

unequal, almost hopeless contest; he had succeeded amidst the gravest difficulties; he had baffled his foes; he had saved his country; and in the end had led her proudly on to victory and to independence. And now that she was free, now that she was her own mistress, he determined to set up for her a constitution such as had never before been recorded in the history of the world; he ventured to rear such a fabric of social order as had never before been put into practice in any land. Young America was the stage on which this new act was to be played, and Washington was the leading actor; while the whole world attentively looked on, anxious to see whether "society could, by carrying into full effect the principle of representation, maintain its own peace and good government, carry forward its own great interests, and conduct itself to political renown and glory." The actors performed well their rôles; the audience pronounced the play a brilliant success; and imitations of it have since been presented, though generally on smaller stages, in every part of the globe. And thus another gem was added to Washington's crown of glory; thus he proved that besides being a great military leader he could also act the part of a statesman, and act it as successfully as the best.

But the part he took in the framing of the constitution is not by any means the only proof he gave of his ability as a law-giver. For two successive terms he occupied the presidential chair, and would have been elected to it a third time had not the fear of establishing a dangerous precedent impelled him to decline the nomination. And well, indeed, would it be for society and for the world if the politicians of our day would

make an attentive study of the principles which influenced Washington's administration, and if they would follow the example he has set! As Webster very concisely and truly remarked of the first president of American Republic; "His principle it was to act right, and trust the people for support; his principle it was not to follow the lead of sinister and selfish ends, and to rely on the little arts of party delusion to obtain public sanction for such a course. Born for his country and for the world, he did not give up to party what was meant for mankind. The consequence is that his fame is as durable as his principles, as lasting as truth and virtue themselves. While the hundreds whom party excitement and temporary circumstances and casual combinations have raised into transient notoriety, sink again, like thin bubbles, bursting and dissolving into the great ocean, Washington's fame is like the rock which bounds that ocean, and at whose feet its billows are destined to break harmlessly for ever."

It was the extraordinary fortune of Washington that from the earliest years of his public life until the time of his death he enjoyed the fullest measure of a nation's trust. No man ever before rose out of the mass of the people to such power without abusing it, and history searches in vain for a military leader, so much of whose life had been spent in the camp, and whose will was law to a grateful nation, who voluntarily resigned his rank and chose the humble, peaceful occupation of a farmer. From the outset of his career, his honor and his country stood foremost in his affections; the first he guarded with scrupulous care, and for the last he offered up his fortune and his life.