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DEATH ABOLISHED :

A SERMON.

Occasioned by the Sickness which prevailed at Alexandria during the months of August, September and October; giving a detail of that Sickness, and of some of the views of Providence in such calamitous visitations.

WITH AN APPENDIX; •

Containing facts, relating to the origin of the Sickness—the extent of the mortality—the labours of the committee of health, and the contributions for the relief of the poor.

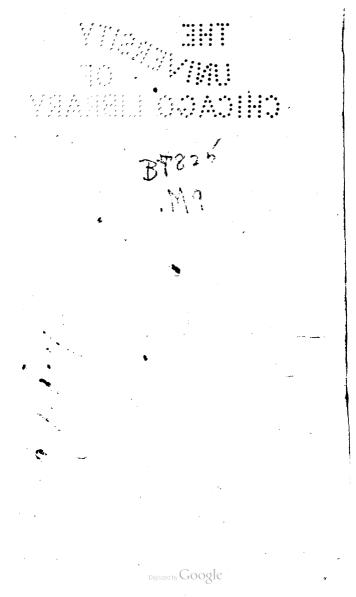
PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

BY FAMES MUIR; D. D.

Alexandría :

PRINTED BY COTTOM AND STEWART.

1803.



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DEATH ABOLISHED, &c.

2. TIMOTHY, i. 10.

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OUR assembling together this day excites a melancholy pleasure. Be glad that it is said, after so long an interruption, Let us go to the house of the Lord. But look on the right, and left, above and below, you do not see many of your fellow worshippers; alas! you shall see them no more—they have been swept by the overflowing flood into the ocean of eternity. We may well mourn; far from discouraging, I would cherish the tender feeling. It would be an indelible disgrace, when the righteous are taken away, did we not lay it to heart.

Beholding the ravages of death, fear, terror and despair would seize, depress and overwhelm the soul, did we not believe in "Jesus Christ "who hath abolished death." I shall, through Divine assistance, illustrate this important doctrine: then I shall bring in view some late events, which seem to contradict this doctrine, that I may shew their consistence there-with.

The reign of death commenced at the fatal moment when Adam transgressed the command of God, eating the fruit of which he had said, Thou shalt not eat. Whilst obedient, he was crowned with glory and honour. Loving God,

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it was melody to hear his voice ; joy to do his will, heaven to stand in his presence. He was happy in himself; and in his associate for life. Earth spread before him her choicest stores; and surrounding creatures were subservient to his pleasure and advantage. No evil of any kind was either felt or dreaded. He was perfectly contented for the present; and with rapture anticipated the future, when, without pain or struggle, he should put off what was gross and earthly; and highly improved, lead the life of angels in a better world. Becoming disobedient, the glory departed from him, and his honours faded. At enmity with God, 4 he could not bear his voice; nor bend to his will; it was hell to be dragged into his presence. He was unhappy in himself, and in his associate for Earth fertile in thorns and thistles, reluctlife. antly yielded her choicest stores to his arduous and incessant labour; and surrounding creatures. assuming an hostile aspect, required an iron rod to render them subservient to his pleasure, and advantage. Evils of every kind were felt and dreaded; he was not contented for the present; and anticipated the future with overwhelming anguish.

By his offence, Adam fell into the lowest state of degradation. At the moment when he disobeyed God, at that moment he died. Death, whose sting is sin, whose strength is the law, seized him as a prey, and reduced him to bondage. Innocence, happiness, and immortality were lost. He was exiled from Paradise, cast out from the presence of God, a child of disobedience, and an heir of Hell. Representing posterity in that act which subjected him to death, they are all under the same condemnation, equally degraded and ensla-

ved ; destitute of innocence, happiness, and immortality ; exiles and outcasts ; children of disobedience and heirs of Hell.

Death in my text, and generally in scriptive, includes the loss of purity and happiness; whatever is degrading and ruinous either in this world or in the next.

Deliverance from such a state cannot be effected by any act of ours; we must be indebted to the grace of God. Fallen angles are reserved in chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day; but fallen men are prisoners of hope; liberty is proclaimed to the captive and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. God has reconciled the world to himself by Jesus Christ; who has been manifested as our Saviour : in his life, and in his death he honoured the law of God, and explated the guilt of men : God accepts of us through the beloved, and at his intercession, grants all the grace, and all the blessing necessary to render us safe and happy, either in time, or in eternity. His spirit corrects the disorders of our nature, freeing us from the timid cowardly spirit, the natural attendant on guilt; inspiring that love which casteth out fear ; that courge which resists unto blood, striving against sin; that wisdom which is pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocracy. Having passed from death to life, we have the fullest assurances of life and immortality. By producing such a change in mens' state and circumstances, Jesus Christ hath abolished death. The apostle has fully illustrated this subject in the epistle to the Romans: "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so

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death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned :-For until the law sin was in the world : but sin is not imputed when there is no law. -Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adams transgression. who is the figure of him that is to come,-But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead ; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many,-And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift : for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification,-For if by one mans offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ,-Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life,—For as by one mans disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous,-Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound : but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,-That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." To explain and enforce these truths, are the

To explain and enforce these truths, are the leading objects in that revelation by which we are distinguished. Every page of which tends, either to convince that we are fallen; or to persuade to submit to the grace of God. Thus convinced, and thus persuaded, we shall be restored to a healthful and a happy state: shall come out

of great tribulation : shall be shewn the path of life, and attain fullness of joy and pleasure for ever more. Among a thousand passages which throw abundant light on a subject in which we have such interest, I shall single out one more. In the plainest language, it speaks peace and consolation to the soul disquieted and cast down under a sense of guilt and wretchedness. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glorv and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man,-For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings,-For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,-Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee,-And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me,-Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,-And deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage."

in the midst of infirmity, temptation, and suffering; tasting the bitterness of death, and submitting to the humiliation of the grave; procured for those who trust in him, by the merit of what he did, and what he suffered, pardon and mercy, grace sufficient for them, and strength perfected in their weakness, complete deliverance from sin and mistry.

The prey is taken from the mighty: The brand snatched out of the burning: The heir of Hell, becomes an heir of Heaven. Satan falls as lightening from Heaven, his throne is overset, and his empire ruined.

Having illustrated the doctrine in my text, that Jesus Chrish hath abolished Death; I proceed to bring in view some late events which seem to contradict this doctrine, that I may shew their consistence the re-with.

Few situations more favorable than the one we possess for health, convenience, and pleasure; elevated and dry; neither too much crouded with houses, nor overstocked with inhabitants, having a navigable river, and a neighbouring country pouring upon us the richest productions of the earth; having water in abundance, and indeed every thing for sustenance, gratification and comfort; but sad experience convinces us that no situation on earth is exempt from change, terror and decay.

About thirty years ago a malignant fever prevailed and carried off the first pastor of this congregation and a great number of inhabitants. At intervals since the alarm has repeatedly been given although not in the same degree, and to an equal extent. Hitherto we have escaped that disease which for ten years past has been the scourge of most of the commercial cities of America. It has at last found us out. Whether of foreign, or

domestic origin : In what degree contagious, and how the contagion is communicated; how far a season unusual among us, having little rain for six months-excessive heat, without thunder or lightening; and existing nuisances of different kinds, may, as natural causes be supposed sufficient to produce-to cherish;-and spread the diseise, are discussions which do not immediately belong to the duties of this place, let the decision be I can pronounce with certainty, that as it mav. this is the visitation of God to answer his own purposes,-taking the righteous from the evil to come ;---scourging the madness of the times ;--vindicating thereby his love of righteousness, and hatred of iniquity Shall there be evil in the city and hath not the Lord done it?-no never he creates evil. When men neglect or profane the service of God, many are weak and sickly. and many die; sore sicknesses, of long continuance, and of which they are afraid cleaves unto them : yet when they make their supplication to him, in their distress "he forgiveth their iniquities; he healeth their diseases," he taketh sickness from the midst of them."

The early part of the season was uncommonly fatal to children; and those who escaped the epidemic after it began its devastation, have otherwise been extremely sickly; so that by one disease or another, since the twentieth of August until the first of November, according to the report of the Committee of Health, of the accuracy of which I am well satisfied, one hundred and seventy five persons, have been swept off, of all ages and descriptions, young and old, rich and poor bond and free, the active and the indolent, the friends and the pests of society, for no distinction was observable, there was one event to all, to the

righteous and to the wicked, to him who sacrificeth, and to him who sacrificeth not.

Christian societies among us of every denomination lament the loss of valuable members; our loss has been great. Some who once fed in these pastures had long since escaped to the dark mountains, where they stumbled and fell, what has become of them God only knows,-of such we can take no account; but nine of our friends are no more; five were in full communion with us; four were already either very useful, or were advincing to usefullness. Thomas Smith was an early victim; and soon followed by his wife, both of whom died in the hopes of a blessed immortality. · Daniel Douglass is a name which must live in our remembrance as long as the faithful discharge of the duties of life; as unassuming manners, and unfeigned piety are held in estimation.

David Graham and his wife escaped from a troublesome world, to a world where I hope all tears are wiped from their eyes.

Beside these, who were in full communion, Kenneth Matthewson was useful to us as a society, and would probably have become more useful, but the head of the church has been pleased to assign him a station in another world.

Of our young friends who belonged to families who worshipped in this place, and were growing up, we hoped, to take the place of their parents when gone, the names of Nancy Madden, John Grandle, and Elizabeth Moody, will immediately occur. Whilst we are lift, these have been taken away—what a breach !—theheart must be hard indeed, which can think of so many snatched from the midst of us without emotion; but what shall we say? It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good; not our will, but thine be done.

The death of the first born struck the Ægyptions with universal panic; they said, We be all dead men. Before the Lord executing judgments upon the earth goes the pestilence, and burning coals at his feet. He marches through the land in indignation; and threshes the heathen in anger. Then the tents of Cushan are seen in affliction, and the curtains of the land of Midian tremble : mens' lives hang in doubt, they fear day and night and have no assurance of life. Has not this been verified in our recent experience? yes, we did tremble and had sorrow; we fled like timorous sheep, and were scattered on the mountains; our streets were deserted; our houses left without inhabitants; business of every kind was interrupted.

It was necessary that some should remain to administer comfort and relief to their afflicted brethren. Of these, I mention with marked approbation, the physicians, the members of the Committee of health, and those who attended the sick, they executed an arduous duty, at the risque of ease, of safety, and even of life; nor were those at a distance deficient in duty: their sympathy and prayers were availing, being attended with alms to a great amount. A contribution of two thousand nine hundred and sixty-nine dollars, beside a large supply of the necessaries of life, the free and cheerful offering of this neighbourhood, is an honourable evidence that one of the best dispositions which can possess the mind exists among us.

It is of importance to remark, that one part of a family have been taken, and another left: that the most *exposed* have been in *safety*, and the, most *cautious* have suffered: that some removed, who died; some remained who are yet alive.

Whence this difference in cases of equal danger ; Why was the issue of exposure or caution, so opposite to what might have been expected ?---How comes it, that any died who removed? or tha any are alive who remained, a reason cannot be assigned which leaves no doubt, unless itt oe, that the victim has been marked with unerring precision; which is still more likely, when it is remembered, that many who languished for a time under the epidemic recovered, but the recovery of many could not be effected, altho they breathed the same air; experienced the same treatment; and had, in every respect, the same attendants. Christians know that the time . of birth and the time of death are fixed in the decree of God. On this principle, and on this alone, can we give an account for what we otherwise could give no good account: nor can such a doct-. rine relax any measure in our power for the preservation of life, which is a duty indispensible in us, and when performed, shall most assuredly be effectual, until the moment for your departure arrive; then, brethren, you must go; nothing can save you; you must bid the world a long-a lasting farewel.

Our late affliction reminds us of many parts of our conduct.

It is too common for men to live as if there were no God, to whom they owed obedience; God now appeared, they trembled and were speechless, and like the guilty Adam, sought to hide themselves from his presence.

The Sabbath has been sadly profaned by labour, and worldly business;—neither labour norworldly business were now performed; the city was left in full possession of these Sabbaths which for long it had not enjoyed, all was still and quiet;

not a dog moved its tongue. Judea was at rest, when the reb-llious Jews were driven into captivi iy, so was this place when the destroying angel drove from our streets the idle, the inconsiderate, and the noisy.

Men will not lay death to heart; now they could hardly be kept alive from the dread of dying.

The rancour of party spirit experienced a momentary suspension. Did we meet any in the street, or in the neighbourhood, it was a brother in affliction; the attachment and the sympathy were mutual: It was matter of congratulation that any of us were left alive.

That inconsideration and levity too often the disgrace of our solemn meetings entirely disappeared, at the house of mourning, around the grave, in the temple of God, the ear was open and the heart tender; there was every evidence that the truths of God's word were believed, and made impression.

There Acre few attempts to plunder ;-few existing quarrels ;-little thirst after carnal pleasure ; as elitary instance of each might probably be found but, the awe of God restrained the wickedness of men, whereby the calamity might have inclused to a degree which we could not well have borne : our chastisement, not our ruin was in v w, therefore anger was qualified with comparising ; jndgment with mercy.

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There were serious apprehensions from a quarter where we are very vulnerable, but an occurrence distressing in itself freed us from apprehensions which were still more so: the desolation of fire was added to that of sickness, and to what extent it might have prevailed, the inhabitants having generally removed, it is impossible to say, had notour african brethren from whom we dreaded every evil, exerted themselves for our good; at a time, and in a manner which calls for gratitude and public rewards.

The events which I have now detailed, seem at first view to destroy, not to establish the doctrine in my text, but considered more attentively, they place that doctrine in the very light, whence we may derive the greatest instruction. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, making men holy, in order that they may be happy. His obedience unto death was a necessary step in effecting that glorous purpose. It was the price of redemption, possessing value to redeem a lost. world. Thus we are restored to the favour of God ; thus, that energy which renews, which sanctifies, which perfects the soul is effectully exerted for the benefit of the individual.

The sufferings of the present life also enter into the plan of providence, for the recovery of man, They are applied, sometimes for the chastisement of transgression ; at other times for the exercise of grace. The Redeemer renders then, effectual for both of these purposes, as appears in fart from the detail now before you, and shall ful mappear, when the whole mystery of providence s all the un-. folded, and explained to the satisfaction fassembled worlds.

Our afflictions have tried the soul In the

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midst of embarrassment, of danger and of death, some have done their duty. But

Let me principally fix your attention to a lesson given by our distress, which ought to be engraven on the heart in indelible characters, which is, that sin is the cause of this, and of every calamity. Your forgetfulness of God, and profanction of his sabbaths ;—your attachment to worldly pleasures and worldly profits - your civil and religious dissentions; - your total disregard of death, and of a future judgment, seem im nediately to be punished in the late visitation of Providence. These are the enemies who have troubled you, and brought you into danger and disgrace. Spare them not, let them be brought forth that they may be slain.

You have sufficient proof what may be expected from the practice of ungodliness, and worldly lusts: Renounce the practice: Flee from it as from hell; let not the accursed cup reach your lips, there is *Death* in the Cup.

I invite you to try a sober, righteous and a godly life. It would free you from the thousand tears, and apprehensions with which you arenow tormented; it is connected with happiness and safety both in this world and in that which is to come: Christ's yoke in the experience of all his disciples is easy, and his burden light; come to him; he will give rest to your souls.

God has been graciously pleased to remove the rod with which our sins have been visited; and the stripes which our transgressions incurred. But remember, that the Lord lives, and reigns; that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and ever jealous for the honour of his name: go therefore, I beseech you, go and sin no more lest a worse thing befall you.

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A P P E N D I X.

The disease, which has prevailed in a fatal degree, for some months past, in its origin, and nature eludes the researches of the most skillful and diligent. Different facts keep the mind in ' suspence, and may be urged with equal force to establish systems the most opposite and contradictory, even physicians of the greatest capacity and experience find the subject so involved that they are continually fluctuating in their opinions. Without venturing even a conjecture upon what lies in such obscurity, it may be of use to observe that union street where the disease first made its appearance, and committed great ravages, stands on ground gained from the river : the ware-houses have no cellars, and are supposed to have water under the floors, often in a very offensive state. Oysters are permitted to be brought into one of the docks on this street. at all seasons, part of the cargoes, which have not been sold, are thrown in a putrid state on the wharf in a heap among shells which always retain some of the ligamentous parts of the Oyster, and altogether becomes a mass of corrupted animal matter. The shells in this heap are disposed of for the purpose of making lime; a thousand bushels, thus circumstanced, were put on 'a brick-kiln in Water Street, and set fire to on the fifth of August, and nothing could be more noisome than the smoke driven for nearly four hours upon the housses of Messrs. Douglass, Wise,

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and Marsteller, whence the fever, by its devastation, began to excite universal alarm. Many houses in the squares both of Water and Union Street, which suffered most, are inhabited by persons who connect no idea of health and comfort with keeping their persons tidy, and the places about them clean. Michael Wise, carried from the schooner Patience, beddes and apparel which had been in use by persons sick of the yellow-fever, to his own house, where they were washed by his wife on the twelfth of August, she was taken ill of a fever on the fourteenth, but recovered at that time.

Darkness envelopes this disease on every side. One instance bespeaks it of *foreign*; another of domestic origin. It could not but arise here, being such a sink of filth and impurity; but it was equally filthy and impure there, and yet no. trace of it were found. It cuts all off where it enters, that family are extinct, neither root nor branch are left; no, it was in this numerous family, and one branch only is missing. It cannot be communicated in a healthy situation, she died, amidst forty persons, at a distant seat, and the forty were safe ; yes, it can be communicated in a healthy situation, she who had timously removed to a remote dwelling, standing alone received it from her husband. It is extremely infectious, go not within its sphere it proved fatal to strangers and to friends who approached the deceased; It is impossible that it can be so extremely infectious, the deceased was visited by strangers. and attended by friends, and none of them expetienced any harm. None escaped whom it seized, it has carried off one hundred and seventy five persons; yes, double that number have struggled

it's malignity and are yet alive. Thus are we tossed by facts equally supporting discordant opinions. The disease baffles the skill of the most skillful. Its way is in the sea, and its path in the great waters, and its foot-steps are not known!*

Facts precisely similar to those I have stated may, no doubt have existed in former years, but the same direful effects have not followed as now. A great change has been experienced in our climate. For three years falls of rain have not been in their usual quantity. The last spring and summer were very dry. The waters of the Patowmac, hitherto fresh, and preferred to any other for carying to sea, became brackish and 24 totally unfit to supply the outward bound vessels, It cannot be recollected that this was ever the case before. Our atmosphere assimulating more than usual with that of the Tropical climates, has given a new character to the prevailing diseases. But whence this change? who gives rain, or ... with-holds it when he thinks best? Is it not the most High? Be sensible that the affliction is from him. Learning righteousness, try to avert his indignation. It is the province of the physician and of the police, to investigate the natural . causes of destruction, that they may be removed, or counteracted, but many causes of destruction , are, far beyond their controul. Know that your health and life are in the hand of God. He can affect both, and in a manner in which it will be impossible for you to resist. Can any forget the

* For the facts on which these observations are founded, I am under obligations to the Healthofficer, it is one obligation among many others, and ofta nature which I shall never be able to repay, Almighty or provoke by their wickedness the terrors of his power? It would be much wiser to seek after the means of pleasing him, than to waste your time in researches not in your sphere after the natural causes of disease, for it is known that sin is the leading cause. Forsake your sins, and God will take sickness from the midst of you. At least make the trial, and I have the best ground for assuring you that it shall not be fruitless.

The account of the mortality, in distant places, has been greatly exaggerated, general report can seldom be depended upon, even on the spot one. cannot venture to repeat what he hears. The committee of health have reported one hundred and seventy five deaths from the 20th. of August until the first of November, and I believe it to be nearly accurate. At Penny hill during August, September and October, one hundred and twenty were buried, forty one at the Episcopal burying ground, fourteen at the Presbyterian, about ten at the new burying ground in Fairfax Street, in the burying ground belonging to the Quakers and Roman Catholics perhaps three in each. This amounts to one hundred and ninety one, but some of the accounts begin earlier in August than the 20th, and others extend into the month of November, for the number had been taken not the dates, with these allowances, the report of the committee of health does not fall far short of as much accuracy as could be expected in the midst of death and dismay.

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In order to arrest the progress of disease and to support and relieve those who may be afflicted, is was ordered in council Sept. 10, 1803. That Andrew Jamieson, Philip Wanton, Alexander Smith,

Washer Blount, Joseph M. Perrin, William Paton, Samuel Snowden, John Mandeville, and Iohn Lumsdon be a Committee of health, who, or any three of them, shall have full power and authority to use all measures which may be necessary for the purposes aforesaid, and who shall from time to time publish a correct statement of the health of the town.-These gentlemen assisted with the advice of the health officer, have executed their duty in the most exemplary manner; they sat for business every day ; they visited the sick in all parts of the town; and afforded personal and pecuniary aid to those who stood in need of aid; they could neither be deterred by fatigue nor danger, but persevered in their labours, until the returning health of the town rendered these labours no more necessary.

It is with peculiar pleasure I state the seasonable relief, afforded the poor, from the cheerful and voluntary contributions of citizens and of neighbours both in their collective and individual capacities. It is an honourable monument, which shall come in remembrance, when this passing scene shall have for ever disappeared, I bring it in view that others also may be induced to inscribe their names where they shall escape the waste of time.

From the City of Washington\$550 00Fredericksburg and its vicinity329 00George-Town218 00Dumfries195 00Prince George County, Maryland150 00Jonathan Swift, Esq.120 00

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APPENDIX.

General John Mason Marine Insurance Association ————————————————————————————————————	100 50 50 50 50 50	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00
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APPENDIX.

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Total. \$ 2999 88

Besides 47 barrels of corn—2 barrels of Flour— 70 bushels of meal—20 bushels of potatoes— 3 quarters of beef—2 sheep—vegetables, and a load of wood, were received from different persons, and at different times.

Alexandria, 16th. November, 1803.

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