

ORATION

DELIVERED BY

Hon. David A. Bokee,

IN THE

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,

Brooklyn,

JULY 4th, 1851,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

SEVENTY-SIXTH ANNIVERSARY

OF OUR

NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE.

es,

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ORATION.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS:

There are times and seasons when it is proper for men, in traveling the journey of life, to pause and take a retrospect of the past, that they may see what progress they have made, and whether they have deviated from the right course,—and that they may also look forward and take as extensive a survey of their future route, as their own vision and the surrounding objects will permit. No wise man, indeed, will allow himself to neglect these proper occasions of self-examination in regard to the past, and serious contemplation of the future.

The same may be said of Nations. With them there are recurrences of important epochs, when the people are emphatically called upon to pause and reflect;—to contemplate the past and survey the future. Can there be a more fitting occasion for such a pause and for such examination than upon the arrival of another national birthday? This is an annual resting place, and it will be well for us to seize the opportunity it offers to deepen the impression and refresh our recollections of the events with which it is in every mind associated. Circumstances of a momentous character that have lately transpired, and are now agitating the public mind, give additional interest to these events, and add greatly to the duty of the American people, rightly to appreciate the blessings which flow from them and which have made us a great and happy nation.

It is not my intention to occupy the brief time allotted me on the present occasion, in recapitulating the history of the Revolution. That history is too deeply engraven on the tablet of your memories, to render any labor of that kind necessary; but at a moment when there are those insane enough to lay violent hands upon our blessed UNION, and attempt to rend it into fragments; when there are others, who, if the severance of the Union be not their avowed object, are yet pursuing a course, which, if persisted in by any very large number of people at the North, must inevitably lead to that result; it will be well for us to cast our eyes back to the past, and see what was the condition of the country previous to the formation of this glorious Union,—what pains, and labor, and anxiety it cost our ancestors to bring it into existence, and then take note of the blessings the whole country has enjoyed under it, and of which it has been the fruitful and still increasing source.

The Colonies which were planted in N.

America, and which at the commencement of that noble struggle which resulted so gloriously to them, were commenced at different periods, by different persons, and for different purposes. They were distant from each other, separated by an unexplored wilderness filled with wild beasts, and wild men much more to be dreaded than the most savage and dangerous animals, and had little communication or sympathy for each other. They were neither all of one race or language; nor was there a community of interest or religion to bind them together as one people. So far from this, there existed among some of them strong feelings of hostility, growing out of those embittered religious contests that had disturbed the peace of England before they had left their parent land for these, then western wilds. The Cavalier of Virginia, Maryland and South Carolina, saw in the New-Englander the same sturdy, bigotted Puritan, who had kindled his ire, and against whom he had drawn his sword in the conflicts between puritanism and prelacy, or protestantism and papistry in Old England. And the Puritan beheld his old enemies settled upon the same continent but at such a distance and beyond such intervening obstacles, that there was little prospect of their ever being brought into proximity or association with each other.

Between these, and the staid, cool and imperturbable settlers of New Amsterdam, there was as little affinity or intercourse, and sometimes even hostilities. Such were the disjointed members of that confederacy which was afterwards formed, and which eventually became a well cemented Union.

And what, let me ask you, fellow citizens, were those causes—powerful indeed, they must have been—which overcame the repulsive force of these scattered members, and united them in a firm, fraternal national band?—what were the causes which brought the Cavalier, the Round-head, and the sturdy Dutchman to forget former antipathies, to embrace as brothers, and to pledge their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor to stand by each other in the deadly conflict they had embarked in?

It was the love of Liberty; it was a firm resolve never to be deprived of the rights of freemen. They and their fathers had sought these western lands, had sundered the ties of kindred and of neighborhood, had left the hearth stones of their infancy and manhood, had bid adieu to the scenes and companions of their youth, and the hallowed graves of their ancestors, had braved the dangers of a voyage, not then as now, a mere pleasure

excursion, but attended with perils and privations of which we have but a faint idea. They had landed upon "rockbound," cold, inhospitable shores; had encountered cold and hunger and sickness in an inclement season, with no covering but the canopy of the heavens, and nothing to sustain them but their abiding faith in Divine protection and goodness, and their own indomitable energies. They were inured to toil, privations, dangers and hardships; but for all these, they had the inestimable blessing which they prized above everything else on earth, "freedom to worship God" after their own manner, and in accordance with the dictates of their own consciences. Here, they tasted the sweets of Liberty; here, they were subject to no capricious whim of a petty tyrant; to no Star-chamber inquisitions, arbitrary fines and imprisonments; to no brutal and blood thirsty judge, with juries ready to do his bidding, and consign innocent victims by scores to the gallows and the gibbet. They were too insignificant and too far distant to attract the notice of those whose tender mercies were cruelty, and whose protection would have been that which the wolf gives to the lamb, or the Eastern satrap to the unfortunate and poverty-stricken inhabitants of his district, whom he robs and oppresses.

Thus, fortunately, for a time left to themselves, our ancestors, as the inhabitants of all new countries are, became a hardy, industrious, religious, liberty-loving people; and they took care that their children should be trained up in the way they should go. With danger they were familiar, for they warred not less with the primeval, interminable, unbroken forest, than with the savage foe with which it was filled, and whose hideous yell was but too often the first intimation they had of his immediate presence, and of the appalling fate that awaited some portions at least of their families.

But they "increased and multiplied."—Industry and enterprise, as they ever do, found their rewards. Few sared sumptuously, but few also lacked the necessaries of life; and all, as a people, went on increasing in comfort and wealth, improving their farms, extending their settlements, and enlarging their commerce, until their prosperity finally attracted the attention of the government of the mother Country, and excited the cupidity of unjust ministers of the Crown, and then commenced that ever memorable conflict between haughty, insolent, and domineering power, and the indomitable spirit of civil liberty. This contest went on for years before hostilities commenced. John Adams has said, that the "revolution was twenty years old when the war began." The steps taken by the British ministry to treat the American Colonies as a conquered people, and not as British subjects having all

the rights of those who dwelt in England, were taken cautiously, and, as it were, by stealth, but they were watched by jealous eyes, sagacious men, and sturdy freemen. Not an inch could they advance unperceived. No disguise, however well assumed—no sophistry however specious could deceive or impose upon those "who knew their rights, and knowing, dared maintain."

The purpose of the British government, that is, to levy a tax upon the colonies without their consent,—to tax them unrepresented in Parliament,—soon became apparent to the more sagacious and lynx-eyed patriots of that day—the Franklins, the Adamses, the Henrys, and the Randolphs;—and a common danger, and common grievances naturally brought about an interchange of opinion between the leading men in opposition to the objectionable measures, residing in different and distant colonies. Each colony, or at least several of them, had their separate quarrels with their Royal Governors, in addition to the common complaints of the whole against the ministry, and these were by no means calculated to reconcile the people to such measures as the Stamp Act, the tax upon tea, the Boston Port Bill, &c., &c., or to allay the irritation of the public mind.

The acts I have alluded to were not so oppressive as they were objectionable in principle. They were subversive of the rights of freemen, which was cause enough for resistance to those who well knew the cautious and stealthy pace with which arbitrary power advances, and the great pains it takes to lull the suspicions of those, upon whose necks it would bind the shackles of tyranny. It was not the amount they were called upon to pay that they objected to, but it was the assumption of the power, without right, to make them pay anything, however trifling. It was the great principle which is the very basis of civil liberty, for which they contended;—namely, that no freeman can be taxed but by himself or his representatives.

In speaking of the resistance of our ancestors to the power assumed by the British ministry, to tax America without giving her a voice in Parliament—those who are not familiar with the history of those times—who have not had access to the private correspondence and diaries of the actors of those days, may suppose that the people were all of one sentiment, and were actuated by one impulse in their resistance to the measures of the ministry. Such, however, was not the case; the diary and letters of John Adams, covering a period of time from 1755, down to the latter part of 1777, show us how much and what constant labor was required to enlighten the public mind upon the great and vital questions then agitated, and what unceasing efforts were necessary to counteract the influence and machina-

tions of the agents of the crown in this country.

Mr. Adams and other friends of the people, were in those days frequently called upon to address large meetings, upon the topics then in controversy between the colonists and the crown or its officers, and his able pen was in constant requisition, to refute the pretensions put forth by them, and to elucidate, sustain and enforce the principles of liberty, for which, he and his compeers were strenuously contending.

In his Auto-Biography, Mr. Adams says "It was I believe, in 1772 (it was in 1773) that Governor Hutchinson, in an elaborate speech to both Houses, endeavored to convince them, their constituents, and the world, that Parliament was our sovereign legislature, and had a right to make laws for us in all cases whatsoever, to lay taxes on all things external and internal, on land as well as on trade."--The House appointed a Committee to answer this speech, and a most elaborate and triumphant reply was drawn up by Mr. Adams, altho' he was not then a member of the House, and published.--Mr. Adams soon after entered into a controversy in the public prints, with General Brattle, one of the King's officers, upon subjects then in dispute between the friends of civil liberty, and the friends of the ministry--of this controversy he afterwards spoke as follows in his Auto-biography:--"The minds of all men were awakened and every thing was eagerly read by every one who could read. These papers accordingly, contributed to spread correct opinions concerning the importance of the independence of the Judges to liberty, and safety." * * *

The principles developed in these papers have been very generally, indeed almost universally, prevalent among the people of America from that time."--These were but a small portion of the effusions of his pen, which were widely circulated among the people, and tended to give them correct notions in regard to their rights, and the unwarrantable assumptions of the crown. The same and similar subjects were also discussed by able minds in other colonies; so that the people might be, if they were not thoroughly imbued with the principles of liberty. They were clearly and eloquently taught their rights and privileges,--their attention was kept alive, and their jealous watchfulness of those who aimed at subjugating them, stimulated to the highest degree. Nevertheless there were two parties,--the party of power and the Liberty party,--and it required no small degree of resolution, firmness and moral courage, for men in those days, to step forward, and become leaders in the contest against the British crown, then in the plenitude of its power and lately victorious over a great and gallant nation. They were taking what appeared to cautious men, the weaker side. They were throwing

away their chances of official elevation, and the privilege of basking in the sunshine of royal favor, for what, to many, seemed a desperate chance of effectual resistance to usurpation. How they felt,--how they reasoned, and how they acted, may be judged from the language of Mr. Adams, on the occasion of his preparing the answer of the House, before referred to, to Governor Hutchinson's speech. In a letter to his friend Tudor, he says, "can I describe to you, my dear Tudor, the state of my mind at that time? I had a wife and such a wife! I had children--and what children! * * * * *

In this situation, I should have thought myself the happiest man in the world, if I could have retired to my little hut and forty acres, which my father left me in Braintree, and lived on potatoes and sea weed for the rest of my life. But I had taken a part, I had adopted a system, I had encouraged my fellow citizens, and I could not abandon them in conscience nor in honor. I determined therefore to set friends and enemies at defiance, and follow my own best judgment, whatever might fall thereon."

Such were the feelings, and such the resolution which nerved the leading men of that day, and bore them on, through almost insurmountable difficulties and discouragements, and through long years of gloom and uncertainty, to the final and glorious consummation of American Independence. It was no holiday labor they had to perform; it was no child's play, the part they acted. Many who co-operated in the outset, cordially and zealously with them, becoming either disheartened, or alarmed, or enticed by promises and rewards from those in power, fell off and joined the Tories. But such things neither lessened the zeal, nor for a moment shook the confidence of the stern patriots who had resolved upon liberty or death. They had screwed their courage to the sticking point, and the word "fail" was not permitted to enter their vocabulary.

But there were those who were faithful to the cause, that were unprepared for the great step which was taken in the revolution, declaring the Colonies Independent, and were even shocked at the suggestion of such a procedure! Will you believe it, fellow citizens, that when this idea first got out through a private letter which had been intercepted, and published by order of General Gage, the author was shunned, even by members of the Congress of '76, as a dangerous person! Mr. Adams was the writer of that letter, and after its publication, he says, "I was avoided like a man having the leprosy. I walked the streets of Philadelphia in solitude, borne down by the weight of care and unpopularity." And this account is confirmed by Dr. Rush, who says, "I saw this gentleman (Mr. Adams)

walk the streets of Philadelphia alone, after the publication of his intercepted letter in our newspapers, in 1775, an object of nearly universal scorn and detestation!"—Such, fellow-citizens, was the odium which in Philadelphia fell upon those who dared even to hint at independence, as late as the fall of 1775, some months after the battle of Bunker's Hill, and after General Washington had taken command of the American Army! Am I not then borne out, in saying that the labor of those great men who prepared the public mind for separation from the mother country—who led the way to independence, and who toiled in Congress to sustain the Army and the conflict in the long years of a doubtful struggle, and of gloomy prospects, was no holiday labor—no drawing-room amusement? Nothing less than the most sacred conviction of the justness of their cause, the inborn love of liberty which belongs to freemen, and a firm reliance on the goodness and justice of that Providence who had ever watched over the destinies of North America, could have sustained and encouraged them in those times that literally and emphatically "tried men's souls."

But they were borne up and through all trials, hardships, and difficulties, and had the satisfaction of seeing their country take her place among the nations of the earth, as their acknowledged equal. And here a reflection is forced upon us. John Adams was the first minister who represented the United States at the Court of St. James, after the peace of '83, and the acknowledgment by Great Britain of our independence; and what a contrast must there have been in his feelings when he stood before George the third, the proud representative of a nation of freemen, and when he walked the streets of Philadelphia "an object of nearly universal scorn and detestation," because he had in a private letter dared to hint at independence! Amply was he then repaid for all the odium that had been attempted to be cast upon him for being six months in advance of some other members of Congress, and well might he afford to forget their scorn and contumely.

With the hardships, privations, and sufferings of the American Armies of the revolution, under Washington and his Generals, you are all familiar, and it is not my purpose, therefore, to occupy your time with them. The courage, fortitude, patience and endurance of those who fought and bled in defence of liberty and independence, have been fruitful themes for eloquence, until all has been said that need be said, though no more than justice has been done those brave spirits, now, alas! nearly all descended to the grave, which must in a very short time close over the last of that gallant band. Ever honored be their names, and hallowed their memories through all future ages! They set a noble example to

their posterity, and may that posterity never prove unworthy of such an ancestry. Degenerate indeed must they have become, when they shall have forgotten WASHINGTON and his associates and the soldiers of the Revolution—of Bunker Hill, Bennington, Saratoga, Trenton, Monmouth, Germantown, Brandywine, Guilford, Eutaw, and Yorktown; or when these names shall not raise a glow of national pride, and make them feel that they have noble blood coursing in their veins.

Peace came at length, but found the country prostrate and helpless. It had within itself ample recuperative powers, but such was its unhappy condition that they could not be brought into action. It was like a strong man paralyzed, or a powerful machine, whose parts were not so united as to make a whole, and perform the functions for which it was designed.

The old Confederation, which had cost Congress and the Legislatures of the States five years of anxious labor e'er it was finally adopted by the whole thirteen, had, from the very first, been a weak, inefficient, impracticable form of government, wholly disappointing the expectations of the majority of its framers. The great error of it lay in the fact that it did not form the States, and the PEOPLE of all the States, into a *national* government, but merely agglomerated them together as separate and independent *Sovereignities*, and not as subordinate parts of an entire *Nation*. I need not tell you how utterly powerless it was for all those purposes for which a national government was most needed, during the war, namely, to raise and equip armies, and to levy taxes for the support of those armies. He who has read the numerous letters of General Washington, addressed to the "Continental Congress," imploring and beseeching that body to do what seemed absolutely necessary to preserve even a semblance of an army in the field,—and recollect the sufferings both he and his brave companions were enduring for the want of arms, ammunition, blankets, clothing, shoes and stockings; he who has tracked them in their weary and painful march over the frozen ground to their retreat at Morristown or Valley Forge, by the blood which their lacerated feet left in their foot prints, will require no stronger evidence of the inefficiency of the old confederacy. For, it was not for want of a disposition to do so, that Congress did not comply with the urgent and pressing solicitations of the commander-in-chief—but from the want of power. All that they could do, was to make requisitions upon the different *States*, and in some cases they might as well have called "spirits from the vasty deep," as to call for men and money. It was a slow and tedious process to raise both, even had every State promptly obeyed the call made upon her; but unfortunately, the disposition to comply with these requi-

sitions, was as often wanting, as the ability. Every such call must be devoted and debated, reconsidered, postponed, and delayed in various ways, until, not unfrequently, the time had gone by, when they would answer the purpose, or meet the exigency for which they were required, and then this fact was dishonorably seized upon as an excuse for criminal inaction.

Still, however, the cause of liberty and independence was sustained,—and it is almost a miracle that it was,—by the ardor of the people, and by the fortunate circumstances that Congress were enabled to borrow money in France, Holland and Spain, and to form a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, with the first mentioned nation, who aided us with land and naval forces, as well as money. But when the excitement, the pressure, and the danger of the war was removed, and the confederation was left to perform by itself the operations of a national government, its weakness became still more apparent and palpable. What the condition of the country then was under this feeble government, I shall let a prominent actor in the public affairs of that eventful day describe. In the 15th number of "The Federalist," the joint production of Hamilton, Madison and Jay, the former uses the following language: "We may indeed, with propriety, be said to have reached almost the last stage of national humiliation. There is scarcely anything that can wound the pride, or degrade the character, of an independent people, which we do not experience. Are there engagements, to the performance of which we are held by every tie respectable among men? These are the subjects of constant and unblushing violation. Do we owe debts to foreigners, and to our own citizens, contracted in a time of imminent peril, for the preservation of our political existence? These remain without any proper or satisfactory provision for their discharge. Have we valuable territories and important posts in the possession of a foreign power, which, by express stipulation, ought long since to have been surrendered? These are still retained, to the prejudice of our interests not less than our rights. Are we in a condition to resent or to repel the aggression? We have neither troops, nor treasury, nor government. Are we even in a condition to remonstrate with dignity? The just imputations on our own faith, in respect to the same treaty, ought first to be removed. Are we entitled by nature and compact, to a free participation in the navigation of the Mississippi? Spain excludes us from it. Is public credit an indispensable resource in time of public danger? We seem to have abandoned its cause as desperate and irretrievable. Is commerce of importance to national wealth? Ours is at the lowest point of declension. Is respectability

"in the eyes of foreign powers, a safeguard against foreign encroachments? The imbecility of our government, even forbids them to treat with us: our ambassadors abroad are the mere pageants of mimic sovereignty."

After further remarks, in a similar strain, Mr. Hamilton most truthfully says, "The great and radical vice, in the construction of the existing confederation, is in the principle of "LEGISLATION" for STATES or GOVERNMENTS, in their CORPORATE or COLLECTIVE CAPACITIES, and as contradistinguished from the INDIVIDUALS of whom they consist."

Such was the old Confederation:—Under it, the nation was in a state of atrophy,—prostrate, helpless, and rapidly sinking into utter imbecility, contempt and dissolution. In thus condemning it, I do not presume to cast censure upon those by whom it was formed. Its authors and architects were wise and patriotic men, but they were striking out a new path; they were commencing a new work, and though they endeavored to concentrate upon it, all the rays of light which could be collected from the experience of the past, which glimmered through the histories of Greece and Rome, and of the Cantons of Switzerland and the United Provinces of Holland, yet, when thus collected, these cast but a dim and feeble light upon their path—it was, in truth,

"No light, but rather darkness visible."

It was not to be expected that they could create a perfect form of government, even if there had been no prejudices nor jealousies to encounter. But of these there were many and strong.

But when the impotency of the confederation had been fully demonstrated by experience—when the condition of the country under it was such as Mr. Hamilton, in the language I have quoted, described it,—the general cry was, what shall be done? We must have commerce; we must have trade; we must have credit; we must have military force to repel the aggressions of the Indians; we must pay the debts the nation contracted to carry on the war of independence; we must do justice to the Officers and Soldiers of the revolution; and to do this, we must have a more efficient government, a more perfect and effective Union.

The idea of revising the articles of the confederation, with a view to strengthen the hands of the government, by giving it power to regulate commerce, and to do other matters, which that instrument did not authorise them to do, was first started at Mount Vernon, in 1785. The Virginia Legislature led the way in appointing commissioners to meet commissioners, from other States, for this purpose at Annapolis. Five other States only, complied with her suggestion, and sent commissioners or delegates, to that convention. Upon meeting and comparing their

powers, these were found to be wholly inadequate to the task necessary to be done, to say nothing of the fact, that not a majority of the States were represented. The result was that this convention only drew up and adopted a recommendation for the assembling of another convention at Philadelphia, in which all the States should be represented with powers adequate to the accomplishment of the desired reformation of the government.

This recommendation was complied with by each State, and the Convention assembled in May, 1787. But though this body comprised some of the wisest, most experienced and patriotic men of the nation, among whom were WASHINGTON, FRANKLIN, SHERMAN, MADISON, and HAMILTON, it had undertaken no ordinary or holiday task. It was soon perceived that in reforming the old Confederation, and endeavoring to adapt it to the exigences of the country, it must be utterly demolished, and a new edifice erected in its place. To tear away from the very foundation, one form of government, and to erect another of a different form on its ruins in a peaceful manner, was what had never before been accomplished by any nation upon the earth. Nevertheless, it was necessary that this should be done, and it was done. I take not long to say this; but the great work itself was not so quickly or easily dispatched. I could not adequately describe, were I to attempt it, the obstacles and the difficulties which beset the Convention on every side, and at every step they advanced;—old prejudices and conflicting opinions were to be overcome and reconciled—jarring and clashing interests were to be harmonised. The large States tenacious of their power, demanded that each should be represented in the National Legislature according to their population; while the small States, jealous of the large, fearful of being overwhelmed and annihilated by them, and claiming to stand on an equality with them, as States, were unwilling to adopt any rule or article that would make them mere satellites of the large States. How these difficulties, after much discussion and anxious consultation, were overcome and settled, you all know—the large States retain their ascendancy in the House of Representatives, while the small States are placed upon an equality with them in the Senate. This was, perhaps, the only possible mode in which the conflicting claims of the States could have been compromised, and a wiser one could not have been devised.

Another question presented difficulties almost insuperable, upon which sectional feelings were enlisted—that question which has of late years so deeply agitated, and still agitates the country. But, thanks to a kind Providence, there was a spirit of patriotic conciliation pervading that body of sages, which, guided by wisdom, overcame

all things,—which made the rough places smooth, laid bridges across deep chasms, and brought men entertaining irreconcilable opinions, to act together in unity and concord. May that Divine Spirit ever pervade the *people* of this land, in its whole length and breadth, and cause them, following the example of their fathers, to yield somewhat of their opinions and prejudices, that peace and concord, prosperity and happiness may cover the land as the waters cover the sea.

The Constitution was brought into existence by compromise. Had each member of the Convention, and each section of the country adhered pertinaciously and unyieldingly to its own views and wishes, the delegates must have separated without accomplishing the glorious work which stands as an everlasting monument of their forbearance, conciliatory spirit and wisdom. What the condition of this country would now have been had they thus separated, and what the contrast between what it would have been, and what it now is, I must leave to the imagination of those who may reflect upon the subject. May our own and all future generations, prove themselves not less wise, patriotic and conciliatory than those who left us the inestimable legacy of the Constitution and the Union.

But, unpropitious as were, at times, the prospects of accomplishing the great labor of forming a Constitution, and strenuous as had been the efforts of those wise men to bring their labors to a successful result, that instrument was immediately assailed in the most furious manner, and its adoption by the State Conventions strenuously opposed. Fortunately, however, it had able supporters both in the State Conventions called to ratify or reject it, and in the broader field of public discussion through the newspapers. The various objections which were urged against it, were taken up and discussed, in a spirit of fairness and candor, and with a masterly ability, in a series of papers, since collected together and published under the title of "the Federalist." They were written as you all know by HAMILTON, MADISON and JAY,—men, and especially the first named, who evinced a knowledge of, and familiarity with the great principles of government, and the springs of human action that seemed almost intuitive. It is scarcely necessary to say, that these papers exerted a most signal and salutary influence upon the public mind, by the beauty of their style, cogency of their reasoning, the forcible manner in which the defects of the old confederation were set forth, and the clear expositions of the Constitution which the people were called upon to approve and adopt. These papers form and will continue to form, for all ages to come, a most lucid exposition of that proud instrument

which has thus far bound us together as one nation in the bonds of UNION.

May we not justly take pride to ourselves that of all those great spirits to whom we are indebted for that Constitution under which our country has run a career of prosperity heretofore unexampled in the history of the world; New York furnished him who was second to no one in the comprehensive powers of his mind,--in the force, beauty, and logic of his writings, in his thorough knowledge of the principles of government,--in the energetic exertion of all his faculties to accomplish the great work of establishing the UNION, in the influence he was enabled to wield in the convention at Philadelphia and in that of our own State, which principally through his efforts, adopted the Constitution, and upon the public mind, by means of his pen. If our own HAMILTON was not the principal architect of that work, he was second to no one, and is entitled to stand side by side with his co-laborer and compeer, MR. MADISON.

The joyous feelings which were exhibited in many parts of the country, but more especially in some of the large cities, by celebrations, processions, bonfires, &c., upon the formation of the Constitution, were the best evidences of the depressed condition of the people under the confederation, and of their high hopes of a favorable change under the new government. Thank Heaven, those hopes have not been doomed to disappointment; so far from this, they did not in their wildest dreams, anticipate the half that has been realized by their children, and their children's children.

Could the genius of America then have taken our fathers up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed them the United States as the country then was, almost entirely covered with boundless forests through which the wild beasts and the red man roamed undisturbed; and then by shifting the scene, exhibited the United States as they now are, stretching from ocean to ocean, and from the St. Johns to the Rio-del-Norte, covered with splendid cities and flourishing towns,--our lakes, rivers and canals teeming with commerce, our railroads running in every direction, through vallies, over rivers, ascending mountains, creeping along frightful precipices, and leaping fearful chasms; our boundless fields of wheat, corn, cotton and other productions of the earth; the three or four millions of people multiplied into twenty-four, among whom intelligence is communicated from one extremity to the other, not only with the speed of lightning, but by lightning itself, what would have been their wonder and amazement!--surely they would have thought, that, what they saw was not reality, but a vision, a dream, a hallucination, conjured up by spirits of the air, by some Prospero and his tricky Ariel. But we, fellow citizens, find the

vision sober reality. Never, in any part of the globe, since the earth was given to man for his habitation, has there been such astonishing changes, improvements, and increase in the physical comforts of man, as have been witnessed in this country within the sixty-two years that have passed away, since the ratification by the people, of the Constitution of the United States. I wish I could say that there had been a corresponding increase in the patriotic attachment of the people to the simplicity of republican institutions, and an equal improvement in the moral and religious character of the country; but I fear, that if we greatly excel our fathers in physical comforts, we fall behind them in some of those moral qualities which are essential to form a truly and permanently great nation.

And now, let me ask, my friends, if we are prepared to tear to pieces that Constitution which was formed with so much labor and with such a patriotic surrender of prejudices and sectional feelings, under whose protection the American people have run so splendid a career of national prosperity? Are we prepared to rend that UNION asunder, and scatter its fragments to the winds of heaven, which our fathers made such efforts to establish? Are we prepared to condemn that noble work which they looked upon with so much pride and exultation, and pronounced *good*? Are we ready to destroy that which has caused the forests of the West to disappear like the mist before the morning sun, and the tide of population to flow on, like the irresistible sweep of the ocean, driving before it the wilderness, the buffalo and the red man, and carrying with it industry, agriculture and the arts, intelligence, education and religion?--that which has whitened every ocean and sea, and river with our commerce, and brought the products of the whole world to our doors?--that which has made us a great, a prosperous, a brave and powerful people? Look around you: what do you now see, standing where you are, or upon the beautiful heights of our own city? Every ship and steamer of the thousands in view,--every warehouse and dock of our own and the adjoining city, every spire of the hundreds that point like so many fingers up to heaven,--all, indeed, that goes to make up "the great emporium of commerce" is a monument to the wisdom of those who formed the CONSTITUTION, and established the UNION, and a cogent argument in favor of their faithful maintainance. Palsied be the hand that would touch the first stone of that noble edifice to remove it from its place, and nerveless the arm that is outstretched to do it harm! Let him who would destroy our reverence and attachment for the UNION, and persuade us to do aught that should weaken its foundations, be *anathema maranatha*; let him walk an object of scorn and detestation in our midst, and be shunned by

every good citizen as one infected with moral leprosy,---a loathed lump of living corruption, whose touch is pollution, and whose breath is pestilence!

It is not to be disguised, fellow citizens, that this Union has been in danger of being rent asunder, and that that danger, in some degree, still exists. It is not to be denied that there are portions of the American people,---few in number it is to be hoped they are,---who are at this moment plotting the dissolution of the Union, and bent upon striking at least one star from that glorious flag which is an emblem of the bright galaxy of States! We could pity their insanity and forgive their intemperate and indiscriminate denunciation of a large portion of the nation, were it not that there is so much wilful blindness, and personal animosity mixed up with that which is sheer prejudice and folly.

Nor is it to be denied that there are those among us, who, if they do not own hostility to the Union, are doing, and persist in doing, what they know must bring about its destruction. Some of them, I believe, even go so far as to avow their hatred to it, and proclaim their desire to see the Constitution committed to the flames! They certainly do all in their power, laboring day and night, to scatter the firebrands of discord and confusion among us. It is to these fanatics, who have been for years endeavoring to provoke the South to commit some deed of rashness which would serve as an excuse for agitation on their part, and as a justification for their own incendiary acts, that we are mainly indebted for that state of things which has endangered the stability of the Union, and justly caused such serious alarm. It is this class of men, who, disregarding the provisions of the Constitution and the laws made in pursuance thereof, even when they have solemnly sworn to support it, profess to be bound by some "higher law" than that which is the highest known to the judicial tribunals of the land! What "higher law" can there be, fellow-citizens, than the Constitution? Is it *conscience*? If so, and every man is bound to obey his own, then no one is bound to obey any other, and every one is a law unto himself; in other words, he may do just as he pleases, or, as he may please to say, his *conscience* directs him---which is no more nor less than anarchy or lawlessness---a state of things which all sensible men must admit to be worse than a despotism, and all good men deplore.

But I will not occupy your time in exposing an absurdity which is too palpable to impose upon any one who has not lost his senses in the noise and confusion of fanaticism. None but a fanatic could seriously put forth such a notion, and to reason with them, is but to reason with the inmates of the Asylum for the insane.

The Constitution is a compact agreed upon by men having different and conflicting

views, by each yielding some portion of his own, for the sake of that which it secures to him and his posterity. It was, as I have before said, the result of compromise and concession, and the spirit of patriotism which pervaded the convention that formed it, and prompted the members to mutual concession or it could never have been formed. As such a compact, or agreement, therefore, it is binding on all, and in each and all its parts. Every section, article, paragraph and word in it, must be faithfully and honestly adhered to, abided by, and executed by *all*, or it is a dead letter, good for nothing, and binding on no one. This is so plain a proposition, that no one in his sober senses, can or will deny it. It follows then, and is just as plain, that if the Constitution is not thus adhered to, abided by, and faithfully executed by *all*, or at least enforced by the judicial tribunals of the land, we shall have no National Government and no Union.

What is it, fellow citizens, that makes us, one and all, proud of the name of Americans? Is it not because we are conscious that we constitute a part of a great and powerful nation? Is it not because we know that that nation is enterprising, prosperous, and increasing in numbers and wealth with unexampled rapidity? Is it not because we are aware, that we are respected by the whole civilized world? Is it not because we know that we enjoy a greater amount of freedom, and exercise individually, a greater agency in making and administering the laws under which we live, than any other people? Certainly. There is not an American who plants his foot upon European soil, but feels proud of his country, and walks with his head as high as if he were a duke, earl, or baron.---But what would be his feelings, if one of Collins' fast steamers, should bring the news to him, in London, or wherever else, on that side of the water it might reach him, that a number of the States had seceded;---that the UNION was broken up, and that the "UNITED STATES" no longer existed as a nation? What, in that case must be his sensations? Would he not drop his arms, hang his head, and shed bitter tears of mortification and sorrow?---Would he not desire to flee from the faces of men, to some secluded spot where he could hide his shame, and mourn over that country, of which he was but yesterday so proud, now struck out of existence through the insane infatuation of fanatics and disunionists? My friends, if we would not turn this "fancy sketch" into sad reality, we must, one and all, do our duty as American citizens. If we have rights under the Constitution, so have others; and we must remember that rights and duties are reciprocal. I will not enter into a discussion of the subject which has so agitated, and still agitates the country; but this I will say, that, if we expect others to abide by and sustain the Constitution, we must not fail in fulfil-

ing every obligation that it imposes upon us. The question of Slavery is one which was settled by those who made the Constitution, ---it is a local, a State question, with which in other States we have nothing to do, and with which we have no right to meddle.--- But the Constitution imposes upon us the obligation to return to their owners, such slaves as flee from them to us; we have agreed to do so; it is a part of the compact ---it is in the bond, and we cannot refuse to do it without violating the compact, and acting in bad faith. And, moreover, if we do not do it, we have no right to call upon those to whom we show such bad faith, to perform their part of the compact.

There is another duty incumbent upon us, that is also essential to the preservation, peace, and harmony of the Union; and that is, to act the part of good neighbors to our brethren of the South, and not to annoy them with our ill-natured and censorious remarks upon matters which concern them and not us, and about which we are not as wise, perhaps, as we may think ourselves. We all know the disturbance which a censorious, carping, meddling person keeps up in his neighborhood, and how he raises the hostility of others against him. And so it is in a nation. No section of the country can, will or ought to bear, peaceably and submissively, the continued railing and censure of other sections; nor have the latter any right to set themselves up in judgment upon their actions, customs or institutions, enter a verdict against them, and proclaim that verdict to the whole world. No people having a proper degree of self respect, will permit this, and a proud people, like our Southern brethren, will certainly resist and resent it.

That the South has been thus annoyed for years, by the constant intermeddling with their concerns, and the unceasing use of provoking language, by a portion of the people at the North, is a fact too notorious to be denied, nor can we censure them for resenting it, though we must those who would, for this reason lay violent hands upon the Union.

And now, what is the remedy for the evils which threaten the integrity of the Union, and what are our duties as good citizens and Americans? The remedy is in faithfully adhering to, and carrying out every requirement of the Constitution, and the execution of all and every law enacted by Congress, and especially those Compromise laws, one and all, entitled "the adjustment measures,"---for if these are not faithfully observed and executed, no one having seen what it has been my lot to see within the last two years, and who is not utterly incapable of judging of coming events by the shadows they cast before,---can for a moment doubt that the secession of the entire South, and the formation of a Southern Confederacy, would be the consequence. Our duties, then, are plain and palpable,---

listen to them from the lips of WASHINGTON himself, who speaks to us as a father in his ever memorable Farewell Address:---"It is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national union to your collective and individual happiness---that you should cherish a cordial, habitual and immovable attachment to it, accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as the palladium of your political safety and prosperity---watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety---discountenancing whatever may suggest a suspicion that it can, in any event, be abandoned, and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts." These are the words of wisdom; they are words uttered from the tomb; let us take heed that we obey their solemn injunctions. And my friends, while we "cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to the Union," we must also cherish and cultivate a cordial respect, and kindly, fraternal feeling for our brother Americans to whatever section of the Union they may belong. We must indulge in no jealousies, no prejudices, no heart-burnings towards any one, and especially of a sectional character. "The name of *American* which belongs to you in your national capacity" says the same warning voice of WASHINGTON, "must always exalt the just pride of patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations." Without this respect and kindly feeling mutually maintained and cherished by Americans,---there may be a union of the States, but there cannot be a cordial sympathy and brotherly union among the people, and they will be like man and wife, when all love has fled, bound together by the bonds,---no longer silken bonds,---of matrimony, but becoming more and more averse to each other, and more and more restive under the restraints which those bonds impose.

Our country, fellow citizens, has seen many dark days and trying crisis; but through the goodness of an All-wise Providence, she has thus far passed safely through them, and like a gallant vessel escaping from the breakers, and spreading her canvas to the favoring breeze, has bounded on in her great and prosperous voyage. Let us fondly hope that we may escape the crisis through which we have been and are now passing, as fortunately and happily as others have been, and that our good ship, guided and managed by able and experienced pilots, laden as she is, with the best hopes of man, and having the anxious eyes of every friend of republican government, and of human liberty turned upon her, may come out unscathed from this and every peril, and prove herself to be staunch and good, and all that her skilful builders dared to hope she would be.