the smallest earthly advantage, not common to all in case of a favourable issue to the dispute; by one who wishes the prosperity of America most devoutly, and sees it, or thinks

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

he sees it, on the brink of ruin; you are besought most earnestly, my dear Colonel Harrison, to exert yourself in endeavouring to rescue your country, by sending your best and ablest men to Congress. These characters must not slumber nor sleep at home in such times of pressing danger. They must not content themselves with the enjoyment of places of honour or profit in their own country, while the common interests of America are mouldering and sinking into irretrievable ruin (if a remedy is not soon applied), ruin in which theirs also must ultimately be involved. If I were to be called upon to draw a picture of the times and of men, from what I have seen, heard, and in part know, I should in one word say, that idleness, dissipation, and extravagance seem to have laid fast hold of most of them; that speculation, peculation, and an insatiable thirst for riches, seem to have got the better of every other consideration, and almost of every order of men; that party disputes and personal quarrels are the great business of the day; whilst the momentous concerns of an empire, a great and accumulating debt, ruined finances, depreciated money, and want of credit (which in its consequences is the want of everything), are but secondary considerations, and postponed from day to day, from week to week, as if our affairs wore the most promising aspect. . . . In the present situation of things, I cannot help asking where are Mason, Wythe, Jefferson,

# Washington

Nicholson, Pendleton, Nelson, and another I could name? And why, if you are sufficiently impressed with your danger, do you not, as New York has done in the case of Mr. Jay, send an extra member or two, for at least a limited time, till the great business of the nation is put upon a more respectable and happy establishment? . . . I confess to you I feel more real distress on account of the present appearance of things, than I have done at any one time since the commencement of the dispute.

## CONGRATULATES LAFAYETTE

[In 1779 General Lafayette returned to France, where he was accorded the highest honours. Washington congratulates him:]

WEST POINT, September 30, 1779.

. . . It gave me infinite pleasure to hear, from yourself, of the favourable reception you met with from your sovereign, and of the joy which your safe arrival in France had diffused among your friends. I had no doubt that this would be the case. To hear it from yourself adds pleasure to the account. And here, my dear friend, let me congratulate you. None can do it with more warmth of affection, or sincere joy than myself. Your forward zeal in the cause of liberty; your singular attachment to this infant world; your ardent and persevering efforts, not only in America, but since your return to France, to serve the United States;

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

your polite attention to Americans, and your strict and uniform friendship for me, have ripened the first impressions of esteem and attachment, which I imbibed for you, into such perfect love and gratitude, as neither time nor absence can impair. This will warrant my assuring you that, whether in the character of an officer at the head of a corps of gallant French (if circumstances should require this), whether as a major-general commanding a division of the American army, or whether, after our swords and spears have given place to the ploughshare and the pruninghook, I see you as a private gentleman, a friend and companion, I shall welcome you with all the warmth of friendship to Columbia's shores; and, in the latter case, to my rural cottage, where homely fare and a cordial reception, shall be substituted for delicacies and costly living. This, from past experience, I know you can submit to; and if the lovely partner of your happiness will consent to participate with us in such rural entertainment and amusements, I can undertake, on behalf of Mrs. Washington, that she will do everything in her power to make Virginia agreeable to the Marchioness. My inclination and endeavours to do this cannot be doubted, when I assure you, that I love everybody that is dear to you, and consequently participate in the pleasure you feel in the prospect of again becoming a parent, and do most sincerely congratulate you and your

# Washington

lady on this fresh pledge she is about to give you of her love.

## ALMOST IN DESPAIR

[In March, 1781, an expedition in Virginia against Benedict Arnold was unsuccessful. This disappointment, coming after serious misfortunes, brought Washington to the brink of despair. He wrote to Colonel John Laurens, Minister at Paris:]

HEADQUARTERS, NEW WINDSOR,

April 8, 1781.

. . . The failure of this expedition, which was most flattering in the commencement, is much to be regretted; because a successful blow in that quarter would, in all probability, have given a decisive turn to our affairs in all the Southern states; because it has been attended with considerable expense on our part, and much inconvenience to the state of Virginia, by the assembling of our militia; because the world is disappointed at not seeing Arnold in gibbets; and above all because we stood in need of something to keep us afloat till the result of your mission is known; for be assured, my dear Laurens, day does not follow night more certainly, than it brings with it some additional proof of the impracticability of carrying on the war, without the aids you were directed to solicit. As an honest and candid man, as a man whose all depends on the final and happy termination of the present contest, I assert this, while I give it decisively as my opinion, that,

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

without a foreign loan, our present force (which is but the remnant of an army), cannot be kept together this campaign, much less will it be increased, and in readiness for another.

. . . If France delays a timely and powerful aid in the critical posture of our affairs, it will avail us nothing should she attempt it hereafter. We are at this hour suspended in the balance; not from choice, but from hard and absolute necessity; and you may rely on it as a fact, that we cannot transport the provisions from the states in which they are assessed, to the army, because we cannot pay the teamsters, who will no longer work for certificates. It is equally certain that the troops are fast approaching to nakedness, and that we have nothing to clothe them with; that the hospitals are without medicines, and our sick without nutriment except such as well men eat; that all our public works are at a stand, and the artificers disbanding. But why need I run into detail, when it may be declared in a word that we are at the end of our tether, and now or never our deliverance must come. . . . How easy would it be to retort the enemy's own game upon them; if it could be made to comport with the general plan of the war, to keep a superior fleet always in these seas, and France would put us in condition to be active, by advancing us money. The ruin of the enemy's schemes would then be certain; the bold game they are now playing would be the means to effect it; for they would

# Washington

be reduced to the necessity of concentrating their force at capital points; thereby giving up all the advantages they have gained in the Southern states, or be vulnerable everywhere. . . .

## HIS SUFFERING ARMY

[Hardship in the field provoked Washington's soldiers to the utmost discontent. He wrote to General Henry Knox, Secretary of War:]

HEADQUARTERS, October 2, 1782.

. . . While I premise that no one I have seen or heard of appears opposed to the principle of reducing the army as circumstances may require; yet I cannot help fearing the result of the measure in contemplation, under present circumstances, when I see such a number of men, goaded by a thousand stings of reflection on the past, and of anticipation on the future, about to be turned into the world, soured by penury, and what they call the ingratitude of the public, involved in debts, without one farthing of money to carry them home, and after having spent the flower of their days, and many of them their patrimonies, in establishing the freedom and independence of their country, and suffered everything that human nature is capable of enduring on this side of death. I repeat it, that when I consider the irritating circumstances, without one thing to soothe their feelings or dispel the gloomy prospects, I cannot avoid apprehending that a train of evils will follow of a very serious and distressing nature. . . .

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

I wish not to heighten the shades of the picture so far as the real life would justify me in doing or I would give anecdotes of patriotism and distress, which have scarcely ever been paralleled, never surpassed in the history of mankind. But you may rely upon it, the patience and long sufferance of this army are almost exhausted, and that there never was so great a spirit of discontent as at this instant. While in the field, I think it may be kept from breaking out into acts of outrage; but when we retire into winter-quarters, unless the storm is previously dissipated, I cannot be at ease respecting the consequences. It is high time for a peace.

## LET ONLY THE TRUTH ABOUT HIMSELF BE TOLD

[The severest critic of Washington was the valiant and eccentric General Charles Lee, who died in October, 1782. After his death it was proposed that his manuscripts be published. Mr. William Goddard asked Washington if any of these manuscripts which might be displeasing to him should be withheld from publication. He received this reply.]

MOUNT VERNON, JUNE 11, 1785.

. . . Your own good judgment must direct you in the publication of the manuscript papers of General Lee. I can have no request to make concerning the work. I never had a difference with that gentleman but on public grounds; and my conduct towards him on this occasion was such, only, as I felt myself indispensably bound to adopt in discharge of the public trust reposed



# Washington

in me. If this produced in him unfavourable sentiments of me, I can never consider the conduct I pursued, with respect to him, either wrong or improper, however I may regret that it may have been differently viewed by him, and that it excited his anger and animadversions. Should there appear in General Lee's writings anything injurious or unfriendly to me, the impartial and dispassionate world must decide how far I deserved it from the general tenor of my conduct.

I am gliding down the stream of life, and wish, as is natural, that my remaining days may be undisturbed and tranquil; and, conscious of my integrity, I would willingly hope that nothing would occur tending to give me anxiety; but should anything present itself in this or any other publication, I shall never undertake the painful task of recrimination, nor do I know that I should even enter upon my justification. I consider the communication you have made as a mark of great attention, and the whole letter as a proof of esteem.

## ON THE POLITICAL PERILS OF 1786

[John Jay, afterward Chief Justice, was in 1786 Secretary of Foreign Affairs. He communicated to Washington his fears of imminent political disaster; he felt even more apprehensive than during the war. In the course of his response Washington said:]

MOUNT VERNON, August 1, 1786.

. . . Your sentiments that our affairs are drawing rapidly to a crisis accord with my own.

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

What the event will be is also beyond the reach of my foresight. We have errors to correct. We have probably had too good an opinion of human nature in forming our confederation. Experience has taught us that men will not adopt and carry into execution measures the best calculated for their own good, without the intervention of coercive power. I do not conceive we can exist long as a nation, without lodging, somewhere, a power which will pervade the whole Union in as energetic a manner, as the authority of the state governments extends over the several states.

To be fearful of investing Congress, constituted as that body is, with ample authorities for national purposes, appears to me the very climax of popular absurdity and madness. Could Congress exert them for the detriment of the people, without injuring themselves in an equal or greater proportion? Are not their interests inseparably connected with those of their constituents? By the rotation of appointments must they not mingle frequently with the mass of the citizens? Is it not rather to be apprehended, if they were not possessed of the powers before described, that the individual members would be induced to use them, on many occasions, very timidly and inefficaciously, for fear of losing their popularity and future election? We must take human nature as we find it; perfection falls not to the share of mortals.

## Washington

What then is to be done? Things cannot go on in the same strain for ever. It is much to be feared, as you observe, that the better kind of people, being disgusted with the circumstances, will have their minds prepared for any revolution whatever. We are apt to run from one extreme to another. . . . I am told that even respectable characters speak of a monarchical form of government without horror. From thinking proceeds speaking, thence to acting is often but a single step. But how irrevocable and tremendous! What a triumph for our enemies to verify their predictions! What a triumph for the advocates of despotism to find that we are incapable of governing ourselves, and that systems, founded on the basis of equal liberty, are merely ideal and fallacious! Would to God that wise measures may be taken in time to avert the consequences we have but too much reason to apprehend.

Retired as I am from the world, I frankly acknowledge I cannot feel myself an unconcerned spectator. Yet having happily assisted in bringing the ship into port, and, having been fairly discharged, it is not my business to embark again on the sea of troubles. Nor could it be expected that my sentiments and opinion would have much weight on the minds of my countrymen. They have been neglected, though given as a last legacy, in a most solemn manner. I then perhaps had some claims to

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

public attention. I consider myself as having none at present.

## ON HIS NOMINATION AS FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

[In 1786, on the adoption of the Federal Constitution, it became necessary to elect a President of the United States. The nation strongly felt that Washington was the one man for this great office. Before the machinery of nomination and election could be set in motion, Colonel Lee, "Light Horse Harry Lee" of Virginia, a warm friend of Washington, urged him to accept the post which would certainly be offered to him. Washington responded:]

MOUNT VERNON, September 22, 1786.

. . . The event to which you allude may never happen, among other reasons, because if the partiality of my fellow-citizens conceive it to be a means by which the sinews of the new government would be strengthened, it will of consequence be obnoxious to those who are in opposition to it, many of whom will unquestionably be placed among the electors. This consideration alone would supersede the expediency of announcing any definitive and irrevocable resolution. You are among the small number of those who know my invincible attachment to domestic life, and that my sincerest wish is to continue in the enjoyment of it solely until my final hour. But the world would be neither so well instructed, nor so candidly disposed as to believe me uninfluenced by sinister motives, in case any circumstance should render a deviation from

the line of conduct I had prescribed to myself indispensable.

Should the contingency you suggest take place, and (for argument's sake alone let me say it) should my unfeigned reluctance to accept the office be overcome by a deference for the reason and opinions of my friends; might I not, after the declarations I have made (and heaven knows they were made in the sincerity of my heart), in the judgment of the impartial world and of posterity, be chargeable with levity and inconsistency, if not with rashness and ambition? Nay, further, would there not be some apparent foundation for the two former charges? Now justice to myself, and tranquillity of conscience require, that I should act a part, if not above imputation, at least capable of vindication. Nor will you conceive me to be too solicitous for reputation. Though I prize as I ought the good opinion of my fellow citizens, yet, if I know myself, I would not seek popularity at the expense of one social duty or moral virtue.

While doing what my conscience informed me was right, as it respected my God, my country and myself, I should despise all the party clamour and unjust censure, which must be expected from some, whose personal enmity might be occasioned by their hostility to the Government. I am conscious, that I fear alone to give any real occasion for obloquy, and that I do not dread to meet with unmerited reproach. And certain I am, whensoever I shall be convinced

the good of my country requires my reputation to be put in risk, regard for my own fame will not come in competition with an object of so much magnitude.

If I declined the task, it would lie upon quite another principle. Notwithstanding my advanced season of life, my increasing fondness for agricultural amusements, and my growing love of retirement, augment and confirm my decided predilection for the character of a private citizen, yet it would be no one of these motives, nor the hazard to which my former reputation might be exposed, nor the terror of encountering new fatigues and troubles, that would deter me from an acceptance; but a belief that some other person, who had less pretence and less inclination to be excused, could execute all the duties full as satisfactorily as myself.

## HAD NO WISH TO BE PRESIDENT

[There was a delay in forming a quorum of Congress, so that the votes for President by the electoral college could not be counted until early in April. The vote proved to be unanimously for Washington. A few days before the count he wrote to General Knox:]

MOUNT VERNON, April 1, 1787.

. . . The delay may be compared to a reprieve; for in confidence I tell you (with the world it would obtain little credit), that my movements to the chair of government will be accompanied by feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution;

# Washington

so unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly consumed in public cares, to quit a peaceful abode for an ocean of difficulties, without that competency of political skill, abilities and inclination, which are necessary to manage the helm. I am sensible that I am embarking the voice of the people, and a good name of my own, on this voyage; but what returns will be made for them, heaven alone can foretell. Integrity and firmness are all I can promise. These, be the voyage long or short, shall never forsake me, although I may be deserted by all men; for of the consolations, which are to be derived from these, under any circumstances, the world cannot deprive me.

## HIS DELIGHT IN AGRICULTURE

[Washington was happiest at home, on his plantation, sowing and reaping, building and road-making. He was well abreast of the agricultural science of his day, and one of his correspondents was Arthur Young, the famous English writer on tillage. He sent him a note:]

MOUNT VERNON, December 4, 1788.

. . . The more I am acquainted with agricultural affairs, the better I am pleased with them; insomuch that I can nowhere find so much satisfaction as in those innocent and useful pursuits. In indulging these feelings, I am led to reflect how much more delightful to an unbauched mind is the task of making improvements on the earth, than all the vainglory that can be acquired from ravaging it by the most uninterrupted career of conquest. I design this

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

observation only to show how much, as a member of human society, I feel myself obliged by your labours to render respectable and advantageous, an employment which is more congenial to the natural disposition of mankind than any other.

## A PEACEMAKER

[There was at times dissension among the counsellors of Washington. Jefferson and Hamilton, for whom he had the highest respect, quarreled often and seriously. At a time when Indians on the Northern and Southern frontiers were giving Washington much trouble, with the aid, as he had reason to believe, of England and Spain, he concludes a letter to Jefferson:]

MOUNT VERNON, August 23, 1792.

. . . How unfortunate then, and how much to be regretted that, while we are encompassed on all sides with armed enemies and insidious friends, internal dissension should be harrowing and tearing our vitals. The latter, to me, is the most serious, the most alarming and the most afflicting of the two; and without more charity for the opinions and acts of one another in governmental matters, or some more infallible criterion by which the truth of speculative opinions, before they have undergone the test of experience, are to be forejudged, than has yet fallen to the lot of fallibility, I believe it will be difficult, if not impracticable, to manage the reins of government, or to keep the parts of it together; for if, instead of laying our shoulders to the machine after measures are decided on, one pulls this way and another that, before the



utility of the thing is fairly tried, it must inevitably be torn asunder; and, in my opinion, the fairest prospect of happiness and prosperity that ever was presented to man, will be lost perhaps forever.

My earnest wish and fondest hope, therefore, is, that instead of wounding suspicions and irritating charges, there may be liberal allowances, mutual forbearances, and temporising yieldings on all sides. Under the exercise of these, matters will go on smoothly, and, if possible, more prosperously. Without them, everything must rub; the wheels of government will clog; our enemies will triumph, and, by throwing their weight into the disaffected scale, may accomplish the ruin of the goodly fabric we have been erecting.

## ON RETIRING FROM OFFICE

[On the second last day of his official career, Washington thus addressed his friend, General Henry Knox, Secretary of War:]

PHILADELPHIA, March 2, 1797.

. . . To the wearied traveller, who sees a resting-place, and is bending his body to lean thereon, I now compare myself; but to be suffered to do this in peace, is too much to be endured by some. To misrepresent my motives, to reprobate my politics, and to weaken the confidence which has been reposed in my administration, are objects which cannot be relinquished by those who will be satisfied with nothing

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

short of a change in our political system. The consolation, however, which results from conscious rectitude, and the approving voice of my country, unequivocally expressed by its representatives, deprive their sting of its poison, and place in the same point of view, both the weakness and malignity of their efforts.

Although the prospect of retirement is most grateful to my soul, and I have not a wish to mix again in the great world, or to partake in its politics, yet I am not without my regrets at parting with (perhaps never more to meet) the few intimates whom I love, and among these, be assured, you are one. . . . The remainder of my life (which in the course of nature cannot be long), will be occupied in rural amusements; and though I shall seclude myself as much as possible from the noisy and bustling crowd, none would, more than myself, be regaled by the company of those I esteem, at Mount Vernon; more than twenty miles from which, after I arrive there, it is not likely that I shall ever be.

## LOVE AND MARRIAGE

[Thus far we have had glimpses of Washington as the commander and the statesman. Let us take a parting glance at him as a man who knew the might of love, who had known many years of happy married life. He writes to his wife's grand-daughter, Eleanor Parke Custis.]

PHILADELPHIA, January 16, 1795.

. . . Men and women feel the same inclination toward each other now that they

## Washington

always have done, and which they will continue to do, until there is a new order of things; and you, as others have done, may find that the passions of your sex are easier raised than allayed. Do not, therefore, boast too soon, nor too strongly of your insensibility to, or a resistance of, its powers. In the composition of the human frame there is a good deal of inflammable material, however dormant it may be for a time, and like an intimate acquaintance of yours, when the torch is put to it that which is within you may burst into a blaze.

Love is said to be an involuntary passion, and it is therefore contended that it cannot be resisted. This is true in part only, for like all things else, when nourished and supplied plentifully with aliment, it is rapid in its progress; but let these be withdrawn, and it may be stifled in its birth, or much stunted in its growth. For example (the same may be said of the other sex) a young woman, beautiful and accomplished, will, while her hand and heart are undisposed of, turn the heads and set the circle in which she moves on fire. Let her marry and what is the consequence? The madness ceases, and all is quiet again. Why? Not because there is any diminution in the charms of the lady, but because there is an end of hope. Hence it follows that love may be and therefore ought to be under the guidance of reason for although we cannot avoid first impressions, we may assuredly place them under guard; and my motives for

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

troubling you are to show you, while you remain Eleanor Parke Custis, spinster, and retain the resolution to love with moderation, at least until you have secured your game, the way by which it may be accomplished.

When the fire is beginning to kindle and your heart growing warm, propound these questions to it. Who is this invader? Have I a competent knowledge of him? Is he a man of good character? A man of sense? For, be assured, a sensible woman can never be happy with a fool. What has been his walk in life? . . . Is his fortune sufficient to maintain me in the manner I have been accustomed to live, and my sisters do live? And is he one to whom my friends can have no reasonable objection? If all these interrogatories can be satisfactorily answered, there will remain but one more to be asked; that, however, is an important one. Have I sufficient ground to conclude that his affections are engaged by me? Without this the heart of sensibility will struggle against a passion that is not reciprocated — delicacy, custom, or call it by what epithet you will, have precluded all advances on your part. The declaration, without the most indirect invitation of yours, must proceed from the man, to render it permanent and valuable, and nothing short of good sense and an easy, unaffected conduct can draw the line between prudery and coquetry. . .

## JEFFERSON

["The Writings of Thomas Jefferson," in twelve volumes, are published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York. They were edited by the late Paul Leicester Ford, who contributed an Introduction of high critical value. He said in part:

". . . In the rebuilding of government [after the Revolution], the classes secured an influence far out of proportion to their numbers. In the state constitutions they succeeded in somewhat curtailing and limiting the popular control; and later, in the formation of our national constitution they sought still further to wrest powers from the people, both by grants, which interposed barriers to the direct delegation of power from the people to the executive, judiciary, and one of the legislative branches, and by clauses properly worded so as to leave the question of the quantity of power granted to the decision of men who would almost certainly be drawn from the classes. And a resulting political party attempted to carry this policy still further. Had government been merely a matter of intellect and ability, the Federalists would have succeeded in controlling and fixing its character in this country. That when they had done their work of construction, they were excluded from office, without ever comprehending the reason, proves how little they understood the tendency, intelligence, and power of the forces they were attempting to circumscribe. Unlike the Federalists, Jefferson was willing to discard the tradition of ages — that the people must be protected against themselves by the brains, money, and 'better elements' of the country — and for this reason American democracy made him its chosen agent and mouthpiece.

". . . Because he believed that only the people truly knew what the people needed; that those who could take care of themselves were wise and practical enough to help care for the nation; and that the only way of enforcing laws was that they should be made by those who are to obey them, he undertook, with reluctance and self-sacrifice, to be

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

the instrument of popular action. That he was the founder of the Democratic party is a claim little less than absurd, for there has always been, and always will be, such a party. But he united the democratic elements on certain principles and objects, and proved himself such a leader as the party has seldom been able to obtain. . . . His methods and results were not always good. His character and conduct had many serious flaws. Yet in some subtle way the people understood him, and forgave in him weaknesses and defects they have seldom condoned. And eventually this judgment will universally obtain, as the fact becomes clearer and clearer, that neither national independence nor state sovereignty, with the national and party rancours that attach to them, were the controlling aim and attempt of his life; that no party or temporary advantage was the object of his endeavours, but that he fought for the ever enduring privilege of personal freedom . . ."

In 1821, in his seventy-seventh year, Jefferson began writing an autobiography. He carried it no further than to 1790. Its pages have been drawn upon for three of the selections here presented.

Many lives of Jefferson have appeared. Two of them may here be named: the *Life* by Henry S. Randall, in three volumes, published in 1858 by J. B. Lippincott, Philadelphia; and "*Thomas Jefferson*," by John T. Morse, Jr., a volume of the *American Statesmen* series, published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston and New York. — Ed.]

## HOW THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WAS WRITTEN

[TO JAMES MADISON]

MONTICELLO, August 30, 1823.

. . . You have doubtless seen Timothy Pickering's Fourth of July observations on the Declaration of Independence. If his principles and prejudices, personal and political, gave us

no reason to doubt whether he had truly quoted the information he alleges to have received from Mr. Adams, I should then say that in some of the particulars, Mr. Adams's memory has led him into unquestionable error. At the age of eighty-eight, and forty-seven years after the transactions of Independence, this is not wonderful. Nor should I, at the age of eighty, venture to oppose my memory to his, were it not supported by written notes, taken by myself at the moment and on the spot.

He says, "The committee of five, to wit, Doctor Franklin, Sherman, Livingston and ourselves, met, and discussed the subjects, and then appointed him and myself to make the draft; that we, as a sub-committee, met and conned the paper over, and he does not remember that he made or suggested a single alteration." Now these details are quite incorrect. The committee of five met; no such thing as a sub-committee was proposed, but they unanimously pressed on myself alone to undertake the draft. I consented; I drew it: but before I reported it to the committee, I communicated it separately to Dr. Franklin and Mr. Adams, requesting their corrections, because they were the two members of whose judgments and amendments I wished most to have the benefit, before presenting it to the committee; and you have seen the original paper now in your hands, with the corrections of Dr. Franklin and Mr. Adams interlined in their own hand-

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

writings. Their alterations were two or three only, and merely verbal.

I then wrote a fair copy, reported it to the committee, and from them, unaltered, to Congress. This personal communication and consultation with Mr. Adams, he has misremembered into the actings of a sub-committee. Pickering's observations, and Mr. Adams's in addition, "that it contained no new ideas, that it is a commonplace compilation, its sentiments hackneyed in Congress for two years before, and its essence contained in Otis's pamphlet," may all be true. Of that I am not to be the judge. Richard Henry Lee charged it as copied from Locke's Treatise on Government. Otis's pamphlet I never saw, and whether I had gathered my ideas from reading or reflection I do not know. I know only that I turned to neither book nor pamphlet in writing it. I did not consider it as any part of my charge to invent new ideas altogether, and to offer no sentiment which had ever been expressed before. Had Mr. Adams been so restrained, Congress would have lost the benefit of his bold and impressive advocations of the rights of revolution. For no man's confident and fervid addresses, more than Mr. Adams's, encouraged and supported us through the difficulties surrounding us, which, like the ceaseless action of gravity, weighed on us by night and day. Yet, on the same ground, we may ask which of those elevated thoughts was new, or can be



# Jefferson

affirmed never before to have entered the conceptions of man.

## AGAINST A LANDED ARISTOCRACY

[FROM THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY]

On October 12, 1776, I obtained leave to bring in a bill in the Virginia House of Delegates, declaring tenants of entailed estates to hold their lands in fee simple [without entail]. In the earlier times of the colony, when lands were to be obtained for little or nothing, some provident individuals procured large grants, and, desirous of founding great families for themselves, entailed them on their descendants. The transmission of this property from generation to generation in the same name raised up a distinct set of families who, being privileged by law in the perpetuation of their wealth, were thus formed into a patrician order, distinguished by the splendour and luxury of their establishments. From this order, too, the king habitually selected his Counsellors of State, the hope of which distinction devoted the whole corps to the interests and will of the crown. To annul this privilege, and instead of an aristocracy of wealth, of more harm and danger than benefit to society, to make an opening for the aristocracy of virtue and talent, which nature has wisely provided for the direction of the interests of society, and scattered with equal hand through all its conditions, was deemed essential to a well ordered

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

republic. To effect it no violence was necessary, no deprivation of natural right, but rather an enlargement of it by a repeal of the law. For this would authorise the present holder to divide the property among his children equally, as his affections were divided; and would place them, by natural generation on a level of their fellow citizens. . . . The bill passed.

## TOO MUCH TALK IN CONGRESS

### [FROM THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY]

Our body [Congress in 1783] was little numerous, but very contentious. Day after day was wasted on the most unimportant questions. My colleague, John F. Mercer, was one of those afflicted with the morbid rage of debate; of an ardent mind, prompt imagination, and copious flow of words, he heard with impatience any logic which was not his own. Sitting near me on some occasion of a trifling but wordy debate, he asked how I could sit in silence hearing so much false reasoning which a word should refute. I observed to him that to refute indeed was easy, but to silence impossible. That in measures brought forward by myself, I took the labouring oar, as was incumbent on me; but that in general I was willing to listen. If every sound argument or objection was used by some one or other of the numerous debaters, it was enough: if not, I thought it sufficient to suggest the omission, without going into a

repetition of what had already been said by others. That this was a waste and an abuse of the time and patience of the house which could not be justified. And I believe that if the members of deliberative bodies were to observe this course generally, they would do in a day what takes them a week, and it is really more questionable, than may at first be thought, whether Bonaparte's dumb legislature which said nothing and did much, may not be preferable to one which talks much and does nothing. I served with General Washington in the legislature of Virginia before the Revolution, and, during it, with Dr. Franklin in Congress. I never heard either of them speak ten minutes at a time, nor to any but the main point which was to decide the question. They laid their shoulders to the great points, knowing that the little ones would follow of themselves. If the present Congress errs in too much talking, how can it be otherwise in a body to which the people send one hundred and fifty lawyers, whose trade it is to question everything, yield nothing, and talk by the hour? . . .

## A RETROSPECT AT FIFTY-SEVEN

[WRITTEN IN 1800]

I have sometimes asked myself, whether my country is the better for my having lived at all? I do not know that it is. I have been the instrument of doing the following things; but

they would have been done by others; some of them, perhaps, a little better:

The Rivanna had never been used for navigation; scarcely an empty canoe had ever passed down it. Soon after I came of age, I examined its obstructions, set on foot a subscription for removing them, got an Act of Assembly passed, and the thing effected, so as to be used completely and fully for carrying down all our produce.

The Declaration of Independence.

I proposed the demolition of the church establishment and the freedom of religion. It could only be done by degrees; to wit, the Act of 1776, chapter 2, exempted dissenters from contributions to the Church, and left the Church clergy to be supported by voluntary contributions of their own sect, was continued from year to year, and made perpetual 1779, chapter 36. I prepared the act for religious freedom in 1777, as part of the revision, which was not reported to the Assembly till 1779, and that particular law not passed till 1785, and then by the efforts of Mr. Madison.

The act of putting an end to entails.

The act of prohibiting the importation of slaves.

The act concerning citizens, and establishing the natural right of man to expatriate himself at will.

The act changing the course of descents, and giving the inheritance to all the children, etc., equally, I drew as part of the revision.

The act for apportioning crimes and punishments, part of the same work, I drew. . . .

# Jefferson

In 1789 and 1790, I had a great number of olive plants, of the best kind, sent from Marseilles to Charleston, for South Carolina and Georgia. They were planted, and are flourishing; and, though not yet multiplied, they will be the germ of that cultivation in those States.

In 1790, I got a cask of heavy upland rice, from the river Denbigh, in Africa, about lat.  $9^{\circ} 30'$  north, which I sent to Charleston, in hopes it might supersede the culture of the wet rice, which renders South Carolina and Georgia so pestilential through the summer. It was divided, and a part sent to Georgia. I know not whether it has been attended to in South Carolina, but it has spread in the upper parts of Georgia, so as to have become almost general, and is highly prized. Perhaps it may answer in Tennessee and Kentucky. The greatest service which can be rendered any country is to add a useful plant to its culture, especially a bread grain; next in value to bread is oil.

[Three years after he wrote these notes, Jefferson effected the purchase of a territory from France which in 1908 sustains at least twenty millions of the population of the United States.]

## REGARDING THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE

[TO M. DUPONT DE NEMOURS, MEMBER OF  
THE COUNCIL OF ANCIENTS, PARIS.]

WASHINGTON, November 1, 1803.

Your favours of April the 6th and June the 27th were duly received, and with the welcome

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

which everything brings from you. The treaty which has so happily sealed the friendship of our two countries, has been received here with general acclamation. Some inflexible Federalists have still ventured to brave the public opinion. It will fix their character with the world and with posterity, who, not descending to the other points of difference between us, will judge them by this fact, so palpable as to speak for itself, in all times and places. For myself and my country I thank you for the aids you have given in it; and I congratulate you on having lived to give those aids in a transaction replete with blessings to unborn millions of men, and which will mark the face of a portion of the globe so extensive as that which now composes the United States of America. It is true that at this moment a little cloud hovers in the horizon. The Government of Spain has protested against the right of France to transfer; and it is possible she may refuse possession, and that this may bring on acts of force. But against such neighbours as France there, and the United States here, what she can expect from so gross a compound of folly and false faith, is not to be found in the book of wisdom. She is afraid of her enemies in Mexico. But not more than we are. Our policy will be to form New Orleans and the country on both sides of it on the Gulf of Mexico, into a state; and, as to all above that, to transplant our Indians into it, constituting them a *Maréchaussée* [jurisdic-

tion] to prevent emigrants crossing the river, until we shall have filled up all the vacant country on this side. This will secure both Spain and us as to the mines of Mexico, for half a century, and we may safely trust the provisions of that time to the men who shall live in it.

## ARISTOCRACIES REAL AND UNREAL

[TO JOHN ADAMS]

MONTICELLO, October 28, 1813.

. . . I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents. Formerly, bodily powers gave place among the aristoi [best]. But since the invention of gun-powder has armed the weak as well as the strong with missile death, bodily strength, like beauty, good humour, politeness, and other accomplishments, have become but an auxiliary ground of distinction. There is also an artificial aristocracy, founded on wealth and birth, without either virtue or talents; for with these it would belong to the first class. The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society. And, indeed, it would have been inconsistent in creation to have formed man for the social state, and not to have provided virtue and wisdom enough to manage the concerns of the society. May we not even

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

say, that form of government is the best, which provides the most effectually for a pure selection of these natural aristoi [best] into the officers of government? The artificial aristocracy is a mischievous ingredient in government, and provision should be made to prevent its ascendancy. On the question, what is the best provision, you and I differ; but we differ as rational friends, using the free exercise of our own reason, and mutually indulging its errors. You think it best to put the pseudo-aristoi [counterfeit best] into a separate chamber of legislation, where they may be hindered from doing mischief by their coördinate branches, and where, also, they may be a protection to wealth against the Agrarian and plundering enterprises of the majority of the people. I think that to give them power in order to prevent them from doing mischief, is arming them for it, and increasing instead of remedying the evil. For if the coördinate branches can arrest their action, so may they that of the coördinates. Mischief may be done negatively as well as positively. Of this, a cabal in the Senate of the United States has furnished many proofs. Nor do I believe them necessary to protect the wealthy; because enough of these will find their way into every branch of the legislation, to protect themselves. From fifteen to twenty legislatures of our own in action for thirty years past, have proved that no fears of an equalisation of property are to be apprehended from them. I think the best



remedy is exactly that provided by our Constitutions, to leave to the citizens the free election and separation of the aristoi from the pseudo-aristoi, of the wheat from the chaff. In general, they will elect the really good and wise. In some instances, wealth may corrupt, and birth blind them; but not in sufficient degree to endanger the society.

## VIEWS ON EDUCATION

[Jefferson was a life-long friend of public education. In 1819 he founded the University of Virginia at Charlottesville.]

. . . At the first session of our legislature after the Declaration of Independence, we passed a law abolishing entails. And this was followed by one abolishing the privilege of primogeniture [inheritance chiefly by eldest son] and dividing the lands of intestates [owners of property who leave no wills] equally among all their children, or other representatives. These laws, drawn by myself, laid the axe to the root of pseudo-aristocracy. . . . And had another which I had prepared been adopted by the legislature, our work would have been complete. It was a bill for the more general diffusion of learning. This proposed to divide every county into wards of five or six miles square, like your townships; to establish in every ward a free school for reading, writing, and common arithmetic; to provide for the annual selection of the best subjects from these schools, who might receive,

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

at the public expense, a higher degree of education at a district school; and from these district schools to select a certain number of the most promising subjects, to be completed [in education] at a university, where all the useful sciences should be taught. Worth and genius would thus have been sought out from every condition of life, and completely prepared by education for defeating the competition of wealth and birth for public trusts. My proposition had, for a further object, to impart to these wards those portions of self-government for which they are best qualified, by confiding to them the care of their poor, their roads, police, elections, the nomination of jurors, administration of justice in small cases, elementary exercises of militia; in short, to have them little republics, with a warden at the head of each, for all those concerns which, being under their eye, they would better manage than the larger republics of the county or state.

## EDUCATION FOR THE FARMER

[TO DAVID WILLIAMS]

WASHINGTON, November 14, 1803.

. . . The greatest evils of populous society have ever appeared to me to spring from the vicious distribution of its members among the occupations called for. I have no doubt that those nations are essentially right, which leave this to individual choice, as a better guide to an advantageous distribution, than any other

which could be devised. But when, by a blind concourse, particular occupations are ruinously overdone, and others left in want of hands, the national authorities can do much toward restoring the equilibrium. On the revival of letters, learning became the universal favourite. And with reason, because there was not enough of it existing to manage the affairs of the nation to the best advantage. All the efforts of society, therefore, were directed to the increase of learning, and the inducements of respect, ease, and profit were held up for its encouragement. To these incitements were added the powerful fascinations of large cities. These circumstances have long since produced an overcharge in the class of competitors for learned occupation, and great distress among the supernumerary candidates; and the more, as their habits of life have disqualified them for reëntering the laborious class.

The evil cannot be suddenly, nor perhaps ever entirely cured. Doubtless there are many means which the nation might bring to bear on this subject. Public opinion and public encouragement are among these. The class principally defective is that of agriculture. It is the first in utility and ought to be the first in respect. The same artificial means which have been used to produce a competition in learning, may be equally successful in restoring agriculture to its primary dignity in the eyes of men. It is a science of the very first order. It counts among

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

its handmaids Chemistry, Natural Philosophy, Mechanics, Mathematics, Natural History and Botany. In every college and university, a Professorship of Agriculture, and the class of its students, might be honoured as the first, young men closing their academical education with this, as the crown of all other sciences, fascinated with its solid charms, and at a time when they are to choose an occupation, instead of crowding the other classes, would return to the farms of their fathers, their own, or that of others, and replenish and invigorate a calling, now languishing. The schools, instead of storing their pupils with a lore which the present state of society does not call for, converted into schools of agriculture, might restore them to that great calling, qualified to enrich and honour themselves, and to increase the productions of the nation instead of consuming them. . . .

## AN OPTIMIST AT SEVENTY-THREE

[TO JOHN ADAMS]

MONTICELLO, April 8, 1816.

You ask, if I would agree to live my seventy or rather seventy-three years over again? To which I say yea. I think with you that it is a good world on the whole; that it has been framed on a principle of benevolence, and more pleasure than pain dealt out to us. There are, indeed, (who might say nay) gloomy and hypochondriac minds, inhabitants of diseased bodies, disgusted

with the present, and despairing of the future; always counting that the worst will happen, because it may happen. To these I say, how much pain have cost us the evils which have never happened! My temperament is sanguine. I steer my bark with Hope in the head, leaving Fear astern. My hopes, indeed, sometimes fail; but not oftener than the forebodings of the gloomy. There are, I acknowledge, even in the happiest life, some terrible convulsions, heavy set-offs against the opposite page of the account. I have often wondered for what good end the sensations of grief could be intended. All our other passions, within proper bounds, have a useful object. And the perfection of the moral character is, not in a stoical apathy, so hypocritically vaunted, and so untruly too, because impossible, but in a just equilibrium of all the passions. I wish the pathologists then, would tell us what is the use of grief in the economy, and of what good it is the cause, proximate or remote.

## ON THE CHARACTER OF WASHINGTON

[TO DR. WALTER JONES]

MONTICELLO, January 2, 1814.

I think I knew General Washington intimately and thoroughly; and were I called on to delineate his character, it should be in terms like these:

His mind was great and powerful, without being of the very first order; his penetration strong, though not so acute as that of a Newton,

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

Bacon, or Locke; and as far as he saw, no judgment was ever sounder. It was slow in operation, being little aided by invention or imagination, but sure in conclusion. Hence the common remark of his officers, of the advantage he derived from councils of war, where hearing all suggestions, he selected whatever was best; and certainly no general ever planned his battles more judiciously. But if deranged during the course of the action, if any member of his plan was dislocated by sudden circumstances, he was slow in re-adjustment. The consequence was, that he often failed in the field, and rarely against an enemy in station, as at Boston and York. He was incapable of fear, meeting personal dangers with the calmest unconcern. Perhaps the strongest feature in his character was prudence, never acting until every circumstance, every consideration, was maturely weighed; refraining if he saw a doubt, but, when once decided, going through with his purpose, whatever obstacles opposed. His integrity was most pure, his justice the most inflexible I have ever known, no motives of interest or consanguinity, of friendship, or hatred, being able to bias his decision. He was, indeed, in every sense of the words, a wise, a good, and a great man. His temper was naturally irritable and high toned; but reflection and resolution had obtained a firm and habitual ascendancy over it. If ever, however, it broke its bonds, he was most tremendous in his wrath.

## Jefferson

In his expenses he was honourable, but exact; liberal in contributions to whatever promised utility; but frowning and unyielding on all visionary projects, and all unworthy calls on his charity. His heart was not warm in its affections; but he exactly calculated every man's value, and gave him a solid esteem proportioned to it. His person, you know, was fine, his stature exactly what one would wish, his deportment easy, erect and noble; the best horseman of his age, and the most graceful figure that could be seen on horseback. Although in the circle of his friends, where he might be unreserved with safety, he took a free share in conversation, his colloquial talents were not above mediocrity, possessing neither copiousness of ideas nor fluency of words. In public, when called on for a sudden opinion, he was unready, short and embarrassed. Yet he wrote readily, rather diffusely, in an easy and correct style. This he had acquired by conversation with the world, for his education was merely reading, writing, and common arithmetic, to which he added surveying at a later day. His time was employed in action chiefly, reading little, and that only in agriculture and English history. His correspondence became necessarily extensive, and, with journalising his agricultural proceedings, occupied most of his leisure hours within doors. On the whole, his character was, in its mass, perfect, in nothing bad, in few points indifferent; and it may truly be said, that never did

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

nature and fortune combine more perfectly to make a man great, and to place him in the same constellation with whatever worthies have merited from man an everlasting remembrance. For his was the singular destiny and merit, of leading the armies of his country successfully through an arduous war, for the establishment of its independence; of conducting its councils through the birth of a government, new in its forms and principles, until it had settled down into a quiet and orderly train; and of scrupulously obeying the laws through the whole of his career, civil and military, of which the history of the world furnishes no other example. . . .

## ON STATE RIGHTS

[TO WILLIAM B. GILES]

MONTICELLO, December 26, 1825.

I wrote you a letter yesterday, of which you will be free to make what use you please. This will contain matters not intended for the public eye. I see, as you do, and with the deepest affliction, the rapid strides with which the federal branch of our Government is advancing toward the usurpation of all the rights reserved to the states, and the consolidation in itself of all powers, foreign and domestic; and that too, by constructions which, if legitimate, leave no limits to their power. Take together the decisions of the federal court, the doctrines of the President, and the misconstructions of the



constitutional compact acted on by the legislature of the federal branch, and it is but too evident, that the three ruling branches of that department are in combination to strip their colleagues, the state authorities, of the powers reserved by them, and to exercise themselves all functions foreign and domestic. Under the power to regulate commerce, they assume indefinitely that also over agriculture and manufactures, and call it regulation to take the earnings of one of these branches of industry, and that, too, the most depressed, and put them into the pockets of the other, the most flourishing of all. Under the authority to establish post roads, they claim that of cutting down mountains for the construction of roads, of digging canals, and aided by a little sophistry on the words "general welfare," a right to do, not only the acts to effect that, which are specifically enumerated and permitted, but whatsoever they shall think, or pretend will be for the general welfare. And what is our resource for the preservation of the Constitution? Reason and argument? You might as well reason and argue with the marble columns encircling them. The representatives chosen by ourselves? They are joined in the combination, some from incorrect views of government, some from corrupt ones, sufficient voting together to outnumber the sound parts; and with majorities only of one, two, or three, bold enough to go forward in defiance. Are we then

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

to stand to our arms, with the hot-headed Georgian? No. That must be the last resource, not to be thought of until much longer and greater sufferings. If every infraction of a compact of so many parties is to be resisted at once, as a dissolution of it, none can ever be formed which would last one year. We must have patience and longer endurance than with our brethren while under delusion; give them time for reflection and experience of consequences; keep ourselves in a situation to profit by the chapter of accidents; and separate from our companions only when the sole alternatives left are the dissolution of our Union with them or submission to a government without limitation of powers. Between these two evils, when we must make a choice, there can be no hesitation. But in the meanwhile, the states should be watchful to note every material usurpation on their rights; to denounce them as they occur in the most peremptory terms; to protest against them as wrongs to which our present submission shall be considered, not as acknowledgments or precedents of right, but as a temporary yielding to the lesser evil, until their accumulation shall outweigh that of separation. I would go still further, and give to the federal member, by a regular amendment of the Constitution, a right to make roads and canals of intercommunication between the states, providing sufficiently against corrupt practices in Congress (log-rolling, etc.) by declaring that

the federal proportion of each state of the moneys so employed, shall be in works within the state, or elsewhere with its consent, and with a due salvo of jurisdiction. This is the course which I think safest and best as yet.

## AS TO THE JUDICIARY

### [FROM THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY]

[Jefferson recalls the Convention held in 1787, in Philadelphia, for the purpose of drafting the Constitution. He describes how the original proposal of electing the President was amended. He continues:]

But there was another amendment of which none of us thought at the time, and in the omission of which lurks the germ that is to destroy this happy combination of national powers in the General Government for matters of national concern, and independent powers in the states for what concerns the states severally. In England it was a great point gained at the Revolution that the commissions of the judges, which had hitherto been during pleasure, should thenceforth be made during good behaviour. A judiciary dependent on the will of the King had proved itself the most oppressive of all tools in the hands of that magistrate. Nothing then could be more salutary than a change there to the tenure of good behaviour; and the question of good behaviour left to the vote of a simple majority in the two houses of Parliament. Before the Revolution [in America] we were all good English Whigs, cordial in their

free principles, and in their jealousies of their executive magistrate. These jealousies are very apparent in all state constitutions; and in the general government in this instance, we have gone even beyond the English caution, by requiring a vote of two-thirds in one of the Houses for removing a judge; a vote so impossible where any defence is made, before men of ordinary prejudices and passions, that our judges are effectually independent of the nation. But this ought not to be. I would not indeed make them dependent on the executive authority, as they formerly were in England; but I deem it indispensable to the continuance of this government that they should be submitted to some practical and impartial control: and that this, to be imparted, must be compounded of a mixture of state and federal authorities. It is not enough that honest men are appointed judges. All know the influence of interest on the mind of man, and how unconsciously his judgment is warped by that influence. To this bias add that of the *esprit de corps*, of their peculiar maxim and creed that "it is the office of a good judge to enlarge his jurisdiction," and the absence of responsibility, and how can we expect impartial decision between the General Government, of which they are themselves so eminent a part, and an individual state from which they have nothing to hope or fear? We have seen, too, that, contrary to all correct example, they are in the habit of going out of

the question before them, to throw an anchor ahead and grapple further hold for future advances of power. They are then in fact the corps of sappers and miners, steadily working to undermine the independent rights of the states, and to consolidate all power in the hands of that government in which they have so important a freehold estate.

But it is not by the consolidation or concentration of powers, but by their distribution, that good government is effected. Were not this great country already divided into states, that division must [would] be made, that each might do for itself what concerns itself directly, and what it can so much better do than a distant authority. Every state again is divided into counties, each to take care of what lies within its own local bounds; each county again into townships or wards, to manage minuter details; and every ward into farms, to be governed each by its individual proprietor. Were we directed from Washington when to sow and when to reap, we should soon want bread. It is by this partition of cares, descending in gradation from general to particular, that the mass of human affairs may be best managed for the good and prosperity of all. I repeat that I do not charge the judges with wilful and ill-intentioned error; but honest error must be arrested when its toleration leads to public ruin. As for the safety of society, we commit honest maniacs to Bedlam, so judges should be

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

withdrawn from their bench, whose erroneous biases are leading us to dissolution. It may indeed harm them in fame or fortune; but it saves the republic, which is the first and supreme law.

## COUNSEL TO A GRANDSON

[TO THOMAS JEFFERSON SMITH]

MONTICELLO, February 21, 1825.

This letter will, to you, be as one from the dead. The writer will be in the grave before you can weigh its counsels. Your affectionate and excellent father has requested that I would address to you something which might possibly have a favourable influence on the course of life you have to run, and I, too, as a namesake, feel an interest in that course. Few words will be necessary, with good dispositions on your part. Adore God. Reverence and cherish your parents. Love your neighbour as yourself, and your country more than yourself. Be just. Be true. Murmur not at the ways of Providence. So shall the life into which you have entered be the portal to one of eternal and ineffable bliss. And if to the dead it is permitted to care for the things of this world, every action of your life will be under my regard. Farewell.

THE PORTRAIT OF A GOOD MAN BY THE MOST  
SUBLIME OF POETS, FOR YOUR IMITATION

Lord, who's the happy man that may to Thy  
blest courts repair,

## Jefferson

Not stranger-like to visit them, but to inhabit there?

'Tis he whose every thought and deed by rules of virtue moves,

Whose generous tongue disdains to speak the thing his heart disproves.

Who never did a slander forge, his neighbour's fame to wound,

Nor hearken to a false report, by malice whispered round.

Who vice, in all its pomp and power, can treat with just neglect;

And piety, though clothed in rags, religiously respect.

Who to his plighted vows and trust has ever firmly stood,

And though he promise to his loss, he makes his promise good.

Whose soul in usury disdains his treasure to employ,

Whom no rewards can ever bribe the guiltless to destroy.

The man, who by this steady course, has happiness insur'd,

When earth's foundations shake, shall stand, by Providence secur'd.

### A DECALOGUE OF CANONS FOR OBSERVATION IN PRACTICAL LIFE

1. Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day.

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

2. Never trouble another for what you can do yourself.

3. Never spend your money before you have it.

4. Never buy what you do not want, because it is cheap; it will be dear to you.

5. Pride costs us more than hunger, thirst, and cold.

6. We never repent of having eaten too little.

7. Nothing is troublesome that we do willingly.

8. How much pain have cost us the evils which have never happened.

9. Take things always by their smooth handle.

10. When angry, count ten, before you speak; if very angry, an hundred.



## ALEXANDER HAMILTON

[The Works of Alexander Hamilton in nine volumes were published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1885. Their editor, the Hon. Henry Cabot Lodge, says in the course of his preface.

"Two schools of political thought have existed in the United States, and their struggle for supremacy has made the history of the country. One was the national school, the other was the school of states-rights. One believed in a liberal construction of the constitution, and in a strong and energetic federal government, wielding all its powers to their full extent. The other believed in a strict construction of the constitution, in a simple and restrained federal government, exercising in a limited way only such powers as were absolutely needful. One was founded by Alexander Hamilton, the other by Thomas Jefferson. On the one side it was maintained that the United States ought to be, and were, a nation; on the other, that the Union was a confederacy. The conflict between these opposing forces began at the close of the Revolution, was ardent in the convention which framed the constitution, continued with ever-increasing intensity for seventy years, and then culminated in the civil war. In that fierce battle the national principle, which had strengthened with every year from the time of the formation of the government, triumphed, and it is now supreme.

"The dominant purpose of Hamilton's life was the creation of a national sentiment, and thereby the making of a great and powerful nation from the discordant elements furnished by thirteen jarring states. To the accomplishment of this purpose everything he said and did as a public man was steadily and strongly directed. The influence of the policy of Washington's administration upon the establishment and development of this great nation of ours cannot be over-estimated. Much of that policy was due to Hamilton alone, and in all parts of it he made himself deeply felt. Yet his

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

masterly policy as Secretary of the Treasury, and as cabinet officer, as well as the active and influential part he took in the constitutional conventions, represent but a small part of his services to the cause of nationality. Hamilton's greatest work was in creating, forming and guiding a powerful public opinion in support of a national system, and the sentiment thus brought into being went steadily on with ever-increasing force, until it prevailed over all its enemies. Hamilton achieved his success by the profound influence which he exerted upon the public mind. No statesman in our history has ever swayed so many of the leading men among his contemporaries as Hamilton, and at the same time he appealed by his pen to the largest popular audience of any man of his day. He was the first teacher in the school of national politics. The sacred fire once lighted never went out, and the principles then inculcated were carried forward and ever raised higher through the after years."

From the volumes edited by Mr. Lodge, the following letters have been taken. Mr. Lodge has written a capital Life of Hamilton, published in the American Statesmen series, by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston and New York. — Ed.]

## SKETCHES HIS LIFE

[TO — HAMILTON, A KINSMAN IN SCOTLAND]

ALBANY, New York, May 2, 1797.

SOME days since I received with great pleasure your letter of the 10th of March. The mark it affords of your kind attention, and the particular account it gives me of so many relations in Scotland are extremely gratifying to me. You, no doubt, have understood that my father's affairs at a very early day went to wreck, so as to have rendered his situation during the greatest part of his life far from eligible. This state of things occasioned a separation between

him and me, when I was very young, and threw me upon the bounty of my mother's relatives, some of whom were then wealthy, though by vicissitudes to which human affairs are so liable, they have been since much reduced and broken up. Myself, at about sixteen, came to this country. Having always had a strong propensity to literary pursuits, by a course of study and laborious exertion, I was able, by the age of nineteen, to qualify myself for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the (Columbia) College of New York, and to lay the foundation by preparatory study for the future profession of the law.

The American Revolution supervened. My principles led me to take part in it; at nineteen, I entered into the American army as captain of artillery. Shortly after I became, by his invitation, aide-de-camp to General Washington, in which station I served until the commencement of that campaign which ended with the siege of York in Virginia, and the capture of Cornwallis's army. The campaign I made at the head of a corps of light infantry, with which I was present at the siege of York, and engaged in some interesting operations.

At the period of peace with Great Britain I found myself a member of Congress, by appointment of the legislature of this state.

After the peace I settled in the city of New York, in the practice of the law, and was in a very lucrative course of practice, when the

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

derangement of our public affairs, by the feebleness of the general Confederation, drew me again reluctantly into public life. I became a member of the Convention which framed the present constitution of the United States; and having taken part in this measure, I conceived myself to be under an obligation to lend my aid toward putting the machine in some regular motion. Hence, I did not hesitate to accept the offer of President Washington to undertake the office of Secretary of the Treasury.

In that office I met with many intrinsic difficulties, and many artificial ones, proceeding from passions, not very worthy, common to human nature, and which act with peculiar force in republics. The object, however, was effected of establishing public credit and introducing order in the finances.

Public office in this country, has few attractions. The pecuniary emolument is so inconsiderable as to amount to a sacrifice to any man who can employ his time with advantage in any liberal profession. The opportunity of doing good, from the jealousy of power and the spirit of faction, is too small in any station to warrant a long continuance of private sacrifices. The enterprises of party had so far succeeded as materially to weaken the necessary influence and energy of the executive authority, and so far diminish the power of doing good in that department, as greatly to take away the motives which a virtuous man might have for making sacrifices.

## Alexander Hamilton

The prospect was even bad for gratifying in future the love of fame, if that passion was to be the spring of action.

The union of these motives, with the reflections of prudence in relation to a growing family, determined me as soon as my plan had attained a certain maturity, to withdraw from office. This I did by a resignation about two years since, when I resumed the profession of the law in the city of New York under every advantage I could desire.

It is a pleasant reflection to me that since the commencement of my connection with General Washington to the present time, I have possessed a flattering share of his confidence and friendship.

Having given you a brief sketch of my political career, I proceed to some further family details.

In the year 1780 I married the second daughter of General Schuyler, a gentleman of one of the best families of this country, of large fortune, and no less personal and political consequence. It is impossible to be happier than I am in a wife; and I have five children, four sons and a daughter, the eldest a son somewhat past fifteen, who all promise as well as their years permit, and yield me much satisfaction. Though I have been too much in public life to be wealthy, my situation is extremely comfortable, and leaves me nothing to wish for but a continuance of health. With this blessing, the profits of my profession and other prospects authorise an expectation of such additions to my resources, as will

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

render the eve of my life easy and agreeable, so far as may depend upon this consideration.

It is now several months since I have heard from my father, who continued at the island of St. Vincent's. My anxiety at this silence would be greater than it is, were it not for the considerable interruption and precariousness of intercourse which is produced by the war.

I have strongly pressed the old gentleman to come and reside with me, which would afford him every enjoyment of which his advanced age is capable; but he has declined it on the ground that the advice of his physicians leads him to fear that the change of climate would be fatal to him. The next thing for me is, in proportion to my means, to endeavour to increase his comforts where he is.

It will give me the greatest pleasure to receive your son Robert at my house in New York, and still more to be of use to him; to which end my recommendation and interest will not be wanting, and I hope not unavailing. It is my intention to embrace the opening which your letter affords me to extend my intercourse with my relations in your country, which will be a new source of satisfaction to me.

A PLEA FOR THE ARMY

[TO WASHINGTON]

PHILADELPHIA, February 7, 1783.

Flattering myself that your knowledge of me will induce you to receive the observations I

## Alexander Hamilton

make, as dictated by a regard to the public good, I take the liberty to suggest to you my ideas on some matters of delicacy and importance. I view the present juncture as a very interesting one. I need not observe how far the temper and situation of the army make it so. The state of our finances will perhaps never be more critical. I am under injunctions that will not permit me to disclose some facts that would at once demonstrate this position; but I think it probable you will be possessed of them through another channel. It is, however, certain that there has scarcely been a period of the Revolution which called more for wisdom and decision in Congress. Unfortunately for us we are a body not governed by reason or foresight, but by circumstances. It is probable we shall not take the proper measures; and, if we do not, a few months may open an embarrassing scene. This will be the case whether we have peace [with Great Britain] or a continuance of the war.

If the war continues, it would seem that the army must, in June, subsist itself, to defend the country. If peace should take place, it will subsist itself, to procure justice to itself. It appears to be a prevailing opinion in the army that the disposition to recompense their services will cease with the necessity for them, and that, if they once lay down their arms, they part with the means of obtaining justice. It is to be lamented that appearances afford too much ground for their distrust.

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

It becomes a serious inquiry: What is the true line of policy? The claims of the army urged with moderation, but with firmness, may operate on those weak minds which are influenced by their apprehensions more than by their judgments, so as to produce a concurrence in the measures which the exigencies of affairs demand. They may add weight to the applications of Congress to the several States. So far a useful turn may be given to them. But the difficulty will be to keep a complaining and suffering army within the bounds of moderation.

This your Excellency's influence must effect. In order to do it, it will be advisable not to discountenance their endeavours to procure redress, but rather, by the intervention of confidential and prudent persons, to take the direction of them. This, however, must not appear. It is of moment to the public tranquility, that your Excellency should preserve the confidence of the army without losing that of the people. This will enable you, in case of extremity, to guide the current, and to bring order, perhaps even good, out of confusion. 'Tis a part that requires address; but 't is one which your own situation, as well as the welfare of the community, points out.

I will not conceal from your Excellency a truth which it is necessary you should know. An idea is propagated in the army that delicacy, carried to an extreme, prevents your espousing its interests with sufficient warmth. The false-



## Alexander Hamilton

hood of this opinion no one can be better acquainted with than myself, but it is not the less mischievous for being false. Its tendency is to impair that influence which you may exert with advantage, should any commotions unhappily ensue, to moderate the pretensions of the army, and make their conduct correspond with their duty.

The great desideratum at present is the establishment of general funds, which alone can do justice to the creditors of the United States (of whom the army forms the most meritorious class), restore public credit, and supply the future wants of the Government. This is the object of all men of sense. In this the influence of the army, properly directed may coöperate.

The intimations I have thrown out will suffice to give your Excellency a proper conception of my sentiments. You will judge of their reasonableness or fallacy, but I persuade myself you will do justice to my motives. General Knox has the confidence of the army, and is a man of sense. I think he may safely be made use of. Situated as I am, your Excellency will feel the confidential nature of these observations.

### DISRUPTIVE FORCES DEPLORED

[TO WASHINGTON]

PHILADELPHIA, March 24, 1783.

Your Excellency will, before this reaches you, have received a letter from the Marquis de

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

Lafayette, informing you that the preliminaries of peace between all the belligerent powers have been concluded. I congratulate your Excellency on this happy conclusion of your labours. It now only remains to make solid establishments within, to perpetuate our Union, to prevent our being a ball in the hands of European powers, bandied against each other at their pleasure, in fine, to make our independence truly a blessing. This, it is to be lamented, will be an arduous work; for, to borrow a figure from mechanics, the centrifugal is much stronger than the centripetal force in these states—the seeds of disunion much more numerous than those of union.

I will add that your Excellency's exertions are as essential to accomplish this end, as they have been to establish independence. I will upon a future occasion open myself upon this subject.

## THE FEDERAL UNION MUST BE STRONG

[TO WASHINGTON]

ALBANY, September 30, 1783.

As I flatter myself I may indulge a consciousness that my services have been of some value to the public, at least enough to merit the small compensation I wish, I will make no apology to your Excellency for conveying, through you, that wish to Congress. You are able to inform them, if they wish information

## Alexander Hamilton

in what degree I may have been useful; and I have entire confidence that you will do me justice.

In a letter which I wrote to you several months ago, I intimated that it might be in your power to contribute to the establishment of our Federal Union upon a more solid basis. I have never since explained myself. At the time, I was in hopes Congress might have been induced to take decisive ground, to inform their constituents of the imperfections of the present system, and of the impossibility of conducting the public affairs, with honour to themselves and advantage to the community, with powers so disproportionate to their responsibility; and, having done this, in a full and forcible manner, to adjourn the moment the definitive treaty was ratified. In retiring at the same juncture, I wished you, in a solemn manner, to declare to the people your intended retreat from public concerns, your opinion of the present government, and of the absolute necessity for a change.

Before I left Congress I despaired of the first, and your circular-letter to the states had anticipated the last. I trust it will not be without effect, though I am persuaded it would have had more, combined with what I have mentioned. At all events, without compliment, sir, it will do you honour with the sensible and well-meaning; and, ultimately, it is to be hoped, with the people at large,

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

when the present epidemic frenzy has subsided. . . .

## URGING HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE PRESIDENCY

[TO WASHINGTON]

NEW YORK, September, 1788.

. . . I should be deeply pained, my dear sir, if your scruples in regard to a certain station should be matured into a resolution to decline it, though I am neither surprised at their existence, nor can I but agree in opinion that the caution you observe in deferring an ultimate determination is prudent. I have, however, reflected maturely on the subject, and have come to the conclusion (in which I feel no hesitation), that every public and personal consideration will demand from you an acquiescence in what will certainly be the unanimous wish of your country. The absolute retreat which you meditated at the close of the late war was natural and proper. Had the government produced by the Revolution gone on in a tolerable train, it would have been most advisable to have persisted in that retreat. But I am clearly of opinion that the crisis which brought you again into public view left you no alternative but to comply, and I am equally clear in the opinion that you are by that act pledged to take a part in the execution of the government. I am not less convinced that the impression of this necessity of your filling the station in question is so universal, that you run

# Alexander Hamilton

no risk of any uncandid imputation by submitting to it. But even if this were not the case, a regard to your own reputation, as well as to the public good, calls upon you in the strongest manner to run that risk.

It cannot be considered as a compliment to say that on your acceptance of the office of President the success of the new government in its commencement may materially depend. Your agency and influence will be not less important in preserving it from the future attacks of its enemies than they have been in recommending it in the first instance to the adoption of the people. Independent of all considerations drawn from this source, the point of light in which you stand at home and abroad will make an infinite difference in the respectability with which the government will begin its operations in the alternative of your being or not being at the head of it. I forbear to urge considerations which might have a more personal application. What I have said will suffice for the inferences I mean to draw. . . .

## WEAKNESS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

[TO WASHINGTON]

April 10, 1791.

. . . It is to be lamented that our system is such as still to leave the public peace of the Union at the mercy of each state government. This is not only the case as regards direct inter-

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

ferences, but as it regards the inability of the national government, in many particulars, to take those direct measures for carrying into execution its views and engagements which exigencies require. For example: a party comes from a county in Virginia into Pennsylvania and wantonly murders some friendly Indians. The national government, instead of having power to apprehend murderers and bring them to justice, is obliged to make a representation to that of Pennsylvania; that of Pennsylvania again is to make a representation to that of Virginia. And whether the murderers shall be brought to justice at all, must depend upon the particular policy and energy and good disposition of two state governments and the efficacy of the provisions of their respective laws; and the security of other states, and the money of all, are at the discretion of one. These things require a remedy.

## THE ART OF PUTTING THINGS

[TO WASHINGTON]

November 5, 1796.

Yesterday, after the departure of the post, I received your letter of the 3d. I have since seen the answer to Adet [minister from France]. I perceive in it nothing intrinsically exceptionable, but something in the manner a little epigrammatical and sharp. I make this remark freely, because the card now to be played is

## Alexander Hamilton

perhaps the most delicate that has occurred in our administration, and nations, like individuals, sometimes get into squabbles from the manner more than the matter that passes between them. It is all-important to us — first, if possible, to avoid rupture with France; secondly, if that cannot be, to evince to the people that there has been an unequivocal disposition to avoid it. Our discussions, therefore, ought to be calm, smooth, inclined to the argumentative; when remonstrance and complaint are unavoidable, carrying upon the face of them a reluctance and regret, mingling a steady assertion of our rights and adherence to principle with the language of moderation, and, as long as it can be done, of friendship.

I am the more particular in these observations, because I know that Mr. Pickering, [Secretary of State], who is a very worthy man, has nevertheless something warm and angular in his temper, and will require much a vigilant, moderating eye. . . .

WITH REGARD TO A POST IN THE ARMY

[TO WASHINGTON]

NEW YORK, June 2, 1798.

. . . It is a great satisfaction to me to ascertain what I had anticipated in hope, that you are not determined in an adequate emergency against affording once more your military services. There is no one but yourself that would

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

unite the public confidence in such an emergency, independent of other considerations, and it is of the last importance that this confidence should be full and complete. As to the wish of the country, it is certain that it will be ardent and universal. You intimate a desire to be informed what would be my part in such an event as to entering into military service, I have no scruple about opening myself to you on this point. If I am invited to a station in which the service I may render may be proportionate to the sacrifice I am to make, I shall be willing to go into the army. If you command, the place in which I should hope to be most useful is that of Inspector-General, with a command in the line. This I would accept. The public must judge for itself as to whom it will employ, but every individual must judge for himself as to the terms on which he will serve, and consequently must estimate his own pretensions. . . .

## ON JEFFERSON AND BURR

[TO OLIVER WOLCOTT, SECRETARY OF THE  
TREASURY]

NEW YORK, December 16, 1800.

It is now, my dear sir, ascertained that Jefferson or Burr will be President, and it seems probable that they will come with equal votes to the House of Representatives. It is also circulated here that, in this event, the Federa-



## Alexander Hamilton

lists in Congress, or some of them, talk of preferring Burr. I trust New England at least, will not so far lose its head as to fall into this snare. There is no doubt but that, upon every virtuous and prudent calculation, Jefferson is to be preferred. He is by far not so dangerous a man; and he has pretensions to character.

As to Burr, there is nothing in his favour; his private character is not defended by his most partial friends. He is bankrupt beyond redemption, except by the plunder of his country. His public principles have no other spring or aim than his own aggrandisement, right or wrong. If he can, he will certainly disturb our institutions, to secure to himself permanent power, and with it wealth. He is truly the Cataline of America; and if I may credit Major Wilcocks, he has held very vindictive language respecting his opponents.

But early measures must be taken to fix on this point the opinions of the Federalists. Among them, from different motives, Burr will find partisans. If the thing be neglected, he may possibly go far.

Yet it may be well to throw out a lure for him, in order to tempt him to start for the plate, and then lay the foundation of dissension between the two chiefs.

You may communicate this letter to Marshall [then Secretary of State, afterward Chief Justice]

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

and Sedgwick. Let me hear from you speedily in reply.

## ASKING A PLACE FOR A CHAPLAIN

[TO GENERAL ANTHONY WAYNE]

July 6, 1781.

Doctor W. Mendy is one of those characters that for its honesty, simplicity, and helplessness interests my humanity. He is exceedingly anxious to be in the Service, and, I believe, has been forced out of it not altogether by fair play. He is just what I should like for a military parson, except that he does not drink. He will fight, and he will not insist upon your going to heaven whether you will or not. He tells me that there is a vacancy in your brigade. I should be really happy if through your influence, he can fill it. Pray take care of the good old man.

## ON THE DECLARATION OF PEACE

[TO JOHN LAURENS]

[Colonel Laurens, at the instance of Hamilton, had been Minister to France. When he returned to America, he brought part of the large subsidy granted by Louis XVI.]

August 15, 1782.

I received with pleasure, my dear Laurens, the letter which you wrote me in — last. Your wishes in one respect are gratified. This state (New York) has pretty unanimously elected me to Congress. My time of service commences in November. . . . Peace (with

## Alexander Hamilton

England) on our own terms is upon the carpet. The making it is in good hands. It is said your father is exchanged for Cornwallis, and gone to Paris to meet the other commissioners, and that Granville, on the part of England, has made a second trip there; in the last instance, vested with plenipotentiary powers. I fear there may be obstacles, but I hope they may be surmounted.

Peace made, my dear friend, a new scene opens. The object will then be to make our independence a blessing. To do this we must secure our Union on solid foundations — a herculean task — and to effect which, mountains of prejudice must be levelled! It requires all the virtue and all the ability of the country. Quit your sword, my friend; put on the toga. Come to Congress. We know each other's sentiments; our views are the same. We have fought side by side to make America free; let us hand in hand struggle to make her happy. Yours forever.

### A TACTFUL BIT OF ADVICE

[TO OLIVER WOLCOTT]

April 5, 1797.

I have received your letter of March 31st. I hope nothing in my last was misunderstood. Could it be necessary, I would assure you that no one has a stronger conviction than myself of the purity of the motives which direct your

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

public conduct, or of the good sense and judgment by which it is guided. If I have a fear (you will excuse my frankness), it is lest the strength of your feelings, the companions of energy of character, should prevent that pliancy to circumstances which is sometimes indispensable. I beg you only to watch yourself on this score, and the public will always find in you an able as well as a faithful servant. . . .

## RULES FOR MR. PHILIP HAMILTON

[Philip, the eldest son of Alexander Hamilton, was a youth of great promise. In resenting an affront to his father, he was challenged to a duel. He fell, mortally wounded, in his eighteenth year.]

From the first of April to the first of October he is to rise not later than six o'clock; the rest of the year not later than seven. If earlier, he will deserve commendation. Ten will be his hour of going to bed throughout the year.

From the time he is dressed in the morning till nine o'clock (the time for breakfast excepted), he is to read law. At nine he goes to the office, and continues there till dinner time. He will be occupied partly in writing and partly in reading law.

After dinner he reads law at home till five o'clock. From this time till seven he disposes of his time as he pleases. From seven to ten he reads and studies whatever he pleases.

From twelve on Saturday he is at liberty to amuse himself.

# Alexander Hamilton

On Sunday he will attend the morning church. The rest of the day may be applied to innocent recreations.

He must not depart from any of these rules without my permission.

ON THE EVE OF THE FATAL DUEL WITH BURR

[TO HIS WIFE]

NEW YORK, July 10, 1804.

This letter, my dearest Eliza, will not be delivered to you, unless I shall first have terminated my earthly career, to begin, as I humbly hope, from redeeming grace and divine mercy, a happy immortality. If it had been possible for me to have avoided the interview [duel], my love for you and my precious children would have been alone a decisive motive. But it was not possible, without sacrifices which would have rendered me unworthy of your esteem. I need not tell you of the pangs I feel from the idea of quitting you, and exposing you to the anguish I know you would feel. Nor could I dwell on the topic, lest it should unman me. The consolations of religion, my beloved, can alone support you; and these you have a right to enjoy. Fly to the bosom of your God and be comforted. With my last idea I shall cherish the sweet hope of meeting you in a better world. Adieu, best of wives — best of women. Embrace all my darling children for me.

## JOHN MARSHALL

[In 1879 the Hon. Edward J. Phelps, afterward Ambassador to Great Britain, delivered an address to the American Bar Association, in the course of which he said:

"It is not, in my judgment, as a great judge merely, that Chief Justice Marshall will have his place in ultimate history. The test of historical greatness — the sort of greatness that becomes important in future history — is not great ability merely. It is great ability combined with great opportunity, greatly employed. The question will be how much a man did to shape the course of human affairs or to mould the character of human thought. Did he make history, or did he only accompany and embellish it? Did he shape destiny, or was he carried along by destiny? These are the inquiries that posterity will address to every name that challenges permanent admiration or seeks a place in final history. Now it is precisely in that point of view, as it appears to me, that adequate justice has not yet been done to Chief Justice Marshall. He has been estimated as the lawyer and the judge, without proper consideration of how much more he accomplished, and how much more is due to him from his country and the world than can ever be due to any mere lawyer or judge. The assertion may perhaps be regarded as a strong one, but I believe it will bear the test of reflection, and certainly the test of reading in American history; that, practically speaking, we are indebted to Chief Justice Marshall for the American Constitution. I do not mean the authorship of it, or the adoption of it—although in that he had a considerable share — but for that practical construction, that wise and far-seeing administration, which raised it from a doubtful experiment, adopted with great hesitation, and likely to be readily abandoned if its practical working had not been successful — raised it, I say, from a doubtful experiment to a harmonious, a permanent and beneficent system of government, sustained by the judgment and established in the affection of the people. He

# John Marshall

was not the commentator upon American constitutional law; he was not the expounder of it; he was the author, the creator of it. The future Hallam, who shall sit down with patient study to trace and elucidate the constitutional history of this country — to follow it from its origin, through its experimental period and its growth to its perfection; to pursue it from its cradle, not, I trust, to its grave, but rather to its immortality — will find it all, for its first half century, in those luminous judgments in which Marshall, with an unanswerable logic and a pen of light, laid before the world the conclusions of his court."

Two brief biographies of Marshall have appeared, both published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston and New York. The first, by Allan B. Magruder, is in the American Statesmen series; the second, by James Bradley Thayer is in the Riverside Biographical series.

The Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, November, 1900, contain letters from Marshall to Story, here drawn upon by the kind permission of the Society.

February 4, 1901, the centenary of Marshall's entrance upon his duties as Chief Justice of the United States, was commemorated throughout the United States by exercises in which distinguished jurists and statesmen took part. Their addresses, with much else of interest, edited by Mr. Justice John F. Dillon, are published by Callaghan & Company, Chicago, in three volumes. Each volume has a portrait of Marshall. — ED.]

## SKETCHES HIS LIFE

[This autobiographical sketch was addressed to Joseph Delaplaine, Philadelphia, who was publishing a "Repository of the Lives and Portraits of Distinguished American Characters." His series, never completed, did not include this sketch.]

RICHMOND, May 22, 1818.

I WAS born on the 24th of September, 1755, in the county of Fauquier in Virginia. My

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

father, Thomas Marshall, was the eldest son of John Marshall, who intermarried with a Miss Markham, and whose parents migrated from Wales, and settled in the county of Westmoreland in Virginia, where my father was born. My mother was named Mary Keith; she was the daughter of a clergyman of the name of Keith who migrated from Scotland, and intermarried with a Miss Randolph on James River. I was educated at home, under the direction of my father, who was a planter, but was often called from home as a surveyor. From my infancy I was destined for the bar; but the contest between the mother country and her colonies drew me from my studies and my father from the superintendence of them; and in September, 1775, I entered into the service as a subaltern. I continued in the army until the year 1781, when, being without a command, I resigned my commission, in the interval between the invasions of Virginia by Arnold and Phillips. In the year 1782, I was elected into the legislature of Virginia; and in the fall session of the same year was chosen a member of the executive council of that state. In January, 1783, I intermarried with Mary Willis Ambler, the second daughter of Mr. Jacquelin Ambler, then treasurer of Virginia, who was the third son of Mr. Richard Ambler, a gentleman who had migrated from England, and settled at Yorktown in Virginia. In April, 1784, I resigned my seat in the executive council, and came to the bar, at which I



# John Marshall

continued, declining any other public office than a seat in the legislature, until the year 1797, when I was associated with General Pinckney and Mr. Gerry in a mission to France. In 1798, I returned to the United States; and in the spring of 1799 was elected a member of Congress, a candidate for which, much against my inclination, I was induced to become by the request of General Washington. At the close of the first session, I was nominated, first to the Department of War, and afterward to that of State, which last office I accepted, and in which I was continued until the beginning of the year 1801, when Mr. Ellsworth having resigned, and Mr. Jay having declined his appointment, I was nominated to the office of Chief Justice, which I still hold.

I am the oldest of fifteen children, all of whom lived to be married, and of whom nine are now living. My father died when about seventy-four years of age; and my mother, who survived him about seven years, died about the same age. I do not recollect all the societies to which I belong, though they are very numerous. I have written no book, except the Life of Washington, which was executed with so much precipitation as to require much correction.\*

---

\* Chief Justice Marshall died in Philadelphia, July 6, 1835, in his eightieth year. His statue, by William Wetmore Story, son of his friend, Mr. Justice Story, adorns the western grounds of the Capitol at Washington.

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

## A LETTER TO WASHINGTON CONTRADICTING A HARMFUL RUMOR

[The enemies of Marshall circulated a report that he had been offered a choice of offices as a reward of fealty to Washington. Marshall at once addressed Washington:]

RICHMOND, May 1, 1799.

You may possibly have seen a paragraph in a late publication stating that several important offices in the gift of the executive, and among others that of Secretary of State, had been obtainable by me. Few of the unpleasant occurrences produced by my declaration as a candidate for Congress, and they have been very abundant, have given me more real chagrin than this. To make a parade of proffered offices is a vanity which I trust I do not possess, but to boast of one never in my power would argue a littleness of mind at which I ought to blush. I know not how the author may have acquired his information, but I beg leave to assure you that he never received it directly or indirectly from me. I had no previous knowledge that such a publication was designed, or I should certainly have suppressed so much of it as relates to this subject. The writer was unquestionably actuated by a wish to serve me, and by resentment at the various malignant calumnies which have been so profusely bestowed on me. One of these was that I only wished a seat in Congress for the purpose of obtaining some office, which my devotion to the administration might procure. To repel this was obviously the motive of the indiscreet

# John Marshall

publication I so much regret. A wish to rescue myself in your opinion from the imputation of an idle vanity, which forms, if I know myself, no part of my character, will, I trust, apologise for the trouble this explanation may give you.

[Washington thus responded:]

MOUNT VERNON, May 15, 1799.

. . . I am sorry to find that the publication you allude to should have given you a moment's disquietude. I can assure you it made no impression on my mind of the tendency apprehended by you.

## LETTER TO PRESIDENT JOHN ADAMS

ACCEPTING THE CHIEF-JUSTICESHIP OF THE  
UNITED STATES \*

February 4, 1801.

SIR:

I pray you to accept my grateful acknowledgments for the honour conferred on me in appointing me Chief Justice of the United States.

This additional and flattering mark of your good opinion has made an impression on my mind which time will not efface.

I shall enter immediately on the duties of the office, and hope never to give you occasion to regret having made this appointment.

---

\* Mr. Adams was wont to declare, in his old age, that this appointment was the greatest act of his life

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

With the most respectful attachment, I am,  
sir, your obedient servant,

J. MARSHALL.

## COURAGE ON THE BENCH

[Marshall in 1807 presided at the famous trial of Aaron Burr for treason. In the course of his charge to the jury Marshall said:]

That this court dares not usurp power is most true. That this court does not shrink from its duty is not less true. No man is desirous of placing himself in a disagreeable situation. No man is desirous of becoming the peculiar subject of calumny. No man, might he let the bitter cup pass from him without reproach, would drain it to the bottom. But if he has no choice in the case, if there is no alternative presented to him but a dereliction of duty or the opprobrium of those who are denominated by the world, he merits the contempt as well as the indignation of his country, who can hesitate which to embrace?

## ON THE OUTBREAK OF WAR, 1812

[TO JAMES MONROE, SECRETARY OF STATE]

RICHMOND, June 25, 1812.

. . . On my return to-day from my farm, where I pass a considerable portion of my time in laborious relaxation, I found a copy of the message of the President [James Madison], of the 1st instant, accompanied by the report of the Committee of Foreign Relations and the

# John Marshall

declaration of war against Great Britain, under cover from you.

Permit me to subjoin to my thanks for this mark of your attention my fervent wish that this momentous measure may, in its operation on the interest and honour of our country, disappoint only its enemies.

Whether my prayer be heard or not, I shall remain with respectful esteem, Your obedient servant,

J. MARSHALL.

## GIVES HIS PORTRAIT TO STORY

[TO MR. JUSTICE STORY, FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS  
HIS ASSOCIATE ON THE SUPREME BENCH]

RICHMOND, March 26, 1828.

MY DEAR SIR:

I beg you to accept my portrait for which I sat in Washington to Mr. Harding, to be preserved when I shall sleep with my fathers as a testimonial of sincere and affectionate friendship.\* The remaining hundred dollars you will be so good as to pay to Mr. Harding for the head and shoulders I have bespoke for myself. I shall not wish the portrait designed for myself to be sent to Richmond till I give directions for it to be accompanied by the head Mr. Greenough means to cast for me. You will very much oblige me by letting me know when those

---

\* This portrait is now hung in the Dining Hall at Cambridge, having been given by Judge Story's will to the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

castings are accomplished what is the price at which he sells them, because if they should not be held higher than I think my head worth I may probably order more than one of them.

I hope Mrs. Story and yourself have had a pleasant journey and have found your little family in perfect health. I congratulate you both on this anticipated happiness. I had a pleasant sail through a smooth sea to Norfolk and thence to Richmond. I have seen scarcely any person out of my own family since my return, but, if I may credit appearances, there is rather a more stormy and disturbed atmosphere on land than I encountered in the Bay. The spirit of party is understood to be more bitter than I could have supposed possible. I am, however, on the wing for my friends in the upper country, where I shall find near and dear friends occupied more with their farms than with party politics.

I had one of your fish dressed yesterday, and found it excellent.

I am, dear sir, with real regard and esteem,  
Your obedient,

J. MARSHALL.

ON THE INDIANS, ALSO A WORD ON WOMEN  
[TO MR. JUSTICE STORY]

RICHMOND, October 29, 1828.

MY DEAR SIR:

I have just finished the perusal of your centennial discourse on the first settlement

of Salem, and while fresh under its influence take up my pen to thank you for the pleasure it has given me. You have drawn a vivid picture, and, I believe, a faithful likeness of those extraordinary men who first peopled New England, and my feelings as well as my judgment have accompanied you in your rapid sketch of the character and conduct of their descendants. I wish the admonitory part may have its full effect on others as well as on those to whom it was particularly addressed. Some of our Southern friends might benefit from the lesson it inculcates.

But I have been still more touched with your notice of the red man than of the white. The conduct of our forefathers in expelling the original occupants of the soil grew out of so many mixed motives that any censure which philanthropy may bestow upon it ought to be qualified. The Indians were a fierce and dangerous enemy whose love of war made them sometimes the aggressors, whose numbers and habits made them formidable, and whose cruel system of warfare seemed to justify every endeavour to remove them to a distance from civilised settlements. It was not until after the adoption of our present government that respect for our own safety permitted us to give full indulgence to those principles of humanity, and justice, which ought always to govern our conduct toward the aborigines when this course can be pursued without exposing ourselves to

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

the most afflicting calamities. That time, however, is unquestionably arrived, and every oppression now exercised on a helpless people depending on our magnanimity and justice for the preservation of their existence impresses a deep stain on the American character. I often think with indignation on our disreputable conduct (as I think) in the affair of the Creeks of Georgia; and I look with some alarm on the course now pursuing in the Northwest. Your observations on this subject are eloquent and are in perfect accordance with my feelings. But I turn with most pleasure to that fine passage respecting the Lady Arabella Johnson. I almost envy the occasion her sufferings and premature death have furnished for bestowing that well merited eulogy on a sex which so far surpasses ours in all the amiable and attractive virtues of the heart, — in all those qualities which make up the sum of human happiness and transform the domestic fireside into an elysium. I read the passage to my wife who expressed such animated approbation of it as almost to excite fears for that exclusive admiration which husbands claim as their peculiar privilege. Present my compliments to Mrs. Story and say for me that a lady receives the highest compliment her husband can pay her when he expresses an exalted opinion of the sex, because the world will believe that it is formed on the model he sees at home.



# John Marshall

With affectionate esteem, I am, dear sir,  
Your,

J. MARSHALL.

## ON THE TEACHING OF LAW

[TO MR. JUSTICE STORY]

RICHMOND, September 30, 1829.

MY DEAR SIR:

I have read with great pleasure your discourse pronounced as Dane Professor of Law in Harvard University. It is in your best style of composition.

You have marked out for yourself a course of labour which is sufficiently arduous; but I believe you love to struggle with difficulty, and you have generally the good fortune or merit to overcome it. At seventy-four you will find indolence creeping over you. But we will not anticipate evil.

You have not spared the students of law more than the professor. You have prescribed for them a most appalling course. Our Southern youths would stumble at the threshold, and think such a task too formidable for even a commencement. You Yankees have more perseverance, or think more justly on the proposition that he who attempts much may accomplish something valuable, should his success not be complete.

I hope I shall live to read your lectures. They will form an exception to the plan of life I had formed for myself to be adopted after my retire-

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

ment from office, that is to read nothing but novels and poetry.

Our convention approaches. I still feel vain regrets at being a member. The chief, though not the only, cause of these regrets is that I can no longer debate. Yet I cannot apply my mind to any thing else.

Farewell. With affectionate esteem I remain  
your

J. MARSHALL.

## WHY A DEVOTED UNIONIST

[Mr. Justice Story, in his discourse on the Life of Marshall, quotes from a letter by Marshall to a friend:]

. . . The questions which were perpetually recurring in the state legislatures, and which brought annually into doubt principles which I thought most sacred; which proved that everything was afloat and that we had no safe anchorage ground, gave a high value in my estimation to that article in the constitution which imposes restrictions on the states. I was consequently a determined advocate for its adoption, and became a candidate for the state convention. . . .

When I recollect the wild and enthusiastic notions with which my political opinions of that day were tintured, I am disposed to ascribe my devotion to the Union, and to a government competent to its preservation, at least as much to casual circumstances as to judgment. I had grown up at a time when the love of the Union,

## John Marshall

and the resistance to the claims of Great Britain, were the inseparable inmates of the same bosom. When patriotism and a strong fellow-feeling with our fellow-citizens of Boston were identical. When the maxim, "United we stand, divided we fall," was the maxim of every orthodox American. And I had imbibed these sentiments so thoroughly that they constituted a part of my being. I carried them with me into the army, where I found myself associated with brave men from different states, who were risking life and everything valuable in a common cause, believed by all to be most precious, and where I was in the habit of considering America as my country and Congress as my government. . . .

My immediate entrance into the state legislature opened to my view the causes which had been chiefly instrumental in augmenting those sufferings [of the army in the field]; and the general tendency of state politics convinced me that no safe and permanent remedy could be found but in a more efficient and better organised general government.

OPPOSED TO JEFFERSON

[TO MR. JUSTICE STORY]

RICHMOND, July 13, 1821.

MY DEAR SIR:

I had yesterday the pleasure of receiving your letter of the 27th of June, by which I am greatly obliged. I shall decide the case concerning

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

which I inquired in conformity with your opinion. The law of the case I have thought very doubtful; the equity of it is, I think, pretty clear.

Your kind expressions respecting myself gratify me very much. Entertaining the truest affection and esteem for my brethren generally, and for yourself particularly, it is extremely grateful to believe that it is reciprocated. The harmony of the bench will, I hope and pray, never be disturbed. We have external and political enemies enough to preserve internal peace.

What you say of Mr. Jefferson's letter rather grieves than surprises me.\* It grieves me because his influence is still so great that many, very many will adopt his opinions, however unsound they may be and however contradictory to their own reason. I cannot describe the surprise and mortification I have felt at hearing that Mr. Madison has embraced them with respect to the judicial department.

For Mr. Jefferson's opinion as respects this department it is not difficult to assign the cause. He is among the most ambitious, and I suspect among the most unforgiving of men. His great power is over the mass of the people, and this

---

\*The letter here commented on was probably the letter to William C. Jarvis, printed in Washington's edition of the Writings of Thomas Jefferson, in which Jefferson denies the right of the judges to issue a mandamus to any "executive or legislative officer to enforce the fulfilment of their official duties," and asserts that it is a "very dangerous doctrine to consider the judges as the ultimate arbiters of all constitutional questions."

## John Marshall

power is chiefly acquired by professions of democracy. Every check on the wild impulse of the moment is a check on his own power, and he is unfriendly to the source from which it flows. He looks of course with ill will at an independent judiciary.

That in a free country with a written constitution any intelligent man should wish a dependent judiciary, or should think that the constitution is not a law for the court as well as the legislature would astonish me, if I had not learnt from observation that with many men the judgment is completely controlled by the passions.

I send you the papers containing the essays of Algernon Sidney. Their coarseness and malignity would designate the author if he was not avowed. The argument, if it may be called one, is, I think, as weak as its language is violent and prolix. Two other gentlemen have appeared in the papers on this subject, one of them is deeply concerned in pillaging the purchasers of the Fairfax estate, in which goodly work he fears no other obstruction than what arises from the appellate power of the Supreme Court; and the other is a hunter after office who hopes by his violent hostility to the Union, which in Virginia assumes the name of regard for state rights, and by his devotion to Algernon Sidney, to obtain one. In support of the sound principles of the constitution and of the Union of the states, not a pen is drawn. In Virginia the

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

tendency of things verges rapidly to the destruction of the Government and the reestablishment of a league of sovereign states. I look elsewhere for safety.

With very much esteem and affection I am,  
dear sir, your

J. MARSHALL.

## FEARS FOR THE UNION

[TO MR. JUSTICE STORY]

RICHMOND, September 22, 1832.

. . . I am very much gratified at hearing that you are so near completing your course on constitutional law, and enriching the political and legal literature of your country with it. The task was arduous, but not above your strength, and you have engaged in it with hearty good will. I anticipate much pleasure as well as information from perusing the work, and can assure you in anticipation that I shall not be among the growlers you may expect to hear. I shall not be among those who bring on you the charge of "apostacy" and "ultraism". I shall like to see how in your quotations from the sage you mention you imitate the bee in extracting honey from poison. I have no doubt, however dexterous the operation, that you will be well stung in requital for you skill and industry.

If the prospects of our country inspire you with gloom, how do you think a man must be

## John Marshall

affected who partakes of all your opinions and whose geographical position enables him to see a great deal that is concealed from you? I yield slowly and reluctantly to the conviction that our constitution cannot last. I had supposed that north of the Potomac a firm and solid government, competent to the security of rational liberty, might be preserved. Even that now seems doubtful. The case of the South seems to me to be desperate. Our opinions are incompatible with a united government even among ourselves. The union has been prolonged thus far by miracles. I fear they cannot continue. Yours affectionately.

J. MARSHALL.

### STORY DEDICATES HIS "COMMENTARIES" TO HIM

[Mr. Justice Story dedicated his "Commentaries on the Constitution" to Marshall, whose acknowledgment ran thus:]

I have just finished reading your great work, and wish it could be read by every statesman and every would-be statesman in the United States. It is a comprehensive and an accurate commentary on our Constitution, formed in the spirit of the original text. In the South we are so far gone in political metaphysics that I fear no demonstration can restore us to common sense. The words "States Rights," as expounded by the Resolutions of 1798, and the Report of 1799, construed by our legislature, have a charm against which all reasoning is vain.

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

Those resolutions and that report constitute the creed of every politician who hopes to rise in Virginia; and to question them, or even to adopt the construction given by their author, is deemed political sacrilege. The solemn and interesting admonitions of your concluding remarks will not, I fear, avail as they ought to avail against this popular frenzy.

I am grateful for the very flattering terms in which you speak of your friend in many parts of this valuable work as well as in the dedication. In despite of my vanity I cannot suppress the fear that you will be supposed by others, as well as myself, to have consulted a partial friendship further than your deliberate judgment will approve. Others may not contemplate this partiality with as much gratification as its object.

## THE CONSTITUTION NOT A LEAGUE BUT A GOVERNMENT

[TO MR. JUSTICE STORY]

RICHMOND, June 3, 1833.

. . . I rejoice to hear that the abridgement of your Commentaries is coming before the public and should be still more rejoiced to learn that it was used in all our colleges and universities. The first impressions made on the youthful mind are of vast importance; and, most unfortunately, they are in the South all erroneous. Our young men, generally speaking, grow up in



# John Marshall

the firm belief that liberty depends on construing our constitution into a league instead of a government; that it has nothing to fear from breaking these United States into numerous petty republics. Nothing in their view is to be feared but that bugbear, consolidation; and every exercise of legitimate power is construed into a breach of the constitution. Your book, if read, will tend to remove these prejudices. Your affectionate friend.

J. MARSHALL.

## AIDS IN REVISING THE CONSTITUTION OF VIRGINIA

[Marshall was a member of the Virginia convention of 1829-30 to revise the constitution of that state. On joining the convention he wrote Mr. Justice Story:]

RICHMOND, June 11, 1829.

I am almost ashamed of my weakness and irresolution, when I tell you that I am a member of our convention. I was in earnest when I told you that I would not come into that body, and really believed that I should adhere to that determination; but I have acted like a girl addressed by a gentleman she does not positively dislike, but is unwilling to marry. She is sure to yield to the advice and persuasion of her friends. . . . I assure you that I regret being a member, and could I have obeyed the dictates of my own judgment I should not have been one. I am conscious that I cannot perform a part I should wish in a popular assembly; but

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

I am like Molière's "Médecin malgré lui" ["A physician against his will"].

## THE JUDICIARY OF VIRGINIA

[The county court judges of Virginia were, at the time of this convention, a self-perpetuating body. It was proposed to make them elective, a change which Marshall stoutly resisted. He said:]

I am not in the habit of bestowing extravagant eulogies upon my countrymen; I would rather hear them pronounced by others; but it is a truth that no State in the Union has hitherto enjoyed more complete internal quiet than Virginia. There is no part of America where less disquiet and less ill-feeling between man and man is to be found, than in this Commonwealth; and I believe most firmly that this state of things is mainly to be ascribed to the practical operation of our county courts. The magistrates who compose those courts consist in general of the best men in their respective counties. They act in the spirit of peacemakers, and allay rather than excite the small disputes and differences which will sometimes arise among neighbours. It is certainly much owing to this that so much harmony prevails amongst us. These courts must be preserved; if we part with them can we be sure that we shall retain among our justices of the peace the same respectability and weight of character as are now to be found? I think not. . . .

I have grown old in the opinion that there is

nothing more dear to Virginia, or that ought to be dearer to her statesmen, and that the best interests of our country are secured by it. Advert, sir, to the duties of a judge. He has to pass between the government and the man whom that government is prosecuting; between the most powerful individual in the community and the poorest and most unpopular. It is of the last importance that, in the exercise of these duties, he should observe the utmost fairness. Need I press the necessity of this? Does not every man feel that his own personal security and the security of his property depend on that fairness? The judicial department comes home, in its effects, to every man's fireside; it passes on his property, his reputation, his life, his all. Is it not to the last degree important that he should be rendered perfectly and completely independent, with nothing to influence or control him but God and his conscience? . . . We have heard about sinecures and judicial pensioners. Sir, the weight of such terms is well known here. To avoid creating a sinecure you take away a man's duties when he wishes them to remain; you take away the duty of one man and give it to another; and this is a sinecure. What is this in substance but saying that there is and can be and ought to be no such thing as judicial independence? . . . I have always thought, from my earliest youth until now, that the greatest scourge an angry heaven ever inflicted upon an ungrateful and sinning people

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

was an ignorant, a corrupt, or a dependent judiciary. Our ancestors thought so; we thought so till very lately; and I trust the vote of this day will show that we think so still. Will you draw down this curse on Virginia?

## ON SLAVERY

[In 1826 Marshall wrote to a friend:]

I concur with you that nothing portends more calamity and mischief to the Southern states than their slave population. Yet they seem to cherish the evil, and to view with immovable prejudice and dislike everything which may tend to diminish it. I do not wonder that they should resist any attempt, should one be made, to interfere with the rights of property, but they have a feverish jealousy of measures which may do good without the hazard of harm, that, I think, very unwise.

## WOULD RETURN THE NEGROES TO AFRICA

[In 1831 it was proposed that the United States apply all the proceeds of its sales of public lands to the repatriation of the Negroes. A Colonisation Society was formed for this purpose, and Marshall became president of the auxiliary society at Richmond. To the parent body he wrote:]

RICHMOND, December 14, 1831.

. . . It is undoubtedly of great importance to retain the countenance and protection of the General Government. Some of our cruisers stationed on the coast of Africa would at the same time interrupt the slave-trade, a horrid

## John Marshall

traffic detested by all good men, and would protect the vessels and commerce of the colony from pirates who infest those seas. The power of the Government to afford this aid is not, I believe, contested. I regret that its power to grant pecuniary aid is not equally free from question. On this subject I have always thought and still think that the proposition made by Mr. King in the Senate is the most unexceptionable and the most effective that can be devised. . . . The lands are the property of the United States, and have hitherto been disposed of by the Government under the idea of absolute ownership.

### A HUMOROUS LETTER

[To his friend, Mr. Justice Archibald Stuart, Marshall wrote, in 1793:]

I cannot appear for Donaghoe. I do not decline his business from any objection to his bank. To that I should like very well to have free access, and would certainly discount from it as largely as he would permit; but I am already fixed by Rankin, and as those who are once in the bank do not, I am told, readily get out again, I despair of being ever able to touch the guineas of Donaghoe.

Shall we never see you again in Richmond? I was very much rejoiced when I heard that you were happily married, but if that amounts to a *ne exeat* [no permission for absence] which is to confine you entirely to your side of the mountain,

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

I shall be selfish enough to regret your good fortune, and almost to wish you had found some little crooked rib among the fish and oysters which would once a year drag you into this part of our terraqueous globe. You have forgotten, I believe, the solemn compact we made to take a journey to Philadelphia together this winter, and superintend for a while the proceedings of Congress. I wish very much to see you. I want to observe how much honester men you and I are [than] half one's acquaintance. Seriously, there appears to me every day to be more folly, envy, malice, and damned rascality in the world than there was the day before; and I do verily begin to think that plain, downright honesty and unintriguing integrity will be kicked out of doors.

We fear, and not without reason, a war. The man does not live who wishes for peace more than I do, but the outrages committed upon us are beyond human bearing. Farewell. Pray heaven we may weather the storm, Yours,

J. MARSHALL.

## ALWAYS RAINING SOMEWHERE IN THE UNITED STATES

The Hon. Josiah Quincy, in his "Figures of the Past," relates that the judges of the Supreme Court at Washington usually dined together, and their custom was to allow themselves wine only when it was raining. But "the Chief," said Mr. Justice Story, "was brought up on

## John Marshall

Federalism and Madeira," and occasionally even on a sunshiny day would say, "Brother Story, will you step to the window and see if there are any signs of rain?" Story would be obliged reluctantly to report that he saw none, whereupon the Chief Justice would say cheerfully, with a gleam of humour in his piercing eyes, "Well, this is a very large territory over which we have jurisdiction, and I feel sure that it is raining in some part of it. I think we may have a bottle to-day."

### TO HIS WIFE, RECALLING HIS COURTSHIP

[Marshall was devotedly attached to his wife. In his seventieth year, while confined to his room by lameness, he writes to her:]

WASHINGTON, February 23, 1825.

. . . I shall be out in a few days. All the ladies of the secretaries have been to see me, some more than once, and brought me more jelly than I could eat, and many other things. I thank them, and stick to my barley broth. Still I have lots of time on my hands. How do you think I beguile it? I am almost tempted to leave you to guess, until I write again. You must know that I begin [a round of reminiscences as a lover] with the ball at York, our splendid assembly at the palace in Williamsburg, my visit to Richmond for a fortnight, my return to the field, and the very welcome reception you gave me on my arrival at Dover, our little tiffs and makings-up, my feelings when Major A.

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

was courting you, my trip to the Cottage [the Ambler home in Hanover County, where the marriage took place] — the thousand little incidents, deeply affecting, in turn [of his wooing and acceptance].

## GRIEF IN BEREAVEMENT

[On December 12, 1832, a year after the death of his wife, Marshall wrote:]

This day of joy and festivity to the whole Christian world is, to my sad heart, the anniversary of the severest affliction which humanity can sustain. While all around is gladness, my mind dwells on the silent tomb, and cherishes the remembrance of the beloved object which it contains.

On the twenty-fifth of December, 1831, it was the will of heaven to take to itself the companion who had sweetened the choicest part of my life, had rendered toil a pleasure, had partaken of all my feelings, and was enthroned in the inmost recess of my heart. Never can I cease to feel the loss, and to deplore it. Grief for her is too sacred ever to be profaned on this day, which shall be, during my existence, marked by the recollection of her virtues.

On the 3d of January, 1783, I was united by the holiest bonds to the woman I adored. From the moment of our union to that of our separation, I never ceased to thank heaven for this, its best gift. Not a moment passed in which I did not consider her as the blessing from



# John Marshall

which the chief happiness of my life was derived. This never-dying sentiment, originating in love, was cherished by a long and close observation of as amiable and estimable qualities as ever adorned the female bosom. To a person which, in youth, was very attractive, to manners uncommonly pleasing, she added a fine understanding, and the sweetest temper that can accompany a just and modest sense of what was due to herself. She was educated with a profound reverence for religion, which she preserved to her last moments. This sentiment, among her earliest and deepest impressions, gave a colouring to her whole life. Hers was the religion taught by the Saviour of man. She was a firm believer in the faith inculcated by the Church [Episcopal] in which she was bred.

I have lost her, and with her have lost the solace of my life! Yet she remains still the companion of my retired hours, still occupies my inmost bosom. When alone, and unemployed, my mind still recurs to her. . . .

## FORTITUDE IN PAIN

[In his seventy-sixth year Marshall underwent a severe surgical operation. On the eve of submitting himself to the knife he wrote to Mr. Justice Story:]

PHILADELPHIA, October 12, 1831.

. . . I am most earnestly attached to the character of the department [of Justice] and to the wishes and convenience of those with whom it has been my pride and my happiness to be

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

associated for so many years. I cannot be insensible to the gloom which lowers over us. I have a repugnance to abandoning you under such circumstances, which is almost invincible. But the solemn convictions of my judgment, sustained by some pride of character, admonish me not to hazard the disgrace of continuing in office a mere inefficient pageant. . . .

[After the operation he wrote Mr. Justice Story:]

. . . Thank heaven, I have reason to hope that I am relieved. I am, however, under the very disagreeable necessity of taking medicine continually to prevent new formations. I must submit, too, to a severe and most unsociable regimen. Such are the privations of age. You have before you, I trust, many, very many years unclouded by such dreary prospects. . . .

TO HIS SON, MR. E. C. MARSHALL

WASHINGTON, February 15, 1832.

MY DEAR SON:

Your letter of the 10th gave me great pleasure, because it assured me of the health of your family and the health of the other families in which I take so deep an interest. My own has improved. I strengthen considerably, and am able, without fatigue, to walk to court, a distance of two miles, and return to dinner. At first this exercise was attended with some difficulty, but I feel no inconvenience from it now. The

sympathetic feeling to which you allude has sustained no diminution; I fear it never will. I perceive no symptoms, and I trust I never shall, of returning disease.

The question on Mr. Van Buren's nomination [as Minister to England] was not exempt from difficulty. Those who opposed him, I believe, thought conscientiously that his appointment ought not to be confirmed. They feel a great hostility to that gentleman from other causes than his letter to Mr. McLane. They believe him to have been at the bottom of a system which they condemn. Whether this conviction be well, or ill founded, it is their conviction — at least I believe it is. In such a case it is extremely difficult, almost impossible, for any man to separate himself from his party.

This session of Congress is indeed peculiarly interesting. The discussions on the tariff and on the bank, especially, will, I believe, call forth an unusual display of talents. I have no hope that any accommodation can take place on the first question. The bitterness of party spirit on that subject threatens to continue unabated. There seems to be no prospect of allaying it.

The two great objects in Virginia are internal improvement and our coloured population. On the first, I despair. On the second, we might do much if our unfortunate political prejudices did not restrain us from asking the aid of the

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

Federal Government. As far as I can judge, that aid, if asked, would be freely and liberally given.

## ON WRITING

[TO HIS GRANDSON JOHN MARSHALL, JR.]

RICHMOND, December 7, 1834.

. . . The man who by seeking embellishment hazards confusion is greatly mistaken in what constitutes good writing. The meaning ought never to be mistaken. Indeed, the readers should never be obliged to search for it. The writer should always express himself so clearly as to make it impossible to misunderstand him. He should be comprehended without an effort. The first step toward writing and speaking clearly is to think clearly. Let the subject be perfectly understood, and a man will soon find words to convey his meaning to others.

## LINCOLN

[While Washington stands highest in the veneration of the American people, Lincoln is first in their affections. Washington, indeed, was as much the last and best of our kings as the first of our presidents. His elevation of mind, his dignity and reserve, keep him far above the plane of a comrade. But Lincoln was one of ourselves: he was always ready to chat with a neighbour about constitutional reform, and then pass to the attractions of a county fair, or tell a mirthful story. He was one of the plain people: he heartily liked them, they returned the feeling with usury.

As a stripling Lincoln brooded over the tangles of states rights and national supremacy. When he had thought his way through to daylight, he wished that daylight to be shared by his friends. His power to penetrate an involved question to its core, and of persuading others as he himself was persuaded, as ever afterward, went hand in hand. He had a clear eye for elemental truth: that eye had no academic training, it was schooled by a daily struggle for bread, by an unending contact and collision with uncushioned facts, by long sessions of argument which were his main relief from toil. He entered the arena of law, and there quietly strode to the front, gaining the knowledge and experience which overcame Douglas in the famous Debates. That victory carried Lincoln into the White House, just as civil war threatened the nation's life. As President he unfolded his innate genius as a master of events and of men. Meanwhile his faculty of expression, stimulated by supreme crises of feeling, rose from height to height, until at Gettysburg and in his Second Inaugural Address he struck the tones of Isaiah and David. He was as great in heart as in mind. Amid crushing labour and anxiety he had a Christ-like sympathy with suffering and sorrow, a Christ-like forgiveness for unrelenting detraction. His amazing talents, his transparent honesty and homely humour, his tragic martyrdom just as he had led the nation through war to peace, enshrine him in the innermost heart of every American. More than

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

forty years after his death, soldiers who fought under his standard recall his memory with tears.

Lincoln's secretaries, John G. Nicolay and John Hay, wrote his life, in ten volumes, and a life, in one volume, published by the Century Company, New York. They also edited his writings, issued by the same publishers, in two volumes. An edition of these writings, with additional matter, a full index, a chronology, and a bibliography, is published in twelve volumes by F. D. Tandy & Co., New York. — ED.]

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

[Written in June, 1860, at the request of a friend, to use in preparing a popular campaign biography for the election of that year.]

### ANCESTRY

ABRAHAM LINCOLN was born February 12, 1809, then in Hardin, now in the more recently formed county of La Rue, Kentucky. His father, Thomas, and grandfather, Abraham, were born in Rockingham County, Virginia, whither their ancestors had come from Berks County, Pennsylvania. His lineage has been traced no farther back than this. The family were originally Quakers, though in later times they have fallen away from the peculiar habits of that people. The grandfather, Abraham, had four brothers — Isaac, Jacob, John, and Thomas. So far as known, the descendants of Jacob and John are still in Virginia. Isaac went to a place near where Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee join; and his descendants are in that region. Thomas came to Kentucky, and after many years died there, whence his descendants went

## Lincoln

to Missouri. Abraham, grandfather of the subject of this sketch, came to Kentucky, and was killed by Indians about the year 1784. He left a widow, three sons, and two daughters. . . . Thomas, the youngest son, and father of the present subject, by the early death of his father and very narrow circumstances of his mother, even in childhood was a wandering labouring boy and grew up literally without education. He never did more in the way of writing than to bunglingly write his own name. Before he was grown he passed one year as a hired hand with his uncle Isaac on Watauga, a branch of the Holston River. Getting back into Kentucky, and having reached his twenty-eighth year, he married Nancy Hanks — mother of the present subject — in the year 1806. She also was born in Virginia; and relatives of hers of the name of Hanks, and of other names, now reside in Coles, in Macon, and in Adams counties, Illinois, and also in Iowa. The present subject has no brother or sister of the whole or half blood. He had a sister, older than himself, who was grown and married, but died many years ago, leaving no child; also a brother, younger than himself, who died in infancy. Before leaving Kentucky, he and his sister were sent, for short periods, to A B C schools, the first kept by Zachariah Riney, and the second by Caleb Hazel.

### HOMES IN KENTUCKY AND INDIANA

At this time his father resided on Knob Creek, on the road from Bardstown, Kentucky,

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

to Nashville, Tennessee, at a point three or three and a half miles south or southwest of Atherton's Ferry, on the Rolling Fork. From this place he removed to what is now Spencer County, Indiana, in the autumn of 1816, Abraham then being in his eighth year. This removal was partly on account of slavery, but chiefly on account of the difficulty in land titles in Kentucky. He settled in an unbroken forest, and the clearing away of surplus wood was the great task ahead. Abraham, though very young, was large for his age, and had an axe put into his hands at once; and from that till within his twenty-third year he was almost constantly handling that most useful instrument — less, of course, in ploughing and harvesting seasons.

At this place Abraham took an early start as a hunter, which was never much improved afterward. A few days before the completion of his eighth year, in the absence of his father, a flock of wild turkeys approached the new log cabin, and Abraham with a rifle-gun, standing inside, shot through a crack and killed one of them. He has never since pulled a trigger on any larger game. In the autumn of 1818 his mother died; and a year afterward his father married Mrs. Sally Johnston, at Elizabethtown, Kentucky, a widow with three children of her first marriage. She proved a good and kind mother to Abraham, and is still living in Coles County, Illinois. There were no children of this



# Lincoln

second marriage. His father's residence continued at the same place in Indiana till 1830.

## SCHOOLING

While here Abraham went to A B C schools by littles, kept successively by Andrew Crawford, — Sweeney, and Azel W. Dorsey. He does not remember any other. The family of Mr. Dorsey now resides in Schuyler County, Illinois. Abraham now thinks that the aggregate of all his schooling did not amount to one year. He was never in a college or academy as a student, and never inside of a college or academy building till since he had a law licence. What he has in the way of education he has picked up. After he was twenty-three and had separated from his father, he studied English grammar — imperfectly, of course, but so as to speak and write as well as he now does. He studied and nearly mastered the six books of Euclid since he was a member of Congress. He regrets his want of education, and does what he can so supply the want.

## A TRIP TO NEW ORLEANS

In his tenth year he was kicked by a horse, and apparently killed for a time. When he was nineteen, still residing in Indiana, he made his first trip upon a flatboat to New Orleans. He was a hired hand merely, and he and a son of the owner, without other assistance, made the trip. The nature of part of the "cargo-load," as it was

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

called, made it necessary for them to linger and trade along the sugar-coast; and one night they were attacked by seven Negroes with intent to kill and rob them. They were hurt some in the *melée*, but succeeded in driving the Negroes from the boat, and then "cut cable," "weighed anchor," and left.

## REMOVAL TO ILLINOIS

March 1, 1830, Abraham having just completed his twenty-first year, his father and family, with the families of the two daughters and sons-in-law of his stepmother, left the old homestead in Indiana and came to Illinois. Their mode of conveyance was waggons drawn by ox-teams, and Abraham drove one of the teams. They reached the county of Macon, and stopped there some time within the same month of March. His father and family settled a new place on the north side of the Sangamon River, at the junction of the timber-land and prairie, about ten miles westerly from Decatur. Here they built a log cabin, into which they removed, and made sufficient of rails to fence ten acres of ground, fenced and broke the ground, and raised a crop of sown corn upon it the same year.

The sons-in-law were temporarily settled in other places in the county. In the autumn all hands were greatly afflicted with ague and fever, to which they had not been used, and by which they were greatly discouraged, so much so that they determined on leaving the county. They

remained, however, through the succeeding winter, which was the winter of the very celebrated "deep snow" of Illinois. During that winter Abraham, together with his stepmother's son, John D. Johnston, and John Hanks, yet residing in Macon County, hired themselves to Denton Offutt to take a flatboat from Beardstown, Illinois, to New Orleans; and for that purpose were to join him — Offutt — at Springfield, Illinois, so soon as the snow should go off. When it did go off, which was about the first of March, 1831, the county was so flooded as to make traveling by land impracticable; to obviate which difficulty they purchased a large canoe, and came down the Sangamon River in it. This is the time and the manner of Abraham's first entrance into Sangamon County. They found Offutt at Springfield, but learned from him that he had failed in getting a boat at Beardstown. This led to their hiring themselves to him for twelve dollars per month each, and getting the timber out of the trees and building a boat at Old Sangamon town on the Sangamon River, seven miles northwest of Springfield, which boat they took to New Orleans, substantially upon the old contract.

## A CLERK IN A STORE AND MILL

During this boat-enterprise acquaintance with Offutt, who was previously an entire stranger, he conceived a liking for Abraham, and believing he could turn him to account, he contracted with

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

him to act as clerk for him, on his return from New Orleans, in charge of a store and mill at New Salem, then in Sangamon, now in Menard County. Hanks had not gone to New Orleans, but having a family, and being likely to be detained from home longer than at first expected, had turned back from St. Louis. . . . Abraham's father, with his own family and others mentioned, had, in pursuance of their intention, removed from Macon to Coles County. John D. Johnston, the stepmother's son, went to them, and Abraham stopped indefinitely and for the first time, as it were, by himself at New Salem, before mentioned. This was in July, 1831. Here he rapidly made acquaintances and friends.

## ENLISTS AS A SOLDIER

In less than a year Offutt's business was failing — had almost failed — when the Black Hawk war of 1832 broke out. Abraham joined a volunteer company, and, to his own surprise, was elected captain of it. He says he has not since had any success in life which gave him so much satisfaction. He went to the campaign, served near three months, met the ordinary hardships of such an expedition, but was in no battle. He now owns, in Iowa, the land upon which his own warrants for the service were located. Returning from the campaign, and encouraged by his great popularity among his immediate neighbours, he the same year ran

for the legislature, and was beaten — his own precinct, however, casting its votes 277 for and 7 against him — and that, too, while he was an avowed Clay man, and the precinct the autumn afterward giving a majority of 115 to General Jackson over Mr. Clay. This was the only time Abraham was ever beaten on a direct vote of the people.

## KEEPS A STORE

He was now without means and out of business, but was anxious to remain with his friends who had treated him with so much generosity, especially as he had nothing elsewhere to go to. He studied what he should do — thought of learning the blacksmith trade — thought of trying to study law — rather thought he could not succeed at that without a better education. Before long, strangely enough, a man offered to sell, and did sell, to Abraham and another as poor as himself, an old stock of goods, upon credit. They opened as merchants; and he says that was *the* store. Of course they did nothing but get deeper and deeper in debt. He was appointed postmaster at New Salem — the office being too insignificant to make his politics an objection. The store winked out. The surveyor of Sangamon offered to depute to Abraham that portion of his work which was within his part of the county. He accepted, procured a compass and chain, studied Flint and Gibson a little, and went

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

at it. This procured bread, and kept soul and body together.

## ELECTED TO THE ILLINOIS LEGISLATURE

The election of 1834 came, and he was then elected to the legislature by the highest vote cast for any candidate. Major John T. Stuart, then in full practice of the law, was also elected. During the canvass, in a private conversation he encouraged Abraham [to] study law. After the election he borrowed books of Stuart, took them home with him, and went at it in good earnest. He studied with nobody. He still mixed in the surveying to pay board and clothing bills. When the legislature met, the law-books were dropped, but were taken up again at the end of the session. He was reelected in 1836, 1838, and 1840. In the autumn of 1836 he obtained a law licence, and on April 15, 1837, removed to Springfield, and commenced the practice — his old friend Stuart taking him into partnership. March 3, 1837, by a protest entered upon the "Illinois House Journal" of that date, at pages 817 and 818, Abraham, with Dan Stone, another representative of Sangamon, briefly defined his position on the slavery question; and so far as it goes, it was then the same that it is now. The protest is as follows:

"Resolutions upon the subject of domestic slavery having passed both branches of the

# Lincoln

General Assembly at its present session, the undersigned hereby protest against the passage of the same.

“They believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy, but that the promulgation of Abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate its evils.

“They believe that the Congress of the United States has no power under the Constitution to interfere with the institution of slavery in the different states.

“They believe that the Congress of the United States has the power, under the Constitution, to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, but that the power ought not to be exercised unless at the request of the people of the District.

“The difference between these opinions and those contained in the above resolutions is their reason for entering this protest.

“DAN STONE,

“A. LINCOLN,

“Representatives from the  
County of Sangamon.”

In 1838 and 1840, Mr. Lincoln's party voted for him as Speaker, but being in the minority he was not elected. After 1840 he declined a reelection to the legislature. He was on the Harrison electoral ticket in 1840, and on that of Clay in 1844, and spent much time and labour in

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

both those canvasses. In November, 1842, he was married to Mary, daughter of Robert S. Todd, of Lexington, Kentucky. They have three living children, all sons, one born in 1843, one in 1850, and one in 1853. They lost one, who was born in 1846.

## ELECTED TO CONGRESS

In 1846 he was elected to the lower house of Congress, and served one term only, commencing in December, 1847, and ending with the inauguration of General Taylor, in March, 1849. All the battles of the Mexican war had been fought before Mr. Lincoln took his seat in Congress, but the American army was still in Mexico, and the treaty of peace was not fully and formally ratified till the June afterward. Much has been said of his course in Congress in regard to this war. A careful examination of the "Journal" and "Congressional Globe" shows that he voted for all the supply measures that came up, and for all the measures in any way favourable to the officers, soldiers, and their families, who conducted the war through: with the exception that some of these measures passed without yeas and nays, leaving no record as to how particular men voted. The "Journal" and "Globe" also show him voting that the war was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally begun by the President of the United States. This is the language of Mr. Ashmun's amendment, for which Mr. Lincoln and nearly or



quite all other Whigs of the House of Representatives voted.

## HIS VOTES IN CONGRESS EXPLAINED

Mr. Lincoln's reasons for the opinion expressed by this vote were briefly that the President had sent General Taylor into an inhabited part of the country belonging to Mexico, and not to the United States, and thereby had provoked the first act of hostility, in fact the commencement of the war; that the place, being the country bordering on the east bank of the Rio Grande, was inhabited by native Mexicans born there under the Mexican Government, and had never submitted to, nor been conquered by, Texas or the United States, nor transferred to either by treaty; that although Texas claimed the Rio Grande as her boundary, Mexico had never recognised it, and neither Texas nor the United States had ever enforced it; that there was a broad desert between that and the country over which Texas had actual control; that the country where hostilities commenced, having once belonged to Mexico, must remain so until it was somehow legally transferred, which had never been done.

Mr. Lincoln thought the act of sending an armed force among the Mexicans was unnecessary, inasmuch as Mexico was in no way molesting or menacing the United States or the people thereof; and that it was unconstitutional, because the power of levying war is vested in

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

Congress, and not in the President. He thought the principal motive for the act was to divert public attention from the surrender of "Fifty-four, forty, or fight" to Great Britain, on the Oregon boundary question.

Mr. Lincoln was not a candidate for reelection. This was determined upon and declared before he went to Washington, in accordance with an understanding among Whig friends, by which Colonel Hardin and Colonel Baker had each previously served a single term in this same district.

In 1848, during his term in Congress, he advocated General Taylor's nomination for the presidency, in opposition to all others, and also took an active part for his election after his nomination, speaking a few times in Maryland, near Washington, several times in Massachusetts, and canvassing quite fully his own district in Illinois, which was followed by a majority in the district of over fifteen hundred for General Taylor.

## LAW PRACTICE, SPEECHES AND DEBATES

Upon his return from Congress he went to the practice of the law with greater earnestness than ever before. In 1852 he was upon the Scott electoral ticket, and did something in the way of canvassing, but owing to the hopelessness of the cause in Illinois he did less than in previous presidential canvasses.

In 1854 his profession had almost superseded the thought of politics in his mind, when the

# Lincoln

repeal of the Missouri Compromise aroused him as as he had never been before.

In the autumn of that year he took the stump with no broader practical aim or object than to secure, if possible, the reelection of Hon. Richard Yates to Congress. His speeches at once attracted a more marked attention than they had ever before done. As the canvass proceeded he was drawn to different parts of the State outside of Mr. Yates's district. He did not abandon the law, but gave his attention by turns to that and politics. The state agricultural fair was at Springfield that year, and Douglas was announced to speak there.

In the canvass of 1856 Mr. Lincoln made over fifty speeches, no one of which, so far as he remembers, was put in print. One of them was made at Galena, but Mr. Lincoln has no recollection of any part of it being printed; nor does he remember whether in that speech he said anything about a Supreme Court decision. He may have spoken upon that subject, and some of the newspapers may have reported him as saying what is now ascribed to him; but he thinks he could not have expressed himself as represented.

---

## STUDIES LAW

One evening in May, 1907, the editor of this little book called on Mr. Alban Jasper Conant, the artist, at his studio in New York. Mr. Conant, in his eighty-sixth year, hale and

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

cheerful, had that day given several hours to a portrait of Bishop Potter of New York. During a chat he recalled his early career in the West: especially interesting was his account of Mr. Lincoln, of whom he painted two portraits. One is now in Shurtleff College, Upper Alton, Illinois; the other is in the Illinois State Normal School, at Carbondale. From a portfolio the venerable artist showed me his original sketch of Mr. Lincoln. Said Mr. Conant:

"In September, 1860, two months before Mr. Lincoln's election, I was commissioned to paint his portrait. I went at once to Springfield, Illinois, where I awaited him in his room at the Capitol. As he entered the door, his face beaming with fun, I asked myself, can this be the man whose picture, circulated far and wide, shows him as sad and mournful? As I saw him at that moment, surrounded by a group of friends, his smile was so mirthful and kindly that I determined then and there to catch it for my canvas. But the question was how? For indeed the camera had told truth about him, although not all the truth. Most of the time his face wore a look of sadness, and occasionally even of woe. But, touch his nerve of humour, appeal to any deep interest of his heart, and then he shone with an expression all the brighter and more winning for the clouds that had hung upon his brow. From day to day, therefore, it became my task to ply him with such queries as would draw him away from the worry and

# Lincoln

anxiety of his campaign, and bring to his features their happiest look. I soon found that his life as a young fellow in Sangamon County gave me my best field. So, one day, in the course of a sitting, I asked him how he came to study law. His answer was in substance this:

“ ‘At New Salem I was for a while the proprietor of a grocery store, ready to buy or sell all kinds of plunder. One afternoon a man drove up to my door in a waggon which held his wife, children, and his household goods. His load was heavy and the roads were miry. He asked if I would give him fifty cents for a barrel of odds and ends, a pan or kettle showing itself on top. I bought the barrel, stowed it away, and, sometime afterward, in clearing up the place I came upon it. I emptied out the barrel and the only thing in it of any account was an edition of Blackstone’s Commentaries. It was summer time, the farmers were busy in the fields, business was dull, and I had scarcely anything to do but read that Blackstone. The more I went into it, the more it held me. Never before did a book so rivet my attention. I fairly devoured every sentence.’ ”

As Mr. Conant concluded his recital he repeated the high pitched tones of Mr. Lincoln’s enthusiasm, and gave his wide-swinging gesture. It was this accidental coming upon Blackstone that proved a turning point in Mr. Lincoln’s career, which decided that he should be a lawyer, and, by virtue of his training as a lawyer, in the

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

fulness of time, President and saviour of the United States.

## ON THE PRACTICE OF LAW

[Note for a lecture about July 1, 1850.]

I am not an accomplished lawyer. I find quite as much material for a lecture in those points wherein I have failed, as in those wherein I have been moderately successful. The leading rule for the lawyer, as for the man of every other calling, is diligence. Leave nothing for to-morrow which can be done to-day. Never let your correspondence fall behind. Whatever piece of business you have in hand, before stopping, do all the labour pertaining to it which can then be done. When you bring a common-law suit, if you have the facts for doing so, write the declaration at once. If a law point be involved, examine the books, and note the authority you rely on upon the declaration itself, where you are sure to find it when wanted. The same of defences and pleas. In business not likely to be litigated, — ordinary collection cases, foreclosures, partitions, and the like, — make all examinations of titles, and note them, and even draft orders and decrees in advance. This course has a triple advantage; it avoids omissions and neglect, saves your labour when once done, performs the labour out of court when you have leisure, rather than in court when you have not. Extemporaneous speaking should be practised and cultivated. It is the lawyer's avenue to the

public. However able and faithful he may be in other respects, people are slow to bring him business if he cannot make a speech. And yet there is not a more fatal error to young lawyers than relying too much on speech-making. If any one, upon his rare powers of speaking, shall claim an exemption from the drudgery of the law, his case is a failure in advance.

Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbours to compromise whenever you can. Point out to them how the nominal winner is often a real loser — in fees, expenses, and waste of time. As a peacemaker the lawyer has a superior opportunity of being a good man. There will still be business enough.

Never stir up litigation. A worse man can scarcely be found than one who does this. Who can be more nearly a fiend than he who habitually overhauls the register of deeds in search of defects in titles, whereon to stir up strife, and put money in his pocket? A moral tone ought to be infused into the profession which should drive such men out of it.

The matter of fees is important, far beyond the mere question of bread and butter involved. Properly attended to, fuller justice is done to both lawyer and client. An exorbitant fee should never be claimed. As a general rule never take your whole fee in advance, nor any more than a small retainer. When fully paid beforehand, you are more than a common mortal if you can feel the same interest in the case,

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

as if something was still in prospect for you, as well as for your client. And when you lack interest in the case the job will very likely lack skill and diligence in the performance. Settle the amount of fee and take a note in advance. Then you will feel that you are working for something, and you are sure to do your work faithfully and well. Never sell a fee note — at least not before the consideration service is performed. It leads to negligence and dishonesty — negligence by losing interest in the case, and dishonesty in refusing to refund when you have allowed the consideration to fail.

There is a vague popular belief that lawyers are necessarily dishonest. I say vague, because when we consider to what extent confidence and honours are reposed in and conferred upon lawyers by the people, it appears improbable that their impression of dishonesty is very distinct and vivid. Yet the impression is common, almost universal. Let no young man choosing the law for a calling for a moment yield to the popular belief — resolve to be honest at all events; and if in your own judgment you cannot be an honest lawyer, resolve to be honest without being a lawyer. Choose some other occupation, rather than one in the choosing of which you do, in advance, consent to be a knave.

## WHY HE COULD EXPLAIN SO WELL

Early in 1860 Mr. Lincoln gave a series of addresses in the Eastern states, including his



famous speech in Cooper Institute, New York. On a train near New Haven he entered into conversation with Rev. J. P. Gulliver of Norwich, Connecticut, who said:

“ ‘I want very much to know how you got this unusual power of “putting things.” It must have been a matter of education. No man has it by nature alone. What has your education been?’

“ ‘Well, as to education, the newspapers are correct — I never went to school more than six months in my life. But, as you say, this must be a product of culture in some form. I have been putting the question you ask me to myself while you have been talking. I say this, that among my earliest recollections, I remember how, when a mere child, I used to get irritated when anybody talked to me in a way I could not understand. I don’t think I ever got angry at anything else in my life. But that always disturbed my temper and has ever since. I can remember going to my little bedroom, after hearing the neighbours talk of an evening with my father, and spending no small part of the night walking up and down, and trying to make out what was the exact meaning of some of their, to me, dark sayings. I could not sleep, though I often tried to, when I got on such a hunt after an idea, until I had caught it; and when I thought I had got it, I was not satisfied until I had repeated it over and over, until I had put it in language plain enough, as I thought, for any

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

boy I knew to comprehend. This was a kind of passion with me, and it has stuck by me, for I am never easy now, when I am handling a thought, till I have bounded it north, and bounded it south, and bounded it east, and bounded it west. Perhaps that accounts for the characteristic you observe in my speeches, though I never put the two things together before.'

" 'Mr. Lincoln, I thank you for this. It is the most splendid educational fact I ever happened upon. This is genius, with all its impulsive, inspiring, dominating power over the mind of its possessor, developed by education into talent, with its uniformity, its permanence, and its disciplined strength, always ready, always available, never capricious — the highest possession of the human intellect. But, let me ask, did you not have a law education? How did you prepare for your profession?'

" 'Oh, yes! I "read law," as the phrase is; that is, I became a lawyer's clerk in Springfield, and copied tedious documents, and picked up what I could of law in the intervals of other work. But your question reminds me of a bit of education I had, which I am bound in honesty to mention. In the course of my law-reading I constantly came upon the word demonstrate. I thought at first that I understood its meaning, but soon became satisfied that I did not. I said to myself, "What do I do when I demonstrate more than when I reason or prove? How does

demonstration differ from any other proof?" I consulted Webster's Dictionary. That told of "certain proof" "proof beyond the possibility of doubt"; but I could form no idea of what sort of proof that was. I thought a great many things were proved beyond a possibility of doubt, without recourse to any such extraordinary process of reasoning as I understood "demonstration" to be. I consulted all the dictionaries and books of reference I could find. but with no better results. You might as well have defined blue to a blind man. At last I said, "Lincoln, you can never make a lawyer if you do not understand what demonstrate means"; and I left my situation in Springfield, went home to my father's house, and staid there till I could give any proposition in the six books of Euclid at sight. I then found out what 'demonstrate' means, and went back to my law studies.' "

"I could not refrain from saying, in my admiration at such a development of character and genius combined, 'Mr. Lincoln your success is no longer a marvel. It is the legitimate result of adequate causes.' " \*

## HABITS OF COMPOSITION

Mr. Lincoln was severely criticised for his suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, and for the arrest of Mr. Vallandigham as a result of that suspension. At Albany, New York, a

---

\*New York *Independent*, September 1, 1864.

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

public meeting voiced its criticism emphatically. Mr. Lincoln's reply of June 13, 1862, to Mr. Erastus Corning and others in charge of the meeting, called forth high praise from Ex-Senator James F. Wilson, who told Mr. Lincoln that it was his best paper.

"I am glad you think so," said Mr. Lincoln, "and I agree with you. I put that paper together in less time than any other one of like importance ever prepared by me."

He then explained how the paper had been prepared. Turning to a drawer in the desk at which he was sitting and pulling it partly out, he said:

"When it became necessary for me to write that letter, I had it nearly all in there," pointing to the drawer, "but it was in disconnected thoughts, which I had jotted down from time to time on separate scraps of paper. I had been worried a good deal by what had been said in the newspapers and in Congress about my suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, and the so-called arbitrary arrests that had followed. I did not doubt my power to suspend the writ, nor the necessity which demanded its exercise. But I was criticised harshly, and sometimes by men from whom I expected more generous treatment, and who ought to have known more and better than the character of their expressions indicated. This caused me to examine and re-examine the subject. I gave it a great deal of thought; I examined and studied it from every

side; indeed, it was seemingly present with me continually. Often an idea about it would occur to me which seemed to have force and make perfect answer to some of the things that were said and written about my actions. I never let one of those ideas escape me, but wrote it on a scrap of paper and put it in that drawer. In that way I saved my best thoughts on the subject, and, you know, such things often come in a kind of intuitive way more clearly than if one were to sit down and deliberately reason them out.

“To save the results of such mental action is true intellectual economy. It not only saves time and labour, but also the very best material the mind can supply for unexpected emergencies. Of course, in this instance, I had to arrange the material at hand, and adapt it to the particular case presented. But that was an easy task compared with what immediate original composition of such a paper would have been. I am satisfied with the result, and am content to abide the judgment of the future on that paper, and of my action on the great subject and grave question to which it relates. Many persons have expressed to me the opinion you have of that paper, and I am pleased to know that the present judgment of thoughtful men about it is so generally in accord with what I believe the future will, without serious division, pronounce concerning it. I know that I acted with great deliberation and on my conscience

when I suspended the writ of habeas corpus. It was with great reluctance that I came to recognise the necessity which demanded it. But when that became plain to my mind I did not hesitate to do my duty. I have had to do many unpleasant things since the country imposed on me the task of administering the government, and I will continue to do them when they come in the line of my official duty, always with prayerful care, and without stopping to consider what personal result may come to me."

## TO AN IDLER

[To his brother-in-law, John D. Johnston, advising him to work.]

SHELBYVILLE, November 4, 1851.

DEAR BROTHER:

When I came into Charleston, day before yesterday, I learned that you were anxious to sell the land where you live and move to Missouri. I have been thinking of this ever since, and cannot but think such a notion is utterly foolish. What can you do in Missouri better than here? Is the land any richer? Can you there, any more than here, raise corn and wheat and oats without work? Will anybody there, any more than here, do your work for you? If you intend to go to work, there is no better place than right where you are; if you do not intend to go to work, you cannot get along anywhere. Squirming and crawling about from

# Lincoln

place to place can do no good. You have raised no crop this year; and what you really want is to sell the land, get the money, and spend it. Part with the land you have, and, my life upon it, you will never after own a spot big enough to bury you in. Half you will get for the land you will spend in moving to Missouri, and the other half you will eat, drink, and wear out, and no foot of land will be bought. Now, I feel it my duty to have no hand in such a piece of foolery. I feel that it is so even on your own account and particularly on mother's account. The eastern forty acres I intend to keep for mother while she lives; if you will not cultivate it, it will rent for enough to support her; at least, it will rent for something. Her dower in the other two forties she can let you have, and no thanks to me. Now do not misunderstand this letter. I do not write it in any unkindness. I write it in order, if possible, to get you to face the truth, which truth is you are destitute because you have idled away all your time. Your thousand pretences deceive nobody but yourself. Go to work is the only cure for your case.

## A JEFFERSONIAN

[In 1859 Mr. Lincoln was invited by Mr. H. L. Pierce and others of Boston, to attend a festival in honour of Thomas Jefferson. In the course of his response he said:]

SPRINGFIELD, Illinois, April 6, 1859.

. . . It is now no child's play to save the principles of Jefferson from total overthrow in this

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

nation. One would state with great confidence that he could convince any sane child that the simpler propositions of Euclid are true; but nevertheless he would fail, utterly, with one who should deny the definitions and axioms. The principles of Jefferson are the definitions and axioms of free society. And yet they are denied and evaded, with no small show of success. One dashinglly calls them "glittering generalities." Another bluntly calls them "self-evident lies." And others insidiously argue that they apply to "superior races." These expressions, differing in form, are identical in object and effect — the supplanting the principles of free government, and restoring those of classification, caste, and legitimacy. They would delight a convocation of crowned heads plotting against the people. They are the vanguard, the miners and sappers of returning despotism. We must repulse them, or they will subjugate us. This is a world of compensation; and he who would be no slave must consent to have no slave. Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves, and, under a just God, cannot long retain it. All honour to Jefferson — to the man who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times, and so to embalm it there that to-day and in all



# Lincoln

coming days it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling-block to the very harbingers of reappearing tyranny and oppression.

## READ AS A BOY THE "LIFE OF WASHINGTON"

[On his way to Washington to be inaugurated as President, Mr. Lincoln on February 21, 1861, addressed the Senate of New Jersey at Trenton. He said:]

. . . Away back in my childhood, the earliest days of my being able to read, I got hold of a small book, such a one as few of the younger members have ever seen — Weems' "Life of Washington." I remember all the accounts there given of the battle-fields and struggles for the liberties of the country, and none fixed themselves upon my imagination so deeply as the struggle here at Trenton, New Jersey. The crossing of the river, the contest with the Hessians, the great hardships endured at that time, all fixed themselves on my memory more than any single Revolutionary event; and you all know, for you have all been boys, how these early impressions last longer than any others. I recollect thinking then, boy even though I was, that there must have been something more than common that these men struggled for. I am exceedingly anxious that that thing — that something even more than national independence, that something that held out a great promise to all the people of the world to all time to come — I am exceedingly anxious that this Union, the

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

Constitution, and the liberties of the people shall be perpetuated in accordance with the original idea for which that struggle was made, and I shall be most happy indeed if I shall be a humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty, and of this, his almost chosen people, for perpetuating the object of that great struggle. You give me this reception, as I understand, without distinction of party. I learn that this body is composed of a majority of gentlemen who, in the exercise of their best judgment in the choice of a chief magistrate, did not think I was the man. I understand, nevertheless, that they come forward here to greet me as the constitutionally elected President of the United States — as citizens of the United States to meet the man who, for the time being, is the representative of the majesty of the nation — united by the single purpose to perpetuate the Constitution, the Union, and the liberties of the people. As such, I accept this reception more gratefully than I could do did I believe it were tendered to me as an individual.

## ON SLAVERY: TO ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS

[Two days after Lincoln wrote this note, Stephens was Vice-President of the provisional government of the Confederate States.]

SPRINGFIELD, Illinois, December 22, 1860.

Your obliging answer to my short note is just received, and for which please accept my thanks. I fully appreciate the present peril the

# Lincoln

country is in, and the weight of responsibility on me. Do the people of the South really entertain fears that a Republican administration would, directly or indirectly, interfere with the slaves, or with them about the slaves? If they do, I wish to assure you, as once a friend, and still, I hope, not an enemy, that there is no cause for such fears. The South would be in no more danger in this respect than it was in the days of Washington. I suppose, however, this does not meet the case. You think slavery is right and ought to be extended, while we think it is wrong and ought to be restricted. That, I suppose, is the rub. It certainly is the only substantial difference between us.

## TO HORACE GREELEY IN RESPONSE TO CRITICISM

[Greeley had published an open letter to Lincoln in the New York *Tribune* of August 20, 1862, under the title "The Prayer of Twenty Millions," in which he accused Lincoln of conciliating pro-slavery sentiment too much. He replied:]

WASHINGTON, August 22, 1862.

I have just read yours of the 19th, addressed to myself through the New York *Tribune*. If there be in it any statements or assumptions of fact which I may know to be erroneous, I do not, now and here, controvert them. If there be in it any inferences which I may believe to be falsely drawn, I do not, now and here, argue against them. If there be perceptible in it an impatient and dictatorial tone, I waive

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

it in deference to an old friend whose heart I have always supposed to be right.

As to the policy I "seem to be pursuing," as you say, I have not meant to leave any one in doubt.

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be "the Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the coloured race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views.

# Lincoln

I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free.

## A REMONSTRANCE TO GENERAL BANKS

WASHINGTON, November 22, 1862.

Early last week you left me in high hope with your assurance that you would be off with your expedition at the end of that week or early in this. It is now the end of this, and I have just been overwhelmed and confounded with the sight of a requisition made by you which, I am assured, cannot be filled and got off within an hour short of two months. I inclose you a copy of the requisition, in some hope that it is not genuine — that you have never seen it. My dear general, this expanding and piling up of impedimenta has been, so far, almost our ruin, and will be our final ruin if it is not abandoned. If you had the articles of this requisition upon the wharf, with the necessary animals to make them of any use, and forage for the animals, you could not get vessels together in two weeks to carry the whole, to say nothing of your twenty thousand men; and, having the vessels, you could not put the cargoes aboard in two weeks more. And, after all, where you are going you have no use for them. When you parted with me you had no such ideas in your mind. I know you had not, or you could not have expected to be off so soon as you said.

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

You must get back to something like the plan you had then, or your expedition is a failure before you start. You must be off before Congress meets. You would be better off anywhere, and especially where you are going, for not having a thousand waggons doing nothing but hauling forage to feed the animals that draw them, and taking at least two thousand men to care for the waggons and animals, who otherwise might be two thousand good soldiers. Now, dear general, do not think this is an ill-natured letter; it is the very reverse. The simple publication of this requisition would ruin you.

### A REBUKE TO GENERAL HOOKER

WASHINGTON, January 26, 1863.

I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course I have done this upon what appear to me to be sufficient reasons, and yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe you to be a brave and skilful soldier, which of course I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable if not an indispensable quality. You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm; but I think that during General Burnside's command of the army you have taken counsel of your ambition and

thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country and to a most meritorious and honourable brother officer. I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the army and the Government needed a dictator. Of course it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The Government will support you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all commanders. I much fear that the spririt which you have aided to infuse into the army, of criticising their commander and withholding confidence from him, will now turn upon you. I shall assist you as far as I can to put it down. Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it; and now beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories.

## A HINT FOR GENERAL HOOKER

WASHINGTON, June 5, 1863.

Yours of to-day was received an hour ago [stating that appearances indicated an advance by General Lee]. So much of professional military skill is required to answer it, that I have turned the task over to General Halleck [General-

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

in-Chief of the army]. He promises to perform it with his utmost care. I have but one idea which I think worth suggesting to you, and that is, in case you find Lee coming to the north of the Rappahannock, I would by no means cross to the south of it. If he should leave a rear force at Fredericksburg, tempting you to fall upon it, it would fight in intrenchments and have you at advantage, and so, man for man, worst you at that point, while his main force would in some way be getting an advantage of you northward. In one word, I would not take any risk of being entangled up on the river like an ox jumped half over a fence and liable to be torn by dogs front and rear without a fair chance to gore one way or kick the other.

If Lee would come to my side of the river I would keep on the same side and fight him, or act on the defensive, according as might be my estimate of his strength relatively to my own. But these are mere suggestions, which I desire to be controlled by the judgment of yourself and General Halleck.

[And further]

WASHINGTON, June 14, 1863.

So far as we can make out here, the enemy have Milroy surrounded at Winchester, and Tyler at Martinsburg. If they could hold out a few days, could you help them? If the head of Lee's army is at Martinsburg and the tail of it on the plank-road between Fredericksburg



# Lincoln

and Chancellorsville, the animal must be very slim somewhere; could you not break him?

## CENSURE OF GENERAL MEADE AFTER THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

RECONSIDERED AND NOT SENT

WASHINGTON, July 14, 1863.

I have just seen your despatch to General Halleck, asking to be relieved of your command because of a supposed censure of mine. I am very, very grateful to you for the magnificent success you gave the cause of the country at Gettysburg; and I am sorry now to be the author of the slightest pain to you. But I was in such deep distress myself that I could not restrain some expression of it. I have been oppressed nearly ever since the battle of Gettysburg by what appeared to be evidences that yourself and General Couch and General Smith were not seeking a collision with the enemy, but were trying to get him across the river without another battle. What these evidences were, if you please, I hope to tell you at some time when we shall both feel better. The case, summarily stated, is this: You fought and beat the enemy at Gettysburg, and, of course, to say the least, his loss was as great as yours. He retreated, and you did not, as it seemed to me, pressingly pursue him; but a flood in the river detained him till, by slow degrees, you were again upon him. You had at least twenty

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

thousand veteran troops directly with you, and as many more raw ones within supporting distance, all in addition to those who fought with you at Gettysburg, while it was not possible that he had received a single recruit, and yet you stood and let the flood run down, bridges be built, and the enemy move away at his leisure without attacking him. And Couch and Smith! The latter left Carlisle in time, upon all ordinary calculation, to have aided you in the last battle at Gettysburg, but he did not arrive. At the end of more than ten days, I believe twelve, under constant urging, he reached Hagerstown from Carlisle, which is not an inch over fifty-five miles, if so much, and Couch's movement was very little different.

Again, my dear General, I do not believe you appreciate the magnitude of the misfortune involved in Lee's escape. He was within your easy grasp, and to have closed upon him would, in connection with our other late successes, have ended the war. As it is, the war will be prolonged indefinitely. If you could not safely attack Lee last Monday, how can you possibly do so south of the river, when you can take with you very few more than two-thirds of the force you then had in hand? It would be unreasonable to expect, and I do not expect [that], you can now effect much. Your golden opportunity is gone, and I am distressed immeasurably because of it.

I beg you will not consider this a prosecution or persecution of yourself. As you had learned

# Lincoln

that I was dissatisfied, I have thought it best to kindly tell you why.

## HOPE IN THE MIDST OF WAR

[Mr. J. C. Conkling invited Mr. Lincoln to attend a mass-meeting of unconditional Union men, to be held in Springfield, Illinois, September 3, 1863. Mr. Lincoln's letter in response, one of the most remarkable he ever wrote, concludes:]

Peace does not appear so distant as it did. I hope it will come soon, and come to stay; and so come as to be worth the keeping in all future time. It will then have been proved that among free men there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet, and that they who take such appeal are sure to lose their case and pay the cost. And then there will be some black men who can remember that with silent tongue, and clenched teeth, and steady eye, and well-poised bayonet, they have helped mankind on to this great consummation, while I fear there will be some white ones unable to forget that with malignant heart and deceitful speech they strove to hinder it.

Still, let us not be over-sanguine of a speedy final triumph. Let us be quite sober. Let us diligently apply the means, never doubting that a just God, in his own good time, will give us the rightful result.

## ADDRESS AT GETTYSBURG

[At the dedication of the National Cemetery, November 19, 1863.]

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new

nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

# Lincoln

## ON NEGRO SUFFRAGE

[From a letter to General James Wadsworth, given by F.B.Carpenter, in the "Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln," edited by J. G. Nicolay and John Hay, published and copyrighted by Francis D. Tandy & Co., 1905.]

WASHINGTON, January or February, 1864.

. . . You desire to know, in the event of our complete success in the field, the same being followed by a loyal and cheerful submission on the part of the South, if universal amnesty should not be accompanied by universal suffrage.

Now, since you know my private inclinations as to what terms should be granted to the South in the contingency mentioned, I will here add, that if our success should be thus realised, followed by such desired results, I cannot see, if universal amnesty is granted, how, under the circumstances, I can avoid exacting in return universal suffrage or at least suffrage on the basis of intelligence and military service.

How to better the condition of the coloured race has long been a study which has attracted my serious and careful attention; hence I think I am clear and decided as to what course I shall pursue in the premises, regarding it a religious duty, as the nation's guardian of these people who have so heroically vindicated their manhood on the battle-field, where, in assisting to save the life of the Republic they have demonstrated in blood their right to the ballot, which is but

the humane protection of the flag they have so fearlessly defended. . . .

## PLEA FOR A SOLDIER IN TROUBLE

[TO SECRETARY STANTON]

WASHINGTON, March 1, 1864.

A poor widow, by the name of Baird, has a son in the army, that for some offence has been sentenced to serve a long time without pay, or at most with very little pay. I do not like this punishment of withholding pay — it falls so very hard upon poor families. After he had been serving in this way for several months, at the tearful appeal of the poor mother, I made a direction that he be allowed to enlist for a new term, on the same conditions as others. She now comes, and says she cannot get it acted upon. Please do it.

## ON SLAVERY AND EMANCIPATION

[TO A. G. HODGES]

WASHINGTON, April 4, 1864.

You ask me to put in writing the substance of what I verbally said the other day in your presence, to Governor Bramlette and Senator Dixon. It was about as follows:

“I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and feel, and yet I have never understood that the presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially

upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took that I would, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath. Nor was it my view that I might take an oath to get power, and break the oath in using the power. I understand, too, that in ordinary civil administration this oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. I had publicly declared this many times, and in many ways. And I aver that, to this day, I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery. I did understand, however, that my oath to preserve the Constitution to the best of my ability imposed upon me the duty of preserving, by every indispensable means, that government — that nation, of which that Constitution was the organic law. Was it possible to lose the nation and yet preserve the Constitution? By general law, life and limb must be protected, yet often a limb must be amputated to save a life; but a life is never wisely given to save a limb. I felt that measures otherwise unconstitutional might become lawful by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the Constitution through the preservation of the nation. Right or wrong, I assumed this ground, and now avow it. I could not feel that, to the best of my ability, I had even tried to preserve the Constitution, if, to save

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

slavery or any minor matter, I should permit the wreck of Government, country, and Constitution all together. When, early in the war, General Frémont attempted military emancipation, I forbade it, because I did not then think it an indispensable necessity. When, a little later, General Cameron, then Secretary of War, suggested the arming of the blacks, I objected because I did not yet think it an indispensable necessity. When, still later, General Hunter attempted military emancipation, I again forbade it, because I did not yet think the indispensable necessity had come. When in March and May and July, 1862, I made earnest and successive appeals to the border states to favour compensated emancipation, I believed the indispensable necessity for military emancipation and arming the blacks would come unless averted by that measure. They declined the proposition, and I was, in my best judgment, driven to the alternative of either surrendering the Union, and with it the Constitution, or of laying strong hand upon the coloured element. I chose the latter. In choosing it, I hoped for greater gain than loss; but of this, I was not entirely confident. More than a year of trial now shows no loss by it in our foreign relations, none in our home popular sentiment, none in our white military force — no loss by it anyhow or anywhere. On the contrary it shows a gain of quite a hundred and thirty thousand soldiers, seamen, and labourers. These are palpable



# Lincoln

facts, about which, as facts, there can be no caviling. We have the men; and we could not have had them without the measure.

“And now let any Union man who complains of the measure test himself by writing down in one line that he is for subduing the rebellion by force of arms; and in the next, that he is for taking these hundred and thirty thousand men from the Union side, and placing them where they would be but for the measure he condemns. If he cannot face his case so stated, it is only because he cannot face the truth.

I add a word which was not in the verbal conversation. In telling this tale I attempt no compliment to my own sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years' struggle, the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man, devised or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North, as well as you of the South shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.

TO A BEREAVED MOTHER, MRS. BIXBY

WASHINGTON, November 21, 1864.

DEAR MADAM;

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant-

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

## SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS

WASHINGTON, March 4, 1865.

FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN:

At this second appearing to take the oath of the Presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging

# Lincoln

to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it — all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war — seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were coloured slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localised in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered — that of neither has been answered fully.

The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope — fervently do we pray — that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

# Lincoln

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan — to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.

## A FEW HOURS BEFORE HIS DEATH

[General Van Alen wrote Lincoln, requesting him, for the sake of his friends and the nation, to guard his life and not expose it to assassination as he had by going to Richmond. Lincoln replied at once, on the very day of his murder:]

WASHINGTON, April 14, 1865.

I intend to adopt the advice of my friends and use due precaution. . . . I thank you for the assurance you give me that I shall be supported by conservative men like yourself, in the efforts I may make to restore the Union, so as to make it, to use your language, a union of hearts and hands as well as of states.\*

---

\*From the "Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln," edited by J. G. Nicolay and John Hay, published and copyright by Francis D. Tandy & Co., 1905.

# Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

## LINCOLN'S FAVOURITE POEM

OH! WHY SHOULD THE SPIRIT OF MORTAL BE  
PROUD?

[Lincoln loved poetry. In early life he committed to memory the poem which follows, and often he recited its stanzas. They were written by William Knox, a poet who died in Edinburgh in 1825, at only thirty-six years of age.—  
ED.]

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?  
Like a fast flitting meteor, a fast flying cloud,  
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,  
Man passes from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,  
Be scattered around and together be laid;  
And the young and the old, and the low and the  
high,  
Shall moulder to dust and together shall lie.

The child a mother attended and loved,  
The mother that infant's affection that proved;  
The husband that mother and infant that blessed,  
Each, all, are away to their dwelling of rest.

The maid on whose cheek, on whose brow, in  
whose eye,  
Shone beauty and pleasure — her triumphs  
are by;  
And the memory of those that beloved her and  
praised,  
Are alike from the minds of the living erased.

## Lincoln

The hand of the king that the sceptre hath borne;  
The brow of the priest that the mitre hath worn;  
The eye of the sage and the heart of the brave,  
Are hidden and lost in the depth of the grave.

The peasant, whose lot was to sow and to reap;  
The herdsman, that climbed with his goats up  
the steep;  
The beggar, who wandered in search of his bread,  
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

The saint that enjoyed the communion of heaven,  
The sinner that dared to remain unforgiven,  
The wise and the foolish, the guilty and just,  
Have quietly mingled their bones in the dust.

So the multitude goes, like the flower and the  
weed  
That withers away to let others succeed;  
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,  
To repeat every tale that hath often been told.

For we are the same our fathers have been;  
We see the same sights our fathers have seen —  
We drink the same stream and we feel the same  
sun,  
And run the same course our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers would  
think;  
From the death we are shrinking from, they, too  
would shrink,  
To the life we are clinging to, they too would cling;  
But it speeds from the earth like a bird on the wing.

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

They loved, but their story we cannot unfold;  
They scorned, but the heart of the haughty is  
cold;  
They grieved, but no wail from their slumbers  
may come;  
They joyed, but the tongue of their gladness is  
dumb.

They died, ay! they died: and we things that  
are now,  
Who walk on the turf that lies over their brow,  
Who make in their dwelling a transient abode,  
Meet the changes they met on their pilgrimage  
road.

Yea! hope and despondence, and pleasure and pain,  
Are mingled together like sunshine and rain;  
And the smiles and the tears, and the song and  
the dirge,  
Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.

'T is the wink of an eye, 't is the draught of a  
breath;  
From the blossom of health to the paleness of  
death,  
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the  
shroud —  
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?



# Lincoln

LINCOLN

BY JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

[From the ode recited at the Harvard Commemoration,  
July 21, 1865.]

. . . . .  
Life may be given in many ways,  
And loyalty to Truth be sealed  
As bravely in the closet as the field,  
So bountiful is Fate;  
But then to stand beside her,  
When craven churls deride her,  
To front a lie in arms and not to yield,  
This shows, methinks, God's plan  
And measure of a stalwart man,  
Limbed like the old heroic breeds,  
Who stands self-poised on manhood's solid  
earth,  
Not forced to make excuses for his birth,  
Fed from within with all the strength he needs.

Such was he, our Martyr Chief,  
Whom late the Nation he had led,  
With ashes on her head,  
Wept with the passion of an angry grief:  
Forgive me, if from present things I turn  
To speak what in my heart will beat and burn,  
And hang my wreath on his world-honoured urn.  
Nature, they say, doth dote,  
And cannot make a man  
Save on some worn-out plan,  
Repeating us by rote:

## Little Masterpieces of Autobiography

For him her Old-World moulds aside she threw,  
And choosing sweet clay from the breast  
Of the unexhausted West,  
With stuff untainted shaped a hero new,  
Wise, steadfast in the strength of God, and true.  
How beautiful to see

Once more a shepherd of mankind indeed,  
Who loved his charge, but never loved to lead;  
One whose meek flock the people joyed to be,  
Not lured by any cheat of birth,  
But by his clear-grained human worth,  
And brave old wisdom of sincerity!

They knew that outward grace is dust;  
They could not choose but trust  
In that sure-footed mind's unfaltering skill,  
And supple-tempered will  
That bent like perfect-steel to spring again and  
thrust.

His was no lonely mountain-peak of mind,  
Thrusting to thin air o'er our cloudy bars,  
A sea-mark now, now lost in vapours blind;  
Broad prairie rather, genial level-lined,  
Fruitful and friendly for all human kind,  
Yet also nigh to heaven and loved of loftiest  
stars.

Nothing of Europe here,  
Or, then, of Europe fronting mornward still,  
Ere any names of Serf and Peer  
Could Nature's equal scheme deface  
And thwart her genial will;  
Here was a type of the true elder race,

# Lincoln

And one of Plutarch's men talked with us face  
to face.

I praise him not; it were too late;

And some innate weakness there must be

In him who condescends to victory

Such as the Present gives, and cannot wait,

Safe in himself as in a fate.

So always firmly he:

He knew to bide his time

And can his fame abide,

Still patient in his simple faith sublime,

Till the wise years decide.

Great captains, with their guns and drums,

Disturb our judgment for the hour,

But at last silence comes:

These all are gone, and, standing like a tower,

Our children shall behold his fame,

The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,

Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,

New birth of our new soil, the first American.