
Epilogue

On July Ninth, 1804 Gouverneur Morris made the following entry in his diary:

General Hamilton was killed in a duel this morning by Colonel Burr. I go to town, but meet (opposite to the hospital) Martin Wilkins, who tells me General Hamilton is yet alive at Greenwich Street, and not, as I was told this morning, already dead. Go there. When I arrive he is speechless. The scene is too powerful for me, so that I am obliged to walk in the garden to take breath. After having composed myself, I return and sit by his side till he expires. He is opened, and we find that the ball has broken one of his ribs, passed through the lower part of the liver, and lodged in the vertebrae of his back: a most melancholy scene. His wife almost frantic with grief, his children in tears, every person present deeply afflicted, the whole city agitated, every countenance dejected. This evening I am asked to pronounce a funeral oration. I promise to do so if I can possibly command myself enough, but express my belief that it will be utterly impossible. I am wholly unmanned by this day's spectacle.

Two days later, at the request of Elizabeth Hamilton, Morris delivered the Funeral Oration for Alexander Hamilton in Manhattan. These are excerpts:

Fellow-Citizens,

If on this sad, this solemn occasion, I should endeavor to move your commiseration, it would be doing injustice to that sensibility which has been so generally and so justly manifested. Far from attempting to excite your emotions, I must try to repress my own, and yet I fear that instead of the language of a public speaker, you will hear only the lamentations of a bewailing friend. But I will struggle with my bursting heart, to portray that Heroic Spirit, which has flown to the mansions of bliss.

Students of Columbia! He was in the ardent pursuit of knowledge in your academic shades, when the first sound of the American war called him to the field. A young and unprotected volun-

teer, such was his zeal and so brilliant his service that we heard his name before we knew his person. It seemed as if God had called him suddenly into existence, that he might assist to save a world!

The penetrating eye of Washington soon perceived the manly spirit which animated his youthful bosom. By that excellent judge of men he was selected as an Aide, and thus he became early acquainted with, and was a principal actor in, the most important scenes of our Revolution.

At the siege of York, he pertinaciously insisted and he obtained the command of a Forlorn Hope. He stormed the redoubt; but let it be recorded, that not one single man of the enemy perished. His gallant troops emulating the example of their chief checked the uplifted arm, and spared a foe no longer resisting. Here closed his military career.

Shortly after the war, your favor, no, your discernment called him to public office. You sent him to the convention at Philadelphia: he there assisted in forming that constitution which is now the bond of our union, the shield of our defence and the source of our prosperity. In signing that compact he expressed his apprehension that it did not contain sufficient means of strength for its own preservation; and that in consequence we should share the fate of many other republics and pass through Anarchy to Despotism. We hoped better things. We confided in the good sense of the American people, and above all we trusted in the protecting Providence of the Almighty. On this important subject he never concealed his opinion. He disdained concealment. Knowing the purity of his heart, he bore it as it were in his hand, exposing to every passenger its inmost recesses. This generous indiscretion subjected him to censure from misrepresentation. His speculative opinions were treated as deliberate designs; and yet you all know how strenuous, how unremitting were his efforts to establish and to preserve the constitution. If then his opinion was wrong, pardon, oh! pardon that single error, in a life devoted to your service.

At the time when our government was organized, we were without funds, though not without resources. To call them into action, and establish order in the finances, Washington sought

for splendid talents, for extensive information, and above all, he sought for sterling, incorruptible integrity. All these he found in Hamilton. . . And the result was a rapid advance in power and prosperity, of which there is no example in any other age or nation. The part which Hamilton bore is universally known.

His unsuspecting confidence in professions which he believed to be sincere, led him to trust too much to the undeserving. This exposed him to misrepresentation. He felt himself obliged to resign. The care of a rising family, and the narrowness of his fortune, made it a duty to return to his profession for their support. But though he was compelled to abandon public life, never, no, never for a moment did he abandon the public service. He never lost sight of your interests. I declare to you, before that God in whose presence we are now so especially assembled, that in his most private and confidential conversations, the single objects of discussion and consideration were your freedom and happiness. . .

Brethren of the Cincinnati! There lies our chief! Let him still be our model. Like him, after

a long and faithful public service, let us cheerfully perform the social duties of private life. Oh! he was mild and gentle. In him there was no offence; no guile. His generous hand and heart were open to all. . .

Fellow Citizens! You have long witnessed his professional conduct, and felt his unrivaled eloquence. You know how well he performed the duties of a citizen. You know that he never courted your favor by adulation, or the sacrifice of his own judgment. You have seen him contending against you, and saving your dearest interests, as it were, in spite of yourselves. And you now feel and enjoy the benefits resulting from the firm energy of his conduct. Bear this testimony to the memory of my departed friend. I charge you to protect his fame. It is all he has left, all that these poor orphan children will inherit from their father. But, my countrymen, that fame may be a rich treasure to you also. Let it be the test by which to examine those who solicit your favour. Disregarding professions, view their conduct and on a doubtful occasion, ask, Would Hamilton have done this thing?

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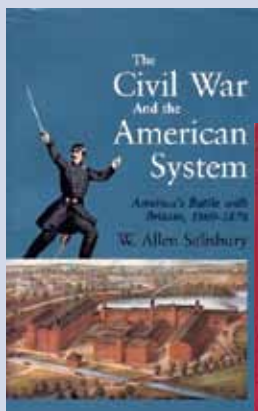
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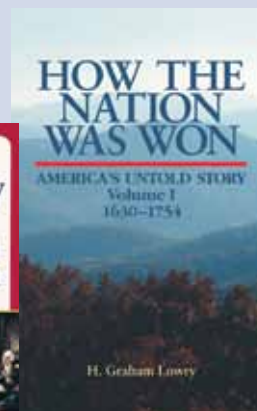
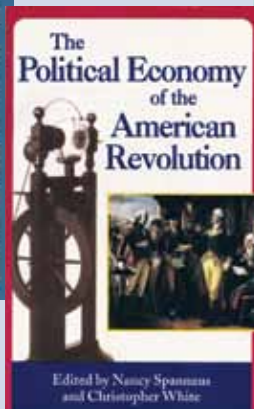
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