

AN ORATION

**ON THE
ADVANTAGES
OF**

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

DELIVERED

Before a Public Assembly of the Inhabitants of
CHARLESTOWN, SOUTH-CAROLINA,

ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, 1778,

THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THAT GLORIOUS ERA.

By DAVID RAMSAY, M. B.

Magnus ab integro seclorum nascitur ordo.
Jam redit & Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna:
Jam noxa progenies, cœlo dimittitur alto.

*Huic ego nec metas rerum, nec tempora pono:
Imperium sine fine dedi.* VIRG.

CHARLESTON:

**PRINTED BY T. C. COX, NO. 137, TRADD STREET,
ONE DOOR FROM THE BAY.**

1800.

TO
The Honorable
CHRISTOPHER GADSDEN, Esquire,
Lieutenant-Governor
OF THE
STATE OF SOUTH-CAROLINA;
WHO,
Fearless of Danger,
Undaunted by Opposition,
Uninfluenced by the Hope of Reward,
IN THE WORST OF TIMES,
Has stood among the FOREMOST,
An early, active, zealous, disinterested Champion,
IN THE CAUSE
OF
AMERICAN LIBERTY AND INDEPENDENCE;
'The following ORATION,
Originally drawn up at his Request,
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED
BY
His humble Servant,
THE AUTHOR.

ORATION.

Friends and Fellow-Citizens,

IMPRESSED with the deepest sense of my insufficiency, I rise to address you with peculiar diffidence. When I consider the knowledge and eloquence necessary to display the glorious prospects, which Independence opens to this continent, I am stung with a degree of self-reproach for undertaking the important task. But your known attachment to the cause of America encourages me to hope, that you will receive with indulgence, a well-intended exertion to promote her welfare; and emboldens me to cast myself on that candour, which looks with kindness on the feeblest efforts of an honest mind.

We are now celebrating the anniversary of our emancipation from British tyranny; an event that will constitute an illustrious æra in the history of the world, and which promises an extension of all those blessings to our country, for which we would choose to live, or dare to die.

Our present form of government is every way preferable to the royal one we have lately renounced. It is much more favorable to purity of morals, and better calculated to promote all our

important interests. Honesty, plain dealing, and simple manners, were never made the patterns of courtly behaviour. Artificial manners always prevail in kingly governments; and royal courts are reservoirs, from whence insincerity, hypocrisy, dissimulation, pride, luxury, and extravagance, deluge and overwhelm the body of the people. On the other hand, republics are favorable to truth, sincerity, frugality, industry, and simplicity of manners. Equality, the life and soul of commonwealth, cuts off all pretensions to preferment, but those which arise from extraordinary merit: Whereas in royal governments, he that can best please his superiors, by the low arts of fawning and adulation, is most likely to obtain favour.

It was the interest of Great-Britain to encourage our dissipation and extravagance, for the two-fold purpose of *increasing the sale of her manufactures*, and of *perpetuating our subordination*. In vain we sought to check the growth of luxury, by sumptuary laws; every wholesome restraint of this kind was sure to meet with the royal negative: While the whole force of example was employed to induce us to copy the dissipated manners of the country from which we sprung. If, therefore, we had continued dependent, our frugality, industry, and simplicity of manners would have been lost in an imitation of British extravagance, idleness, and false refinements.

How much more happy is our present situation, when necessity, co-operating with the love of

of our country, compels us to adopt both public and private economy? Many are now industriously clothing themselves and their families in sober homespun, who, had we remained dependent, would have been spending their time in idleness, and strutting in the costly robes of British gaiety.

The arts and sciences, which languished under the low prospects of subjection, will now raise their drooping heads, and spread far and wide, till they have reached the remotest parts of this untutored continent. It is the happiness of our present constitution, that all offices lie open to men of merit, of whatever rank or condition; and that even the reins of state may be held by the son of the poorest man, if possessed of abilities equal to the important station. We are no more to look up for the blessings of government to hungry courtiers, or the needy dependents of British nobility; but must educate our own children for these exalted purposes. When subjects, we had scarce any other share in government, but to obey the arbitrary mandates of a British parliament: But honor with her dazzling pomp, interest with her golden lure, and patriotism with her heart-felt satisfaction, jointly call upon us now to qualify ourselves and posterity for the bench, the army, the navy, the learned professions, and all the departments of civil government. The independence of our country holds forth such generous encouragement to youth, as cannot fail of making many of them despise the syren calls of luxury and

mirth, and pursue heaven-born wisdom with unwearyed application. A few years will now produce a much greater number of men of learning and abilities, than we could have expected for ages in our boyish state of minority, guided by the leading strings of a parent country.

How trifling the objects of deliberation that came before our former legislative assemblies, compared with the great and important matters on which they must now decide? They might then, *with the leave of the king*, his governors and councils, make laws about *yoking hogs, branding cattle, or marking rice*; but they are now called upon to determine on peace and war, treaties and negotiations with foreign states, and other subjects interesting to the peace, liberty, sovereignty, and independence of a wide extended empire. No wonder, that so little attention has been paid to learning; for ignorance was better than knowledge, while our abject and humiliating condition so effectually tended to crush the exertions of the human mind, and to extinguish a generous ardor for literary pre-eminence.

The times in which we live, and the governments we have lately adopted, all conspire to fan the sparks of genius in every breast, and kindle them into flame. When, like children, we were under the guardianship of a foreign power, our limited attention was naturally engrossed by agriculture, or directed to the low pursuit of wealth. In this state, the powers of the soul, benumbed with ease and indolence, sunk us into sloth and effeminacy. Hardships, dangers, and proper

proper opportunities, give scope to active virtues, and rouse the mind to such vigorous exertions, as command the admiration of an applauding world. Rome, when she filled the earth with the terror of her arms, sometimes called her generals from the plough : In like manner, the great want of proper persons to fill high stations, has drawn from obscurity many illustrious characters, which will dazzle the world with the splendour of their names. The necessities of our country require the utmost exertions of all our powers ; from which vigorous united efforts, much more improvement of the human mind is to be expected, than if we had remained in a torpid state of dependence.

Eloquence is the child of a free state. In this form of government, as public measures are determined by a majority of votes, arguments enforced by the arts of persuasion, must evermore be crowned with success : The rising patriot, therefore, who wishes the happiness of his country, will cultivate the art of public speaking. In royal governments, where the will of one or a few has the direction of public measures, the orator may harangue, but most probably will reap prosecution and imprisonment, as the fruit of his labour : Whereas, in our present happy system, the poorest school-boy may prosecute his studies with increasing ardour, from the prospect, that in a few years he may, by his improved abilities, direct the determinations of public bodies, on subjects of the most stupendous consequence.

Thus

Thus might I go through the whole circle of the arts and sciences, and shew, that while we remained British subjects, cramped and restrained by the limited views of dependence, each one of them would dwindle and decay, compared with the perfection and glory in which they will bloom and flourish, under the enlivening sunshine of freedom and independence.

I appeal to the experience of all, whether they do not feel an elevation of soul growing out of the emancipation of their country, while they recollect that they are no longer subject to lawless will, but possess the powers of self-government, and are called upon to bear an active part in supporting and perpetuating the sovereignty of the United States; and in organizing them in such a manner, as will produce the greatest portion of political happiness to the present and future generations. In this elevation of soul consists true genius; which is cramped by kingly government, and can only flourish in free states.

The attention of thousands is now called forth from their ordinary employments to subjects connected with the sovereignty and happiness of a great continent. As no one can tell to what extent the human mind may be cultivated; so no one can foresee what great events may be brought into existence, by the exertions of so many minds, expanded by close attention to subjects of such vast importance.

The Royal Society was founded immediately after the termination of the civil wars in England. In

In like manner, may we not hope, as soon as this contest is ended, that the exalted spirits of our politicians and warriors will engage in the enlargement of public happiness, by cultivating the arts of peace, and promoting useful knowledge, with an ardor equal to that which first roused them to bleed in the cause of liberty and their country? Their genius sharpened by their present glorious exertions, will naturally seek for a continuance of suitable employment. Having, with well tried swords, and prudent counsels, secured liberty and independence for themselves and posterity, their great souls will stoop to nothing less than concerting wise schemes of civil policy and happiness— instructing the world in useful arts—and extending the empire of science. I foresee societies formed of our heroes and statesmen, released from their present cares; some of which will teach mankind to plough, sow, plant, build, and improve the rough face of nature; while others critically examine the various productions of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, and teach their countrymen to “look through Nature up to Nature’s God.” Little has been hitherto done towards completing the natural history of America, or for the improvement of agriculture, and the peaceful arts of civil life; but who will be surprised at this, who considers, that during the long past night of 150 years, our minds were depressed, and our activity benumbed by the low prospects of subjection? Future diligence will convince

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the candid world, that past inattention was the effect of our dependent form of government.

Every circumstance concurs to make it probable, that the arts and sciences will be cultivated, extended, and improved, in independent America. They require a fresh soil, and always flourish most in new countries. A large volume of the book of nature, yet unread, is open before us, and invites our attentive perusal. Many useful plants, unknown to the most industrious botanist, waste their virtues in our desert air. Various parts of our country, hitherto untrod by the foot of any chymist, abound with different minerals. We stand on the shoulders of our predecessors, with respect to the arts that depend on experiment and observation. The face of our country, intersected by rivers, or covered by woods and swamps, gives ample scope for the improvement of mechanics, mathematics, and natural philosophy. Our free governments are the proper nurseries of rhetoric, criticism, and the arts which are founded on the philosophy of the human mind. In monarchies, an extreme degree of politeness disguises the simplicity of nature, and "sets the looks at variance with the thoughts;" in republics, mankind appear as they really are, without any false colouring: In these governments, therefore, attentive observers have an opportunity of knowing all the avenues to the heart, and of thoroughly understanding human nature. The great inferiority of the moderns to the ancients in fine writing, is to be referred to this veil cast over mankind, by the

the artificial refinements of modern monarchies. From the operation of similar causes it is hoped, that the free governments of America will produce poets, orators, critics, and historians, equal to the most celebrated of the ancient commonwealths of Greece and Italy.

Large empires are less favorable to true philosophy, than small, independent states. The authority of a great author is apt, in the former case, to extinguish a free enquiry, and to give currency to falsehood unexamined. The doctrines of Confucius were believed all over China, and the philosophy of Descartes, in France: But neighbouring nations, examining them without partiality or prepossession, exploded them both. For the same reason, our separate states, jealous of the literary reputation of each other, and uninfluenced by any partial bias, will critically pry into the merit of every new opinion and system; and nought but truth will stand the test, and finally prevail.

In monarchies, favour is the source of preferment; but, in our new forms of government, no one can command the suffrages of the people, unless by his superior merit and capacity.

The weight of each state in the continental scale, will ever be proportioned to the abilities of its representatives in Congress: Hence, emulation will take place, each contending with the other, which shall produce the most accomplished statesmen. From the joint influence of all these combined causes, it may strongly be presumed, that literature will flourish in America;

rica; and that our Independence will be an illustrious epocha, remarkable for the spreading and improvement of science.

A zeal for promoting learning, unknown in the days of our subjection, has already begun to overspread these United States. In the last session of our Assembly, three societies were incorporated for the laudable purpose of erecting seminaries of education. Nor is the noble spirit confined to us alone: Even now, amidst the tumults of war, literary institutions are forming all over the continent, which must light up such a blaze of knowledge, as cannot fail to burn, and catch, and spread, until it has finally illuminated, with the rays of science, the most distant retreats of ignorance and barbarity.

Our change of government smiles upon our commerce with an aspect peculiarly benign and favorable. In a few years, we may expect to see the colours of France, Spain, Holland, Prussia, Portugal, and those of every other maritime power, waving on our coasts; whilst Americans unfurl the Thirteen Stripes in the remotest harbours of the world. Our different climates and soils produce a great variety of useful commodities. The sea washes our coast along an extensive tract of two thousand miles; and no country abounds in a greater plenty of materials for ship-building, or has a better prospect of a respectable navy. Our stately oaks, the greater part of which would probably have withered in their native spots, had we remained subjects, will now be converted into ships of war, to ride triumphant

triumphant on the ocean, and to carry American thunder around the world. Whole forests will be transformed into vessels of commerce, enriching this independent continent with the produce of every clime and every soil. The wealth of Europe, Asia, and Africa, will flow in upon America: Our trade will no longer be confined by the selfish regulations of an avaricious step-dame, but follow wherever interest leads the way. Our great object, as a trading people, should be to procure the best prices for our commodities, and foreign articles at the most reasonable rates: But all this was cruelly reversed by acts of the British Parliament, regulating our trade in a subserviency to their own emolument; our interest being entirely out of the question. It requires but a moment's recollection to convince us, that as we now have a free trade with all the world, we shall obtain a more generous price for our produce, and foreign goods on easier terms, than we ever could, while we were subject to British monopoly.* The
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 boasted

* That British merchants gave us a low price for our commodities, appears from this single consideration—they made money by exporting them from England. If they found it profitable to export tobacco, rice, indigo, &c. from Britain, it must be in consequence of their allowing the American colonists less for those articles, than they would have brought in European markets. In this manner, much of our produce was sold to the consumers, loaded with double freight, insurance, and commissions, over and above the additional expense of unloading and reloading in Great Britain. The industrious American planter received no more

boasted act of navigation was not intended for our advantage, nor for the advantage of the whole empire; but was a glaring monument of the all-grasping nature of unlimited power. To enumerate all the ungenerous restrictions imposed by the

more for his produce than the pittance the British merchant, after reserving his own profit, was pleased to allow on the sale thereof, brought to market charged with this unnecessary expense. The distance from America to those places of Europe, which consumed our staples, is generally less than to the British ports. From all which premises, it appears undeniably evident, that American commodities, carried directly to the countries where they are consumed, will produce much more clear profit to the planter, than when they arrived there by the circuitous way of Great Britain.

The same reasoning holds good with respect to many articles imported from England, which were not of its own growth or manufacture; for they would come much cheaper from the countries where they were made, than they ever could, while we were obliged to receive them through the hands of British merchants, loaded with double freight, insurance, commissions, and sometimes with duties. If interest had not silenced the voice of justice, Great Britain, while she obliged us to buy at her market, would have considered herself as bound to supply our wants as cheap, as they could be supplied elsewhere: But instead of this, she not only fixed exorbitant prices on articles of her own production, but refused us the liberty of buying from foreigners those articles which her own markets did not afford, and had also begun the fatal policy of superadding additional duties. What a scene of oppression does this open to us? A great part of the price, for which our commodities sold in Europe, was lodged in British coffers; and we were obliged to buy manufactures of her production, at prices of her own fixing, and were restrained from buying even those articles which she could not raise, where they could be got cheapest: Besides, as we durst not buy from any others, they had it in their power to fix any advance on the first cost, that their avarice prescribed, and our necessities would permit.

the British government on American commerce, would be an outrage on patience. Time only will unfold the whole of this mystery of iniquity. A few years experience will shew such an amazing difference between the fettered trade of the British Colonies, and the extensive commerce of the Free, Independent States of America, as will cause us to stand amazed, that we so long and so patiently submitted to so many and such cruel restrictions. In one word, so long as we remained dependent, the commerce of this great continent would have been sacrificed to the interest of a selfish European island.

Carolina had particular reason to wish for the free trade of Independence.† The whole island of Great Britain did not annually consume more than five thousand barrels of her staple commodity, rice; and yet, it was an enumerated article. The charge on unloading, reloading, and shifting every cask, owing to this enumeration, was immense; though it served no other purpose but to procure jobs for British coopers and wharfingers. So little regard was had to our interest, while dependent, that this enumeration was obtained

† The Tobacco Colonies were also great losers by the British monopoly of trade. The duties on their staple amounted to more than half the first cost. Tobacco exported from Britain, sold in European markets for more than double the sum the American planter received for it.—If it should become a custom in the United States, to celebrate the anniversary of Independence with an annual oration, it is hoped that some citizen of Virginia or Maryland, will place the selfish restrictions on the exportation of this valuable commodity, in a proper light.

tained by the instigation of a Captain Cole: Several vessels coming from England before him, and purchasing rice for Portugal, prevented the aforesaid captain of a loading; he returned, and in resentment said, carrying rice to Portugal was a prejudice to the trade of England: And on this single instance, so ill founded and supported, rice became an enumerated article.* How could our trade flourish, or our produce bring its full value, while restricted by a legislature so regardless of our interest, that a petty captain, to secure himself a cargo, could prevent our staple from being sent directly to a foreign market.

Union with Great Britain confined us to the consumption of her manufactures, and restrained us from supplying our wants by the improvement of those articles, which the bounty of Heaven had bestowed on our country. So numerous were the inhabitants of some provinces, that they could not all find employment in cultivating the earth; and yet a single hat, manufactured in one colony, and exported for sale to another, forfeited both vessel and cargo. The same penalties were inflicted for transporting wool from one to another. Acts of parliament have been made to prohibit the erection of slitting mills in America. Thus did British tyranny exert her power, to make us a needy and dependent people, obliged to go to her market, and to buy at her prices; and all this at a time when, by her exclusive trade, she fixed her own prices on our commodities.

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* See on Trade, page 21.

How widely different is our present situation? The glorious fourth of July, 1776, repealed all these cruel restrictions, and holds forth generous prices, and public premiums, for our encouragement in the erection of all kinds of manufactures.

We are the first people in the world, who have had it in their power to choose their own form of government. Constitutions were forced on all other nations, by the will of their conquerors; or, they were formed by accident, caprice, or the over-bearing influence of prevailing parties or particular persons: But, happily for us, the bands of British government were dissolved at a time when no rank above that of freemen existed among us, and when we were in a capacity to choose for ourselves among the various forms of government, and to adopt that which best suited our country and people. Our deliberations on this occasion, were not directed by the over-grown authority of a conquering general, or the ambition of an aspiring nobility, but by the pole-star of public good, inducing us to prefer those forms that would most effectually secure the greatest portion of political happiness to the greatest number of people. We had the example of all ages for our instruction, and many among us were well acquainted with the causes of prosperity and misery in other governments.

In times of public tranquillity, the mighty have been too apt to encroach on the rights of the many: But it is the great happiness of America, that her independent constitutions were agreed

agreed upon by common consent, at a time when her leading men needed the utmost support of the multitude, and therefore could have no other object in view, but the formation of such constitutions as would best suit the people at large, and unite them most heartily in repelling common dangers.

As the strength of a people consists in their numbers, our separate states, sensible of their weakness, were actually excited by self interest to form such free governments, as would encourage the greatest influx of inhabitants. In this manner, an emulation has virtually taken place in all the thirteen states, each contending with the others, who should form the freest constitution. Thus independence has been the fruitful parent of governments formed on equal principles, more favourable to the liberty and happiness of the governed, than any that have yet been recorded in the annals of history.

While we were dependent on Britain, our freedom was out of the question; for what is a free state, but one that is governed by its own will? What shadow of liberty then could we possess, when the single NO of a king, 3000 miles distant, was sufficient to repeal any of our laws, however useful and salutary; and when we were to be bound in all cases whatsoever by men, in whose election we had no vote, who had an interest opposed to ours, and over whom we had no controul? The wit of men could not possibly devise any mode, that would unite the freedom of America with Britain's claim of unlimited

limited supremacy. We were therefore reduced to the alternative of liberty and independence, or slavery and union. We wisely chose to cut the gordian knot, which tied old Britain to the new, and to assume our independent station among the empires of the world. Britain, had she honestly intended it, was incapable of governing us for the great purposes of government. Our distance, and other local circumstances, made it impossible for her to be sufficiently acquainted with our situation and wants: But, admitting it was in her power, we had no reason to expect that she would hold the reins of government for any other end but her own advantage. Human nature is too selfish, too ambitious, for us to expect, that one country will govern another, for any but interested purposes. To obtain the salutary ends of government, we must blend the interest of the people and their rulers; or else, the former will infallibly be sacrificed to the latter. Hence, the absurdity of our expecting security, liberty, and safety, while we were subjects of a state a thousand leagues distant.

Connexion with Britain involved us in all her quarrels; and such is the fluctuating state of her politics, that we could not long expect a political calm. In vain did the Atlantic ocean interpose; for, by our unnatural union, we were necessarily dragged into every war, which her pride or ambition might occasion. Besides, as she considered the colonies as her property, what was to hinder her from ceding any or all of them to the different European states? Thus, while we had no

independent government of our own, we might have been the sport of various contending powers, and tossed about, like a foot-ball, from one to the other.

Our independence will naturally tend to fill our country with inhabitants. Where life, liberty, and property are well secured, and where land is easily and cheaply obtained, the natural increase of people will much exceed all European calculations. Add to this, the inhabitants of the old world becoming acquainted with our excellent forms of government, will emigrate by thousands. In their native lands, the hard-earned fruits of uninterrupted labour, are scarcely equal to a scanty supply of their natural wants ; and this pittance is held on a very precarious tenure ; while our soil may be cheaply purchased, and will abundantly repay the toil of the husbandman, whose property no rapacious landlord dare invade. Happy America ! whose extent of territory westward, is sufficient to accommodate with land, thousands and millions of the virtuous peasants, who now groan beneath tyranny and oppression in three quarters of the globe. Who would remain in Europe, a dependent on the will of an imperious landlord, when a few years industry can make him an independent American freeholder?

Such will be the fruits of our glorious revolution, that in a little time, gay fields adorned with the yellow robes of ripening harvest, will smile in the remotest depths of our western frontiers, where impassable forests now frown over the

the uncultivated earth. 'The face of our interior country will be changed from a barren wilderness, into the hospitable abodes of peace and plenty. Cities too, will rise majestic to the view, on those very spots which are now howled over by savage beasts and more savage men.

The population of this country has been heretofore very rapid ; but it is worthy of observation, that this has varied more or less, in proportion to the degrees of liberty that were granted to the different provinces, by their respective charters. Pennsylvania and New-England, tho' inferior in soil, being blest originally with the most free forms of government, have outstripped others in the relative increase of their inhabitants. Hence I infer, that as we are all now completely free and independent, we shall populate much faster than we ever have done, or ever would, while we were controuled by the jealous policy of an insignificant island.

We possess thousands and millions of acres, which we may sell out to new settlers, on terms very easy to them, and yet sufficient to defray the whole expense of the present war. When the quit rents formerly paid to the king, shall be appropriated to the benefit of the independent states, they will fill our treasuries to so great a degree, that foreign nations, knowing that we abound in the sinews of war, will be afraid to provoke us. In a few years, when our finances are properly arranged, the stoppage of those sums which were formerly drained from us, to support the pride and extravagance of the British

king, will be an ample provision, without taxes, for defraying the expense of our independent governments.

It is difficult to compute the number of advantages arising from our present glorious struggle; harder still, perhaps impossible, precisely to ascertain their extent. It has attracted the attention of all Europe to the nature of civil liberty, and the rights of the people. Our constitutions, pregnant with the seeds of liberty and happiness, have been translated into a variety of languages, and spread far and wide. Who can tell what great events, now concealed in the womb of time, may be brought into existence by the nations of the old world emulating our successful efforts in the cause of liberty? The thrones of tyranny and despotism will totter, when their subjects shall learn and know, by our example, that the happiness of the people is the end and object of all lawful government. The wondering world has beheld the smiles of Heaven on the numerous sons of America resolving to die or be free: Perhaps this noble example, like a wide-spreading conflagration, may catch from breast to breast, and extend from nation to nation, till tyranny and oppression are utterly extirpated from the face of the earth.*

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* Britain will eventually lose less by our independence, than is commonly supposed. The king and ministry may be cured of their lust of domination, and will be deprived of influence and the means of corruption. While she had a monopoly of our trade, it encouraged idleness and extravagance in her manufactures; because they were sure of a market

The tyrants and landlords of the old world, who hold a great part of their fellow men in bondage because of their dependence for land, will be obliged to relax of their arbitrary treatment, when they find that America is an asylum for freemen from all quarters of the globe. They will be cautious of adding to the oppressions of their poor subjects and tenants, lest they should force them to abandon their country for the enjoyment of the sweets of American liberty. In this view of the matter, I am confident that the cause of America is the cause of human nature, and that it will extend its influence to thousands who will never see it, and procure them a mitigation of the cruelties and oppressions imposed by their arbitrary task-masters.

If such be the glorious consequences of Independence, who can be so lost to every generous sentiment, as to wish to return under royal domination? Who would not rather count it an honour to stand among the foremost, in doing and suffering in a cause so intimately connected with the happiness of human nature? Away with all the peevish complaints of the hardness of the times,

ket for their goods, though dear and ill made: But, as independence will below our commerce on those who most deserve it, this will be the means of introducing frugality and industry among her labouring poor. Our population will be so much the more rapid for our free governments, that, in my humble opinion, that part of our trade which will fall to the share of Great Britain, if she has the wisdom to conclude a speedy peace, will be more to her advantage than a monopoly of the whole of it, if we had remained subjects.

times, and the weight of the taxes. The prize for which we contend, would be cheaply purchased with double the expense of blood, treasure, and difficulty, it will ever cost us.

Our independent constitutions, formed on the justest principles, promise fair to give the most perfect protection to life, liberty, and property, equally to the poor and the rich. As at the conflagration of Corinth, the various melted metals running together, formed a new one, called Corinthian brass, which was superior to any of its component parts; in like manner, perhaps it is the will of Heaven, that a new empire should be here formed, of the different nations of the old world, which will rise superior to all that have gone before it, and extend human happiness to its utmost possible limits. None can tell to what perfection the arts of government may be brought. May we not therefore expect great things from the patriots of this generation, jointly co-operating to make the new-born republics of America as complete as possible? Is it not to be hoped, that human nature will here receive her most finished touches? That the arts and sciences will be extended and improved? That religion, learning, and liberty will be diffused over this continent? And, in short, that the American editions of the human mind will be more perfect than any that have yet appeared? Great things have been achieved in the infancy of states; and the ardor of a new people rising to empire and renown, with prospects that tend to elevate the human soul, encourages these flattering expectations.

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Should any puny politician object, that all these prospects are visionary, till we are certain of independence; I reply, that we have been in possession of it for two years, and are daily more able to support it, and our enemies less able to overset it. When we first dared to contend with Britain, we were a loose, disjointed people, under no other government but that of a well regulated mob. If in these circumstances we were able to defend ourselves, what may we not now expect, when we can draw forth our whole strength in a regular constitutional manner? If the maiden courage of our new raised levies, has successfully withstood the well trained bands of our enemies, can we distrust, when three campaigns have made them equal in discipline, to those with whom they are to contend? Such is the situation of Britain, that were we only able to keep up the appearance of an army, she could not afford to protract the war: But instead of this, our troops are more numerous, better disciplined, clothed, and armed, than they ever were. The most timid may dismiss all their doubts, since Louis XVI., of France, that illustrious protector of the rights of human nature, with a magnanimity worthy of himself, has guaranteed to us our independency. If Britain could not subdue America when she stood single and alone, how abortive must all her attempts prove, when we are aided by the power of the greatest European monarch?

The special interposition of Providence in our behalf, makes it impious to disbelieve the final establishment

establishment of our heaven-protected independence. Can any one seriously review the beginning, progress, and present state of the war, and not see indisputable evidence of an overruling influence on the minds of men, preparing the way for the accomplishment of this great event?

As all the tops of corn in a waving field are inclined in one direction by a gust of wind; in like manner, the Governor of the world has given one, and the same universal bent of inclination to the whole body of our people. Is it a work of man, that thirteen states, frequently quarreling about boundaries, clashing in interests, differing in policy, manners, customs, forms of government, and religion, scattered over an extensive continent, under the influence of a variety of local prejudices, jealousies, and aversions, should all harmoniously agree, as if one mighty mind inspired the whole?

Our enemies seemed confident of the impossibility of our union; our friends doubted it; and all indifferent persons, who judged of things present, by what has heretofore happened, considered the expectation thereof as romantic: But He who sitteth at the helm of the universe, and who boweth the hearts of a whole nation as the heart of one man, for the accomplishment of his own purposes, has effected that, which to human wisdom and foresight, seemed impossible. A review of the history of America, from its first discovery to the present day, forces upon us a belief that greater blessings are reserved for

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this continent, than she ever could have possessed whilst lying low at the foot of an European island.

It has never yet been fairly tried how far the equal principles of republican government would secure the happiness of the governed. The ancients, unacquainted with the present mode of taking the sense of the people by representatives, were too apt, in their public meetings, to run into disorder and confusion. The distinction of *Patricians* and *Plebians*, laid the foundation of perpetual discord, in the Roman commonwealth. If the free states of Greece had been under the controul of a common superintending power, similar to our Continental Congress,* they could have peaceably decided their disputes, and probably would have preserved their freedom and

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* Their Council of Amphyctions, in some things resembled our Congress; but their powers were too limited. This suggests a hint, that a confederation of the United States, on principles that vest the Congress with ample powers, is most likely to perpetuate our republican governments and internal tranquillity. The union of independent commonwealths, under one common head, is an application of the social compact to states, and requires powers proportionably enlarged. Treason in our governments, puts on a new aspect, and may be committed by a state as well as an individual; and therefore ought to be clearly defined, and carefully guarded against.

To give permanency to our confederation on republican principles, among other regulations, it will be expedient to erect a great Continental University, where gentlemen from all the states may form acquaintance, receive the finishing touches of education, and be inspired with a continental liberality of mind, superior to local prejudices, and favourable to a confederated union.

importance to the present day. Happily for us, warned by experience, we have guarded against all these evils. No artificial distinction of ranks has been suffered to take place among us. We can peaceably convene a state in one small assembly of deputies, representing the whole in an equal proportion. All disputes between the different states, and all continental concerns, are to be managed by a congress of representatives from each. What a security for liberty, for union, for every species of political happiness! Small states are weak and incapable of defence; large ones are unwieldy, greatly abridge natural liberty, and their general laws, from a variety of clashing interests, must frequently bear hard on many individuals. But our confederation will give us the strength and protection of a power equal to that of the greatest; at the same time that, in all our internal concerns, we have the freedom of small independent commonwealths. We are in possession of constitutions that contain in them the excellencies of all forms of government, free from the inconveniences of each; and, in one word, we bid fair to be the happiest and freest people in the world for ages yet to come.

When I anticipate in imagination the future glory of my country, and the illustrious figure it will soon make on the theatre of the world, my heart distends with generous pride for being an American. What a substratum for empire! compared with which, the foundation of the Macedonian, the Roman, and the British, sink into

into insignificance. Some of our large states have territory superior to the island of Great Britain, whilst the whole together, are little inferior to Europe itself. Our independence will people this extent of country with freemen, and will stimulate the innumerable inhabitants thereof, by every motive, to perfect the acts of government, and to extend human happiness.

I congratulate you on our glorious prospects. Having for three long years weathered the storms of adversity, we are at length arrived in view of the calm haven of peace and security. We have laid the foundation of a new empire, which promises to enlarge itself to vast dimensions, and to give happiness to a great continent. It is now our turn to figure on the face of the earth, and in the annals of the world. The arts and sciences are planted among us, and, fostered by the auspicious influence of equal governments, are growing up to maturity; while truth and freedom flourish by their sides. Liberty, both civil and religious, in her noon-tide blaze, shines forth with unclouded lustre on all ranks and denominations of men.

Ever since the flood, true religion, literature, arts, empire, and riches, have taken a slow and gradual course from east to west, and are now about fixing their long and favourite abode in this new western world. Our sun of political happiness is already risen, and hath lifted his head over the mountains, illuminating our hemisphere with liberty, light, and polished life. Our independence will redeem one quarter of

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the globe from tyranny and oppression, and consecrate it the chosen seat of truth, justice, freedom, learning, and religion. We are laying the foundation of happiness for countless millions. Generations yet unborn will bless us for the blood-bought inheritance, we are about to bequeath them. Oh happy times! Oh glorious days! Oh kind, indulgent, bountiful Providence, that we live in this highly favoured period, and have the honor of helping forward these great events, and of suffering in a cause of such infinite importance!

FINIS.