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O R A T I O N :

DELIVERED JULY 4, 1788,

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F E D E R A L C O N S T I T U T I O N .

By *ENOS HITCHCOCK*, A. M.

P R O V I D E N C E :  
P R I N T E D B Y B E N N E T T W H E E L E R .

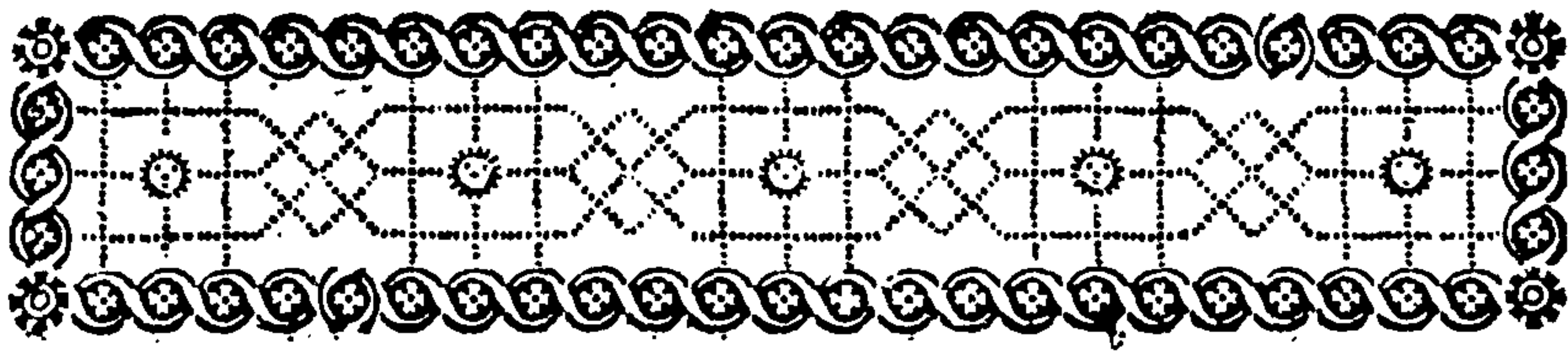
*1877 Benjamin Jackson's Book*

ON the fourth of JULY inst. being the Anniversary of the Declaration of INDEPENDENCE by the UNITED STATES, and appointed for the CELEBRATION of the ADOPTION of the FEDERAL CONSTITUTION ; the following ORATION, at the previous Desire of the Inhabitants of the Town of PROVIDENCE, was delivered in Commemoration of those Events, to a numerous Assembly at the Baptist Meeting-House ;—and at their Request, it now solicits the Candour of the Public.

Providence, July 9, 1788.

*Benjamin Sabin's Book V 817*

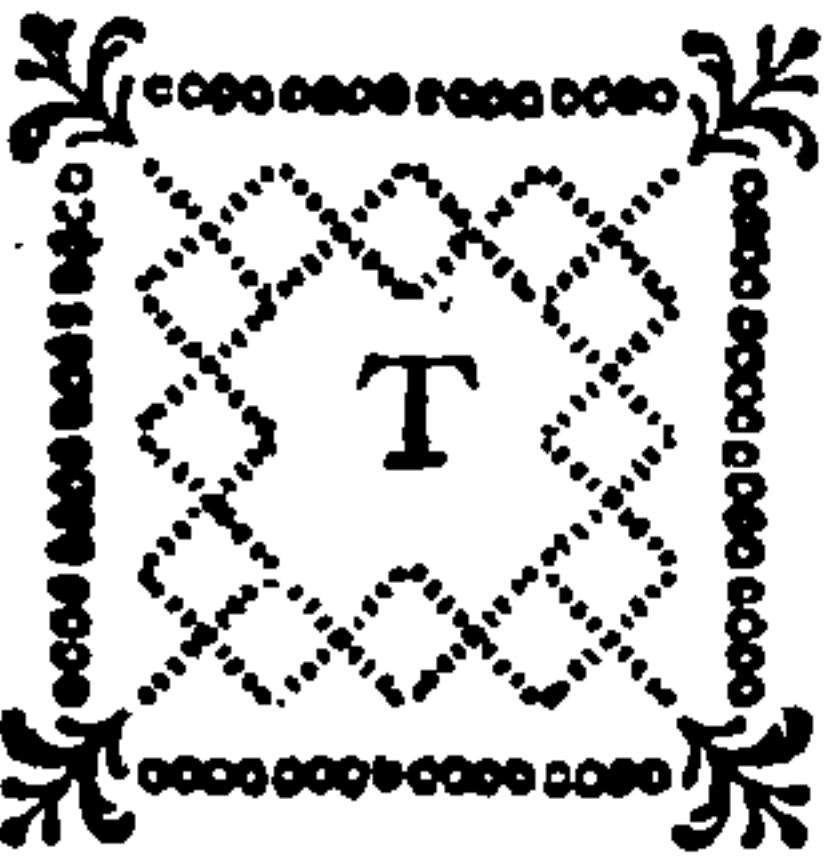
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# O R A T I O N .



 O felicitate Americans on the Anniversary of their Independence is a dictate of philanthropy.—To echo among my fellow-citizens, in grateful acclamations, the accession of a free federal government is but the natural effusion of a heart elate with joy.—To sacrifice, at the shrine of liberty, “the fat of fed beasts,” and pour out the generous libation, if conducted with prudence, may not be unsuitable expressions of the pleasure we this day experience.

BUT a nobler employment now awaits us—we ascend from gratulations and amusements to contemplate, in the temple of liberty, the various beauties of the edifice,—to recount the multifarious blessings she proffers our favoured land.

LONG had she erected her standard in our hearts before it was securely planted on the walls of our  
citadel,



citadel, or we safely rested under the shades of its banner.—Long did the doubtful events of war hold it in suspense and threaten to wrest it from our hands.

It is a dishonour to human nature that wherever liberty has been planted and flourished, it has commonly required the blood of her sons to water and enrich the soil—Nor were we reluctant to pay the price.—Too dearly had the fair inheritance been purchased and too bravely defended by our ancestors, to be tamely resigned by their sons.—And when the encroaching spirit of ambition threatened to wrest it from us we resisted unto blood.

THE genius of America greatly rose and inspired thirteen bodies with one soul to oppose the usurpations of power,—to secure and transmit the inestimable patrimony to generations yet unborn.—Here rises to view that band of patriots who first united in common council for mutual defence and safety.—While their productions astonish the political world, they secure its attention,-----while the royal ear is shut against reiterated and dutiful petitions of faithful subjects, the listening world only wait the favourable moment to lend their aid.

VAIN are petitions, and all the pleadings of honest zeal, when the minions of power and the calls of innumerable dependants plead against them.—Insult is added to iniquity—invasion to insult—We now approach the gloomy walks of death!—The awful images of war croud around us!—Hark!----the distant clashing of arms—the hollow groans of the expiring salute our ears—the pale ghosts of our slaughtered countrymen hover over our heads and call on us to avenge their wrongs, and defend our rights!

A SCENE now opens to view in which the best blood and treasure of America were sacrificed to unjust claims,—to the dictates of avarice, or the haggard demon of revenge.—To trace the steps which led to the unequal combat would be to tread a hacknied path——To relate the many achievements of the cabinet and the field, through its varied progress, would be to give, not an Oration but an history.

LET us then draw a veil over the melancholy scene which brings to sad remembrance, the beloved brother—the dutiful son—the affectionate parent—the tender husband, whose lives were the only sacrifice that could appease the violence of military force, and save a sinking country from  
ruin.—

ruin.—And at the same time we drop the tear of gratitude at the urn of our dear departed heroes, let us never forget how much we are indebted to them, and that band of brothers, who still live to participate in the blessings we this day enjoy.—Nor should we pass in silence the generous efforts of a powerful Monarch, whose seasonable alliance greatly aided to plant the vine his friendly hand still continues to cherish.

UPON this day, which history will ever commemorate, America, compelled by reiterated and atrocious acts of tyranny and oppression, declared her independency, and determined, at all hazards to maintain it.—Though nursed in the lap of peace, and consequently unversed in the arts of war,—though assailed in a variety of points, and unprepared for defence in any, she began, under every disadvantage, a contest, not for glory but for freedom and independence, and divine providence hath smiled upon efforts resulting from motives so laudable.

It has been often asked, what have we gained by our Independence?—

WE have gained our freedom, Sirs!—We have shaken off the yoke of foreign legislation, with all  
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the train of evils which would have followed our subjugation to the unequivocal authority of transatlantic jurisdiction.—We are emancipated from all the horrors of vassalage and slavery;—and “the man who will meanly submit to wear a shackle, contemns the noblest gift of heaven, and impiously affronts that God who made him free.”—We have gained peace and empire with all the blessings of freedom.—Forever welcome be the day that raised us above the government of monarchy, and gave us rank among the citizens of free republics !

A REVOLUTION can never be considered as complete till government is firmly established—and without this independency would be a curse instead of a blessing—These jointly were the great object of the American revolution—and the sole reason why we have not enjoyed all the emoluments of the latter, is because we have not availed ourselves of the former.—We came into national existence without national ideas, and therefore, could not have those arrangements which more experience is suited to give.

THIS great and extensive people, pressed together by common danger, and loosely holden by a confederacy suited only to their present exigency,  
united



united their efforts for common safety.—But when freed from the apprehensions of danger, their government lost its energy—their councils were divided—the refractory conduct of some States—the clashing interests of others, and the divided politics of the whole made it utterly impossible to draw forth national resources, and to comply with the just demands of creditors, or even defray the contingent expenditures of government.—The tottering fabric of their union shook from its foundation, and threatened the very existence of empire.—Feuds and animosities arose in every quarter ; and formidable insurrections teemed with all the horrors of civil war——But the liberties of America are the object of divine patronage—a guardian God protects them—This intervening cloud, which spread darkness and distress over our land, was a prelude to a brighter day.

INDEPENDENCE was but a part of the revolution—and as we experienced many difficulties in laying the foundation, it was but natural to look for some in erecting the superstructure.—The blessings of a free government, which many nations have been unable to procure, even after ages of efforts and misery, are granted by divine providence, to the confederating States after a few years struggle.

THE boasted wisdom of Greece and Rome were not sufficient to prevent convulsions in the State, nor to effect revolutions by reason or by rhetoric.

RIVERS of blood ran down the streets of Rome in defence of the republic, and for the establishment of government—and while her legions triumphed in Italy, Gaul, Spain, Britain, and some parts of Germany,—while the provinces of Asia Minor, together with Armenia, Syria, Mesopotamia and Media, yielded to her superior force—while the most of the inhabitants of Africa obeyed the voice of the Roman senate, there subsisted within her own walls civil wars of the most threatening and sanguinary nature.

GREECE could boast of a Solon, a Lycurgus and other splendid genii, who did honour to human nature, but they cannot boast of a revolution by reasoning, began and completed in so short a period as that which distinguishes the present Era.

IT was not till a struggle of more than forty years had distressed and impoverished Holland that she gained her independence, and many more before she attained to a firm government.—England has been a great theatre of civil discord and contention for centuries—In all their variations of  
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the mode of government recourse was had to the sword—and almost the whole of that island has been stained with the blood of contending nations and domestic factions ;—and they have found that when a sovereign or a system was agreed upon, their reduction to order was far less rapid than ours.

THE road to empire has usually been slow and difficult.—As order progressively arose out of Chaos by the forming hand of the great Architect, so must a well-ordered government be collected and formed from the scattered materials and wild mixture of a chaotic people.

How to rescue these materials from the splendid ruins of government, and give stability to the rising fabric with the greatest rapidity and least difficulty, is a question which hath nonplussed all the philosophers, lawgivers and politicians of the world.—The answer to this question has been reserved to the American States.—After ages of fruitless attempts in other countries, this country affords the first instance of an entire revolution in policy and government, the most important that ever marked the progress of human society, without the effusion of human blood, without force, fraud or surprize.

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HAVING had painful experience of the imbecility of the confederation and its inadequacy to the purposes of government, the same patriotism which glowed in the American breast at the commencement of the revolution,—which animated the patriot in the cabinet, and supported the brave soldier in the sufferings and dangers of the field, is renewed in a Convention for devising a more perfect scheme of government.

BEHOLD “the majesty of a free people, convened in awful simplicity, to consult their safety and promote their happiness!”—Here again rises to view, from the placid shades of domestic life, the great AMERICAN CINCINNATUS, whose virtues in the field can be equaled only by his wisdom in the senate!—Illustrious Chief---May remotest ages reap the fruit of thy toils, and the happiness of a grateful people crown thy most ardent wishes!

THE business devolved on this august body is as difficult as it is new—as important as it is difficult.—To balance the different interests of the States, so that each might give up its proportion of local advantage for the good of the whole,—to frame a model of government that should so accord with the genius of a large, extensive and free people, of different education, manners and employments, that should meet the  
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consenting voice of even of nine among thirteen independent republics ;——to effect all this was a task, to which nothing was equal short of that assemblage of wisdom and philanthropy which appeared in convention.

To the disappointment of our enemies and the joy of our friends, their wisdom and candour accomplished the wondrous deed, and we now behold a system of federal government acceded to with a degree of peace and unanimity, all circumstances considered, which has no parallel.—The abilities and political knowledge,—the patient deliberation and constant attention,—the mutual candour and condescension, which were exhibited by those who framed the Federal Constitution—and the similar spirit which actuated the most of those States in which it has been received, do immortal honour to our country, and add lustre to the present age.—Justly may it be said, “The present is an age of philosophy, and America the empire of reason.”

YES, my fellow-countrymen, this is an Era reserved for the commencement of this western empire ! The confederating States exhibit to the world the noble image of a community, which, founded in equality and justice, secures to the individuals every enjoyment which can be derived  
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from human institutions.—The fields and the fruits are their own,—the regulations under which they live are theirs—they are the proprietors and lords of the soil, and jointly constitute the sovereignty of their country.—They are under a government of laws and not of men.

HAPPY people ! whose minds are not awed by the dread of a master, nor dazzled with the pageantry of courts, nor enslaved by superstitious customs and prejudices.

It is not my province to point out the merits or defects of that federal constitution which has employed the ablest pens—I will only offer you the sentiment of an ingenious writer on the subject—  
 “The Constitution defines the powers of Congress ; and every power not expressly delegated to that body, remains in the several State legislatures. The sovereignty and the republican form of government of each State is guaranteed by the constitution ; and the bounds of jurisdiction between the federal and State governments are marked with precision. In theory, it has all the energy and freedom of the British and Roman governments, without their defects.”—And I may venture to add, that whatever defects appertain to this plan of government, it has this perfection, it prescribes a remedy for them, and contains within  
 itself

itself the means of its own cure—a circumstance which ought to have its weight in the minds of all opposers !

IF, from a vile assemblage of vagrants and rogues, the wisest and most virtuous nation that ever existed, deduced its origin, under the wise constitution and laws of Romulus—what may not be expected from an enlightened, virtuous and heroic people, who have the advantage of the wisdom and experience, under a constitution formed by their free suffrages and combined wisdom, of all those who have gone before them ?—Though much is already effected—though wonders are wrought, yet much still remains to be done.—Great wisdom and candour, both in public and private conduct, —great steadiness and perseverance will be necessary in order to reap all the advantages which this happy event may produce.

WHAT blessings may they secure to themselves and posterity by a wise improvement of the present occasion ? What glorious prospects open to view when we contemplate the scope given to the human mind for exertion,—the extension of commerce—the progress of science, agriculture, manufactures; and all the pleasuring and useful arts of refined society, which naturally flow from independence, and a government as just in its principles



ciples and firm in its texture, as it is free in its formation?—The vast tracts of uncultivated lands; and their rapid population, present us with a most extensive theatre for human action, and the most magnificent empire on which the sun ever shone.—Hither shall the oppressed of all nations flee for safety, and find a refuge from the encroachments of restless ambition!—The hand of industry shall change the haunts of wild beasts into fruitful fields—the wilderness shall blossom as a rose—the desert become vocal with the praises of God. The friendly bosom of the earth shall nourish and unfold to her noble lord, the industrious farmer, her inexhaustible sources of support and wealth—and pour forth her blessings, through the extended channels of trade and commerce, to all quarters of the globe.—While the East-Indian partakes of her dainties, the hardy sons of Kamtschatka, in rude mirth, hail the American navigator, who in exchange for the superabundance of our produce receives the wealth-giving furs and other effects of the frigid zone.

THESE improvements and advantages are not the doubtful prognostics of fancy, nor the chimeras of enthusiasm.—They are already realized in part—nor is this Town and State unacquainted with some of those advantages :—Soon shall your

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adventurous sons relate on India's scorching sands the enterprising spirit of our merchants—soon shall her inhabitants regale themselves with the generous fruits of your husbandry, and amply repay your labour with the delicious products of her soil ;—and as this intercourse will lessen the price of your imports it will increase the value of your produce.

WHETHER America will ever reap all the advantages, and realize all the pleasing prospects which offer themselves to view, depends very much on the wisdom, unanimity and firmness of her inhabitants in this critical and most interesting period.

CERTAIN it is that a most extensive field is now opened before every friend of his country, to display his utmost abilities in providing for its peace and safety, and promoting its honour and prosperity in the sphere in which they severally move.—Society is composed of individuals—they are parts of the whole,—and when each one moves in his own orb, and fills his own station, the system will be complete,—each will enjoy his proportion of good, and be entitled to a just tribute of honour and applause from the whole.—Every true friend  
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of society will consider the importance of good government, and cheerfully submit to lawful authority,—will encourage and support public officers, in the execution of their office for the public good,—will cultivate in himself and others those benevolent dispositions so necessary to amity and friendship; and those principles of integrity, honesty and justice which lay the foundation of mutual confidence, and the preservation of peace and harmony—and, what is above all worthy of consideration, it will secure the friendship and protection of that Almighty Being, whose providence rules over all—to whose controul all second causes and subordinate agents are subject.

THE privileges put within our reach are of such magnitude that they ought to fire every breast with a fixed determination to adopt that line of conduct which will effectually secure the proffered good.—The consequences of our present conduct will reach into future ages, and affect the unknown millions who will come after us.—What consideration of so much weight could arise in the minds of parents to draw forth their exertions to secure the blessings which the propitious hand of divine providence now offers, and transmit them to posterity?

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“WHERE property is secure, and men allowed to enjoy the fruits of their own labour, they are capable of efforts unknown in those countries where despotism renders every thing precarious, and where a tyrant reaps what slaves have sown,” —said an European observer; and adds,—“The chilling effects of despotic oppression, or the benign influence of freedom and commerce, strikes the eye of the most careless traveller.”

By our independency we are not only freed from the shackles of encroaching monarchy, and are raised to a rank among the nations of the earth, but the way is opened for the cultivation of the most useful knowledge and the practice of the most exalted virtues; and the preservation of any republican form of government depends infinitely more on a general diffusion of these than on the form itself.—What could give a more pleasing prospect of the future stability of this empire than that spirit of enquiry which is gone forth so generally through the land?—The institution of colleges, academies, and literary societies have increased the means of knowledge—Nor can you easily estimate the advantage which this vicinity derives from yonder seat of the Muses.



KNOWLEDGE has as favourable an aspect on religion as on civil society.—The religion of the ignorant is superstition—Ignorance is the parent of blind devotion, and such devotion generates the wildness of enthusiasm.—Such will not enquire, with candour and impartiality, after truth, nor practice the great duties of benevolence.

A FREE intercourse with the world by an extensive commerce not only prepares the way for the accession of wealth, but it unfetters and expands the human mind, and prepares it for the reception of liberal science and the practice of the most amiable virtues.—It removes prejudices, and, by an acquaintance with other nations, it softens the mind towards them, enlarges the benevolent affections, and extends the empire of humanity to all the world.

THE happy effects of the American revolution are felt far beyond the bounds of America.—The oppressed Irishman has been exonerated of an insupportable burden, and is permitted, in part to taste the sweets of independence with us.—The spirit of toleration, of which we so highly boast, is gone forth and spread itself far through Europe.—The bigotry of the Catholic, and the resentment of the oppressed Protestant, have subsided—the one no longer esteems the temple polluted in  
which



which the unhallowed foot of the other has trodden ; but can succeed each other with their own modes in the same house, sacred to the service of the same God.

MAY the spark of liberty, which has been kindled on the American altar, be blown into one pure universal flame, and irradiate the whole world of intelligent beings.—No longer let the lovers of freedom impiously dare trample under foot the natural rights of others—nor wrest, by violence or fraud, from their own domain, Africa's unoffending sons.—May the happy time be hastened when the reign of tyranny and oppression, of every description, shall forever cease,—when the majesty of laws shall be superior to that of Kings, —when the happy influences of a mild and benevolent religion shall be universally felt, putting a final period to the baleful effects of bigotry, superstition and persecution for conscience sake,—when the nations of the earth shall learn war no more !

It cannot be necessary, after what has been said, to dwell on the importance of attending to the regular education of children and youth—it must be evident, on the least reflection, that not only the growth and happiness, but the very existence of  
 republican

republican government depends upon the culture of the mind and morals of the rising generation.—Let the history of fallen republics admonish you of the danger of neglecting to nourish them by public education, and to strengthen them by public virtue !—Nor is education less necessary to domestic peace and personal enjoyment, than to the well-being of society.

THE great encouragement given to industry by the avenues of commerce which are continually opening to us, is a reflection that cannot have escaped any one.—By this means a market is found for your products, and their comparative value is enhanced.—Industry is the only sure road to wealth,—and while it encreases the stock, it contributes to the health—promotes the virtues, and, of course, adds to the happiness of a people.

ALREADY have we experienced a material advantage from the recovery of this source of every good to society.—Nor are we a little indebted to the fair part of the community for the vast increase of our manufactures.—The profits of their industry lay claim to this public tribute of applause.—To them must it be principally ascribed that in this town the manufactures of the last year, on a loose calculation, exceed those of five or six years before

before by an hundred thousand yards, the value of which cannot be computed at less than 30,000 dollars.—Thus are we returning to the fruitful paths of industry more rapidly than we declined from them.

WE have now little to fear from our enemies, but every thing to hope from the situation, extent and resources of our country; and from the enterprising spirit of its inhabitants.—Under the smiles of approving heaven, may they proceed and prosper in every useful art—encreasing in knowledge and virtue, until they become as conspicuous for the purity of their morals as for the equality and perfection of their government!

MAY no one, this day, prove himself unworthy the freedom he enjoys, by a conduct inconsistent with the purest pleasures,—by any thing unbecoming him as a man, as a christian!—May temperance, sobriety and decorum preside over all our joys, and be our constant attendants through the various walks of life.—Then may we look forward with hope and joy, through all the variations of imperfect government, and the struggles of the contending passions of men, to a state of more perfect society,—to that grand community where “universal love smiles on all around.”

