

AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED IN THE
INDEPENDENT CIRCULAR CHURCH,
BEFORE THE INHABITANTS OF
CHARLESTON, SOUTH-CAROLINA,
ON FRIDAY, THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1806;
IN COMMEMORATION OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY APPOINTMENT OF THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION SOCIETY:
AND PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THAT SOCIETY;
AND ALSO OF THE
South-Carolina State Society of Cincinnati.

By KEATING LEWIS SIMONS,
A MEMBER OF THE REVOLUTION SOCIETY:

CHARLESTON:
PRINTED BY W. P. YOUNG, FRANKLIN'S HEAD,
BROAD-STREET,

NO. 41.

ORATION.



Friends & Fellow-Citizens!

HOW dear to you is the event we have met to celebrate? How full and unfading the joys which it first inspired? You have assembled to hear him, who hath the honor of addressing you, when the proud theme, in strains of noble eloquence, hath so frequently been offered to your meditations, and sometimes impressed upon your hearts, not only by the charms of graceful speech; but the powerful influence of its flowing from the lips of heroes, adorned with the laurels of that illustrious achievement. What is there now to be gleaned from this field, with which it may be hoped to reward your attention, or even to win your audience? There is, in general, little to excite the ardor of one, whose task is to descant upon a topic, which hath already shed its lustre to the glow of genius, and yielded to taste and elocution, whatever of grace, or sublimity, that may raise the heart, or delight the imagination. Still, should not this reflection, however obtruding, dismay such as are called upon to pourtray the character of **AMERICA'S INDEPENDENCE**? Sacred to the pride and glory of our nation, it must continue, fellow citizens, to nourish your best feelings; to animate your noblest sentiments; to keep alive a generous enthusiasm in your minds, and therefore, can never be touched, however often, or feebly, without awakening all your sensibility. Here, no art is wanted to kindle passion: You come already inspired. As in reviving the image of some dear departed relative, the tender qualities and
amiable

amiable virtues of his life, would smite the fond heart, and awaken emotions dear to friendship; so, at the return of this eventful day, must the pride of heroes, and the raptures of liberty, possess your souls, and animate sentiments that are sacred to patriotism.

It must be owned, indeed, that the annals of mankind do not afford the example of a nation, who have maintained higher wisdom, or more heroic courage, in the pursuit and vindication of their freedom, than the people of these United States. Led from the old to the new hemisphere, by a spirit of enterprize, or expelled by the ruinous superstition of their parent kingdom, denying to them the rights of conscience, which herself had wrested from the arm of a debasing hierarchy, they braved the horrors of a howling wilderness; raised in its bosom an altar, and kindled the vital flame of liberty. Here, for twice the term allowed to the course of man, they watched and fed its growing splendor—for twice that term, though marked by frightful disasters, they continued to flourish under its genial beams, and to derive, as well from the blessings of their own day, as those, which seemed in store for the unborn, something, more than requital for the comforts they had renounced; something, more than consolation for the calamities they had endured.

BUT, the light which cheers the heart of the pilgrim, may guide the steps of the robber. Britain, dead to the feelings of consanguinity, beheld, with jealousy, this dawning glory of the west; and regardless of its benign influence upon her children in the wilderness, embraced the unnatural scheme of its utter extinction.—Her measures were accordingly taken; and means devised to suit the foul intent.—Fraud, violence and perfidy, alternately obeyed the dictates of her rancorous hate.—When confounded by the thunder of Pitt, still unappeased, she seemed to abandon; but, in fact, hugging closer to her heart, the flagitious plot, soon resumed her wily course, with a subtlety, not to have been contemned by the primitive spoiler of human beatitude. What address! What menacing!

menacing! What simulation and dissimulation! Promises succeeded threats; and threats, in turn, gave way to professions of parental solicitude. Now the iron rod was grasped—now the gilded rattle shaken. But, vain were her arts: the guardian angel of America hovered over, and kept her close to the side of a protecting policy.—In vain the serpent waved his shining folds; in vain erected his golden crest; in vain put forth his forked tongue; she would taste not the killing fruit; but, mindful of the awful warning, “Eat not, or ye Die,” rather than become the victim of his guile, preferred the noble enterprize of braising his head. The motives which impelled her to this fearful conflict, sprang from no vulgar source. No! Not from despair; not from faction; nor the smart of positive suffering; but, from the love of liberty; loving with all her heart, with all her soul, with all her might; and regarding every hostile approach, however remote, or oblique, with the jealousy which a Lucretia would contemplate an attack upon her virtue. The conduct of her leaders in the revolution, clearly demonstrates the truth of these assertions. Devoted to a cause in which their strongest passions were enlisted, they still adopted their measures with most exemplary foresight and circumspection. Provoked by the continued wrongs of their country, and impelled by the enthusiasm of the times; pervading every rank, and sex, and age, they yet repressed the general propensity to violence; and, maintaining the balance of moderation, sought for a redress of grievances, only by attempts to rouse the torpid justice of their sovereign, and to rally around their cause, the generous spirits of his kingdom. But, there was no justice in the breast of the former; and the pious labours of the latter were consequently abortive. Neither the pathetic eloquence of Barre; nor the warning voice of Chatham; nor the radiant flow of Burke’s wonderful soul, could convert his arbitrary will, or check the headlong impetuosity with which his subjects seconded every project of his pernicious and infatuated councils. Columbia was doomed for the yoke of Albion! But, she bowed not her lofty head! The sword was unsheathed; and the appeal,

that had been laid at the foot of the tyrant's throne, transferred to the God of battles. What a dreadful, affecting spectacle! Thirteen states, yet in the gristle, with courage in their hearts, and faith in their God, arrayed, for the justest cause, against the greatest power on earth; proud and towering, with a train of splendid victories and rich conquests, and the recent humiliation of her ancient, lofty rival.

THE achieving of this daring and patriotic enterprise, was not tarnished by any acts of rashness, or desperation. Conceived in wisdom, and conducted with spirit, it led, through a rapid progression of brilliant exploits, to that high act, which gave us rank among the powers of the earth; in commemoration of which, we have now met, on this proud day, in this holy temple, to offer praise and thanksgiving to the Maker and Comforter of nations. But, independence, though asserted with promptitude by America, was not won with facility. Much precious treasure; much heroic blood, signal toils, and cruel privations, were the price of its consecration. "Through what variety of untried peril, through what new scenes and changes did she pass! A wide, an unbounded prospect lay before her!" But, though "Shadows, clouds and darkness, rested on it," These did not deter her daring soul from the bright glory they eclipsed.—By the valor of her sons, and the piety of her daughters, she was, at length, under the auspices of a benign Providence, seated in the rank of acknowledged Independence.—The piety of her daughters; yes, to the fair of our country are we as much indebted for that glorious achievement, as to the generous souls, who endured the toils of the camp, and stood the shocks of battle. Warmed by the same honorable feelings, they maintained, throughout, the same devotion to the cause. Their patriotism became the more noble, as it was of a kind entirely suited to their sex.—I though glowing, it did not transport them out of that modest grace and delicacy, which, endowing them with power, is always sure to gild their conquests, and complete their sway. They did not merit the praise of their
country

country by the neglect; but, rather, from a more than ordinary cultivation of that gentleness of nature; those soft cares, and tender charities, which make them so lovely in the eyes, and so dear to the happiness of their countrymen: By these, they “Smoothed the wrinkled front of war,” and disarmed the grim monster of half his horrors. Yet, were they not the less exempt from the alarms of weak timidity.—secure in the chastening majesty of their inbred virtue, they could, serenely, behold the approaches of a foe, who, while he seldom failed to rob, never dared to insult them. With equal elevation of sentiment, they viewed, without other emotions, than scorn and disgust, his blandishments, to make them forget, in the whirl of amusements, the sufferings of their bleeding country. Among this amiable group, was seen the aged heroine pouring into the wound of one son, the balm of parental tenderness; while she continued to animate the bosom of another, whom the fortune of war had still permitted to follow the banners of liberty: The tender sister mourning the fall of one brother, and inspiring another’s valour; alternately, strewing the grave of the dead, and decking the temples of the living; or, the youthful widow, wrapt in fresh grief, and forgetting the world for her blighted love, awed into resignation, by the piety of a matron, who wipes from her venerable orbs, the tear of maternal sorrow:

“*Cedite Romanæ Heræ, cedite Græcæ;*

“*Non orta in Terris, Americana melior.*”

If Rome hath boasted a heroine, who pluck revenge from the heart of her rebel son, storming the walls of his ungrateful country, the examples of equal devotion, to the public weal, were not wanting among the fair of America; and, if not manifested in the same way, it was, because there was not the same occasion —if maternal love was sacrificed by the dames of Sparta, at the shrine of patriotism, the ladies of America, with not less ardor for the rights of their country, were more tender of the rights of nature.—If, in either Rome, or Greece, the ornaments of youth and beauty have

have fed the empty coffers of the state, the American revolution was marked by privations as signal and illustrious: For it, the lovely virgin, with sweet enthusiasm, put away the elegant drapery, and gay attire of Europe, for the simple habit of her domestic loom.—If, in both, it hath been a common virtue to prefer the general welfare to individual good, the illustrious fair of our country can still afford the examples of a more lofty patriotism. Among that delightful host, who have sacrificed on the altar of the public, there was a matron,* touched by a spark from Heaven's own altar, who, to complete the triumph of her gallant countrymen, lighted a torch for the roof, which sheltered her venerable locks from the "peltings of the pitiless storm." Then, when, and where, hath female glory eclipsed the fame of the fair, who shared in the emancipation of America? History doth not afford the instance; and, it may be safely predicted, never will. Such examples were not only, in themselves, decisive upon the character of our country; but, must, were it even below, have exalted it to a tone of nobleness.—They must have banished every selfish care from the public service, and warmed apathy, itself, into patriotism. But, the genial, towering souls of our countrymen were actuated as by inspiration—They thought, they toiled, they bled, and died in the cause, with the cheerfulness with which they took their daily bread. Hence, in the course of this revolution, so propitious to the exaltation of the human character, was exhibited a phenomenon in politics, the most novel and wonderful,

* The British, in the chain of posts, which they had established, to keep up the communication between Charleston and Camden, had erected fortifications around the house of Mrs. Motte, on the South side of the Congaree. The Fort was invested by the Americans; and defended by the enemy, for four days, with obstinate valour. Mrs. Motte, who had retired to a neighbouring hut, recollected a quiver of African arrows, which were hanging in her barn; and presented them to Colonel Harry Lee, to be employed against her mansion.—They were armed with combustible materials, and used with effect.—The roof was fired, and the garrison compelled to surrender at discretion. None partook so largely of the triumph as the patriotic lady, who had sacrificed her property for the interest of her country.

wonderful, perhaps, that hath ever appeared.—A nation, without laws, swayed by the mere force of moral principle;—an army, without discipline, wielded by the mere effect of patriotic zeal: What a theme for the poet, the philosopher, and patriot.—Here, Homer might sweep his golden lyre, Plato own his fabled republic; here, Diogenes might behold the honesty he had sought in vain, and Aristides lose his pre-eminence in virtue.

“ Illustrious statesmen and soldiers !”

YE, who guided the councils of your country, in these awful, trying times, with such constant virtue, and such unerring wisdom, can look only to the faithful history of your immortal deeds, for the eulogy which is so justly due to your transcendent excellence.—Sons of the “ tented field !” Fame was your idol; and praise, her trumpet, should not refuse its triumphal music. Yet, it would far exceed the measure of this day’s duty, and of the humble talent, allotted to its performance, to render just tribute to your valorous exploits.

WHETHER we lament the too early fate of WARREN, fallen in the prime of manhood, and at the dawn of his opening fame; or, MONTGOMERY, great, as he was unfortunate, descended from the sublime eminence of his glory, to the dusky vale of death; not more deplored by the affectionate host he had led to battle, than the hostile bands, against whom he had hurled the thunder of his art: Or, if we turn to another quarter of the great theatre of martial achievements, and admire the mighty GREENE, more blessed than Camillus of old, rescuing the wing of a grateful country, from the fangs of a fierce and unrelenting foe, against whom, (when swollen with pride and rapine, he would still augment the heap of his spoils) this tutelary hero turns the scale of victory, by the weight of his sword: Or, MARION,* his illustrious co-adjutor, ever terrible to
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* There are many acts of innate justice, and pure love of country, which stamp the fame of this hero, with that high virtue, which distinguished the patriots of the best ages of Rome:

the fighting, ever tender to the yielding foe:—Who, neither damped by adversity, nor shaken by peril; but, bearing up with manly front, against the disastrous change and shocks of fortune, “ In the midst of despair, performs the tasks of hope:” Sometimes, when laws were silent, bearing in one hand, a sword for his country’s enemies; in the other, a balance for his country’s children; with courage and justice so equal, as to poise admiration between the spirit of the hero, and the equity of the umpire: and, at all times, with pious allegiance to the state, seeking the general happiness in preference to his own bright renown: Or, should we weep over the urn of young LAURENS, who, after passing through the revolution, with prowess and honor not excelled; and covering his brow with the laurels of many fields, sealed with his life, his own fame, and the independence of his country.

STILL, with these mighty manes, a host of noble spirits would claim our oblations, and demand our applause: Nor were it easy to bestow the palm.—In an army of heroes, can we select for praise, without wounding the rights of the excluded? But, if the province of panegyric be, to excite gratitude and admiration, for such as have greatly served their country, the authors of the American Revolution need not its influence here.—These are, already, your heart-felt sentiments; and what strength of art can vie with the powers of nature? Could the polished periods, and silver accents of Cicero; or, the pithy speech, and soul-inspiring

But it will suffice here, to notice the following fact:—When the enemy had over-run the State of South-Carolina, broken up its tribunals of justice, and exposed its citizens to the ravages of war, and of private discord, General Marion, in its North-Eastern extremity, with a handful of hardy followers, sustained the valour, and kept up the justice of the State. At this time, it was the common practice of the citizens, in the vicinity of his camp, to repair to the General, and request his adjudication of their controverted rights.—The task, he never declined, though engaged with the most important public concerns; and such was the authority of his justice, and the confidence reposed in it, that the unsuccessful were never known to infringe, or murmur at his decisions.

inspiring voice of Demosthenes, awaken feelings more ardent, more rapturous and sublime, than are kindled in your hearts, at each returning light of this proud anniversary? No!

ONE there was, however, among the illustrious band, who,

“ Cloth’d with transcendent brightness, did outline
 “ The rest—though bright”—

WASHINGTON!—A seeming emanation of the divinity, charged with the salvation of his country! What organ, what speech can accomplish the laud of WASHINGTON?—A name, itself, the type of whatever may be held great, or good, in the composition of human character?—WASHINGTON!—Who so happily combined the simplicity of the best age of Roman virtue, with the genius that distinguished the epocha of Roman greatness; in whom, were blended, softened, and united, the disinterested patriotism of Cincinnatus; the invincible magnanimity of Cato; and all that was good in the character of Cæsar;—his spirit of enterprize; his complexional humanity, and miraculous conduct in war. To attempt the praise of such a man, might hurry me into a strain of adulation, offensive to the ears of the pious servants of this holy altar.—Then, let the tears of his country, in which his precious memory is embalmed, tell to the world, the virtues of him, for whom they were shed.—It should almost seem, indeed, as if his good and mighty spirit, having, upon this orb, enchanted the souls of the virtuous, could not ascend to the bright spheres of bliss, without beckoning to it some of its kindred spirits.

THE feelings of the public had not yet subsided from the tone of grief, to that melancholy, which is “ mournful and pleasant to the soul,” when their tears were again demanded.—We wept for our RUTLEDGE:—

“ A name, which ev’ry wing to Heav’n will bear;
 “ Which men, to speak, and angels joy, to bear”—

This sweet model of manly grace and excellence; this early and eloquent assertor of his country’s rights; for which,

“ When he spoke,
 “ The air, a charter'd libertine, was still;
 “ And the mute wonder lurk'd in men's ears,
 “ To steal their sweet and honey'd sentences”:—

This favored son of genius—“ Framed in the prodigality of nature;” benign, wise, amiable and magnanimous—He, alas! survived our hero, but to bedew his tomb; then sunk into his own, from a bright constellation of high virtues, and tender charities, bewailed by all who loved philanthropy, or delighted in elegance; by all who could admire the ornaments, or rejoice in the benefactions of their country; bewailed by all within the circle of his diffusive beneficence:—The widow, the orphan, the poor and broken in spirit, with the mingled emotions of social affection, and public feeling; not knowing which, most to deplore, their own, or the national bereavement.

WITHIN a few little months, after this mournful event, another illustrious patriot,* of the same blood and name, fell beneath the scythe of the great destroyer.—The man, to whom this section of the union
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* Very fortunately for America, when the State of South-Carolina was invaded in 1776, the troops, at Fort-Moultrie, were not upon the continental establishment. General Lee ridiculed the idea of defending the fort against a British fleet, and ordered it to be abandoned.—General Moultrie declared himself to be under the particular command of Governor Rutledge, and that he would not obey the order unless it came from him.—Upon General Lee's urging his wish—with some warmth, the Governor replied—“ Moultrie will obey no order that is not signed by me; and I would sooner cut off my hand, than give one for a measure, which he, and every man under his command, would consider as disgraceful.” The result filled the breast of every American, with triumph. That gallant officer, strong in this sentiment, and the firmness of the Governor, maintained his post, with heroism; and, snatching victory from the grasp of the too sanguine enemy, gave a new spring to our drooping cause; rescued his own State from the yoke; and raised her Palmetto to the honors of the laurel.

In 1780, the Legislature of South-Carolina passed an act, “ delegating to Governor Rutledge, and such of his council, as he could conveniently consult, a power to do every thing necessary for the public good, except the taking away the life of a citizen, without legal trial.”

were wont to look, as to a guiding star, when their political horizon lowered, and clouds portended the peril of the state; who, trusted with the power of a Roman dictator, demeaned himself with the virtue of a Roman patriot; who displayed such vigor of intellect, and wonderful resources of genius and ability, in whatever sphere of public duty he moved, whether in the cabinet, the senate, or under the sacred robe of justice, that it may be well said, "He had a head to contrive; a tongue to persuade; and an heart to execute any good," with a power of discrimination, that "Turn him to any cause of policy," or jurisprudence,

"The gordian-knot of it he would unloose,
"Familiar as his garter"—

Extraordinary talents, which he dedicated to the service of his country, with undeviating honor and rectitude.

TIME, with its gentle breath, had not long dispelled these glooms from the public mind, when its sunshine was again overshadowed.—HAMILTON fell! Not like his great prototype, under a weight of years, with all his "Honors ripened on him;" not like his gallant companions in arms, beneath the banners of their country; not on that field, where his heroic spirit so oft had courted glory at the cannon's mouth; but, alas! in the midst of peaceful scenes, of social joys, and domestic endearments; in the full march of his mighty mind; and at the meridian of a life, of such eminent usefulness, and resplendent lustre, that one, intimately acquainted with, and well fitted to decide upon its merits, ventured to affirm, at the moment when the public sorrow was highest; when even political adversaries were mingling their tears with those of his personal friends, that the country of this excellent man knew not, at that time, half its loss. It deeply laments, said the eloquent Ames, when it turns its eyes back, and sees what HAMILTON was; but my soul stiffens with despair, when I think what HAMILTON would have been.

Soon afterwards, went down to his grave, as to the bed of repose, the venerable GADSDEN!—Full of years; full of honor, and of the love of his countrymen: Whose integrity and patriotism, during a life of extraordinary length, was like unto the sun, when, at a summer's solstice, it shines from dawn till eve, without a vapor to refract its rays, or a cloud to dim its splendor. But, let us take leave of these melancholy topics.—It is not fit that the national joy should now be damp't, even by the recollection of such national misfortunes.—The day forbids us to be sad.—Let us, then, turn from the troubled scenes of the revolution; let us cease to bewail the heroes and patriots, who then perished, or have since departed, and contemplate the spirit, by which, that signal change was effected; when it no longer “Rode upon the whirlwind, and directed the storm;” but, resting from its labors, slept in the bosom of peace.

As great virtues spring from great calamities, and are prone to sink in the unruffled tide of prosperity, it was to be feared, that the soft indulgencies of a long political calm might relax the tone of the American mind, and melt away the bold lines of its manly character. Such, indeed, is ever the course of national spirit, if, by that name it may be called, when it is no more than the raving of despair, or a frantic revolt from the torturing scourge of despotism. By pain, it is roused to action; and, as quickly lulled to rest, with the return of ease. But, far different is that spirit, which, soaring above the objects of sense, is the genuine offspring of the soul; which is devoted to liberty, more from the beauty and sublimity of the object itself, and the dignity conferred on its possessor, than from a love of the indulgencies, which flow from its benignity, and are denied by a tyrant's sway. Far different was the American spirit of seventy-six.—Tho' rocked, for sixteen years, in the cradle of peace, and pampered with the luxuries of teeming agriculture, and swift-winged commerce, it still had wasted none of its native vigor; but, when roused by the genius of the nation, rose, in the plenitude of its first stature, rather refreshed, than enfeebled by its long repose. THE

THE feelings of seventy-six were revived in ninety-seven.—The United States were then ready to take the field against the victorious legions of France, covered with

“Inglorious triumphs and dishonest scars;”

when, unmindful of the ties between them, by common toils and glory, she would have preferred the ignoble exploit of rendering them sordid dependants, to an honorable renewal of their former friendship.

POLITICAL conduct being governed more by considerations of interest, than moral rectitude, it is, at all times, difficult to maintain the relations of states upon a just footing. But, when the convulsions of Europe had stirred up, and inflamed all the malignant passions of the mind, it was found quite impossible to preserve even the shadow of friendship between two powers; of which, with the one, the feelings of virtuous individuals were infused into the body politic; while, in the other, such principles had become degenerate and worn out. The French government administering no justice at home, would practice none abroad; but, presuming upon the overweening attachment of America; upon the heterogeneous contexture of her national mass (the effect of infant condition); and upon supposed dissensions in her household; conceived the hardy enterprize of bringing her down from that noble eminence, to which her own arms had assisted, to join in the train of those degenerate, ruined, and unhappy states; who, stript, bound, and scourged, were compelled to fall upon their knees, and groan out songs of praise and thanksgiving, to her cap't idol, loaded with the plunder of their country, and besmeared with the blood of their people. How long did the unsuspecting virtue of America blind her to the machinations of this insidious ally?—How much outrage had she endured!—How much more was she disposed to bear!—How slowly were her envoys faithful to her sentiments!—“receding from these attachments,” under the pressure of aggressions, unredressed; when disgrace was offered, to fill up the measure of her wrongs. This was the crisis.—Resentment now burst its bands.—Unmoved by injustice, oppression, and indignity, it sprang, instantly

instantly, from the wound of national honor.—Those brows, that had looked the heralds of peace and amity, now frowned scorn and indignation :— These lips, from which had issued, but the accents of conciliation and ingenuous remonstrance, now uttered the wrath of insulted feelings.

WITH what delight do we look back into antiquity, to compare with that pious Roman, who, between his own cruel immolation, and a dishonorable peace from his country, reported to the Carthaginian senate, that he had counselled the Romans not to sheath their swords; when we remember the noble burst of indignation, from a citizen of our own republic, at the demand of tribute from his government; unawed by the perils of his situation, in the bosom of a nation, where the diplomatic ægis had been broken to pieces and trampled under foot; where rage, rapine and fraud, in uproar, ministered to the wretched affairs of anarchy, and at a season, when a colder heart, or less heroic spirit, would have paused over the chance of offending the prejudices of his own countrymen: But he confided in the nobleness of their character, and he was not deceived—they had wandered from their political interests; but not from their national honor. The lofty sentiment of “MILLIONS FOR DEFENCE, BUT NOT A CENT FOR TRIBUTE,” was wafted from one extremity of the union to the other; and the pure and dauntless mind from which it sprang, hailed by his country—the mirror of her own virtue and courage.

THIS generous effusion of the public mind, by inducing the conviction, that we were ready for the preservation of our independence, to renew the same energies, to encounter the same toils, and endure the same privations, by which it had been achieved, precluded the necessity of these sacrifices. But, America was not to relinquish her warlike attitude, without adding fresh lustre to her arms. Some trophy was wanted to atone for the disturbance of her peace—that was won by the gallant TRUXTON: the wreath wrought under his hands for the honor of her infant navy, served not only as
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the emblem of its dawning glory, but was a pledge for its future renown—this was soon redeemed. The feats of pithy valor, which have been performed under the conduct of the dauntless PREBLE, against our barbarous foes on the Mediterranean, will hand the fame of our gallant seamen down to posterity, upon the list with those heroes of the ocean, whose actions history hath most delighted to record—Shades of DECATUR and SOMMERS! How often will ye be invoked in battle by the sons of future generations, when Columbia's eagle shall contend for the trident of the waves; when the cannon, over which it hovers, shall assert our right to a voice upon the constructions of the code of nations, and reject every gloss which shall not grow out of the laws of nature, or rise from the ever living fountains of justice; when they shall maintain the hospitality of our shores, and punish the shedding of our blood.

It hath been seen, that the spirit, by which America had been emancipated, was exerted, as happily, for the preservation of her freedom: But, this was not all.—It not only rescued her from the disgrace and ruin, common to nations in these unhappy times; but, left her in an attitude with the world, which is peculiar to herself, and reflective of the highest lustre upon her principles. Melancholy to tell!—She possesses the high, but, mournful glory of being the only republic amid the wide dominions of the earth; while a baleful genius, under the mask of liberty, by crushing every other power, which bore the image of republic; and, by waging a war of extermination against every other government, under which freedom is sheltered, hath, by these means, almost brought this fair system into disgrace, and giving rise to theories unfriendly to the doctrine of resistance to tyrants—she remains a living and illustrious pledge of the republican form.—She yet furnishes its literary champions with the pregnant example of a people (formed, however, with fit habits for the enjoyment of freedom, who have broken a tyrant's sceptre, and constructed, for themselves, a constitution, which equally steers between the extremes of paralyzing despotism, and fierce anarchy. Twice happy people!

Happy

Happy in the fortune of your own day, which shelters you from the miseries common to so large a portion of the world.—Happy in the hope, which, amid so much desolation, ye still nourish for the children of more propitious ages.

WHILE then we cannot but deplore the fate of those commonwealths, which have been compelled to exchange their fair republics for the domination of the iron crown; which, from basking in the genial sun of liberty, are doomed to wither under the morbid heat of despotism; let us still rejoice in the happy distinction that marks the destiny of our own, nor check the generous ambition of transmitting it, unblemished, and unimpaired, to distant generations. Such, surely, must be the wish, the devout wish of every honorable American, no matter by what epithet distinguished, or to what party attached.—A wish, whose consummation need not be despaired of, if the means of having it fulfilled, which are in our power, be not neglected or abused. We have a constitution; we have, in its virtues, the promise of that high and chaste celebrity, which would arise from drinking deep ourselves of the cup of liberty, and handing it thro' successive ages, still filled with its generous nectar, down to a remote posterity.

FOR, notwithstanding that governments, however beautiful in theory, and just in practice, are still like all things else, of human invention, full of decay; and tend, we are told, from imbecility to vigor, and again from maturity to dissolution, by laws, which, if not as precise, are yet as certain, as those, by which the spheres are moved:—Yet, we know, from history, that their decline is retarded, according to the degree of skill, which hath been conferred upon the structure and conformation of their components; and the degree of care and fidelity, which is bestowed upon the administration of their concerns. In short, that the body politic, like the body physical, when sound, and well organized and regulated, by wholesome habits, affords a better hope of longevity, than when it is weak, corrupt, and prone to disorder. The federal constitution,

tution, let it be repeated, is believed to be of a stamp, which, if watched and cherished, will secure to the government of the United States a venerable antiquity. This instrument, the pride of the human intellect, is compounded of whatever hath been approved in ancient or modern times, as best fitted for the preservation of man's happiness. It is adapted to the peculiar habits, characters, and complex wants, of the people for whom it was designed; with a justness of means to ends, and a symmetry in the order of its multifarious parts, that fill the imagination with the pleasure of their beauty, while they impress on the judgment the conviction of their utility.

THE sages, by whom it was framed, believed that the people, who, at the moment of breaking their chains, were yet so calm and reflecting, as to apply themselves, with sober thought, about the things best fitted for the wholesome restraint of themselves, could never, afterwards, be wanting to the fundamentals of their national compact. They have, therefore, founded their noble work upon the basis of popular principles: for, those which are termed federative, in contra-distinction, are still of the popular kind; only, so trained and compounded, as to counteract the mischievous activity of the former, in their simple, unmix'd state. It follows, hence, that as all the powers of government spring from the people, mediately, or immediately, these checks, designed to give to it consistency and harmony, cannot repel the usurpations of the popular principles, unless a just, profound, and habitual veneration be cherished, and improved, by the whole body of the people, for the several members of the constitution, moving in their proper spheres, and performing their appropriate functions.

Thus, at last, must be the real balance of the government; the virtue of the people; the continued exercise of that fidelity for the preservation, which was bestowed upon the construction of the wheels and springs, by which, the machine of state carries on its
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operations.—They are beautifully and aptly organized.—They are taken from the best models.—They have, through the constitution which they compose, been highly useful, and promise to be more so.—But it must be remembered, that they are under the care of the people, from whom, unless they find a liberal and anxious protection, it is impossible that they can be faithful to their objects.

In Great-Britain, a monarchy, clothed with formidable prerogatives and an active patronage, harmonises the warring elements of that constitution.—In the ancient republics, the people appeared to enjoy greater franchises than they, in reality, possessed. Their share in government was of a negative quality.—They might reject, but could not propose expedients. The areopagus, into which no candidate was received, whose golden reputation had not stood the crucible of merit: or, the ostracism, more often a cruel scourge to virtue, than the just sentence upon vice, united the turbulent members of the Athenian republic: and, at Rome, some prerogatives in the senate, of a despotic complexion, together with the martial habits of the nation, which turned the fiery spirits of her restless citizens against her unfortunate neighbours, kept together the parts of that tempestuous commonwealth. But, in America, the federal constitution, formed of whatever was most friendly to the rights of freemen, in Britain, Athens, and Rome, is the sacred palladium of her liberty, consigned to the reverence and protection of her children—It is the basis of our republic, from which, if shaken, its noble superstructure must be wrecked.

BUT, what eternal disgrace will stain the memories of those, who either permit, or share in, the ruin of this last monument of the kind, which is not only the rightful inheritance of our own posterity, but is, in some sort, the property of mankind; which seems set apart by him, “In whose hands are all the corners of the earth,” to do away the pollution of republics, and vindicate to man, the rights of man.

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THE sentiments which are held essential to the perpetuation of our national compact, cannot be cultivated, if empirics are indulged in innovations upon its principles; or, if party rancour, or state pride, at any time, under any circumstances, are permitted to sully its beauties, or spoil its fundamental excellencies. An elegant writer observes, “The moment received usages are departed from, in a single point, the opinion of their wisdom is destroyed; an abuse is introduced; and poison circulates in the veins of the state.” Take from our constitution the credit of that high wisdom, which is so justly allowed to have been infused into its spirit, and it must immediately bend to the hypothesis of every wild or empty theorist.—Madness and folly will then pour their turbulent and deleterious current through those channels, where ought to flow the life-blood of our empire.

VANITY loves to act for itself; and can be attached to the works of wisdom, only by inflexible habits, and sentiments of the grave and awful kind. It will not abstain from meddling with what, has been the fashion to alter; and, the degree of skill, of which it is possessed for the performance, rarely enters into the reason for its undertaking.—But, it may be said, must we always remain in leading strings?—Shall we never walk, but with the staff of our fathers?—Not alter the constitution?—Wherefore should it not be altered?—Have not the framers of it left the door open, and even made provision for its amendment?—It is true they have: But, let us be sure, before we begin to alter, that we can succeed in amending. In all matters, where-with the arts and sciences are conversant, excepting in the affairs of national economy, the rage for experiments can rarely be too much indulged, at least for the general welfare. There, all things lie open to genius and enterprise; but governments, especially such as are formed of the principles of liberty, are not so much the productions of vivid genius, as of profound judgment, chastened by experience, and “Acting upon the maxims of cautious prudence”. They are, as hath been well said, “The results of the thoughts of many minds in many

ages."—They cannot be built at all seasons; but rise gradually into excellence, or else they are cast after a long m turing of principles, at nice junctures, under the influence of auspicious causes. What is gained at such a crisis, should be looked upon rather as the gift of Heaven, than the acquisition of man; and should, therefore, be consecrated to the use of posterity. The federal constitution is believed to have sprung from the latter of those sources. The people of its care had been born and educated under a government of the freest principles, by far, at that period, of any in the world; and it was conceived itself, at so lucky a juncture, and under a combination of so many favoring circumstances, that a concurrence as happy, can hardly be looked for again, according to the course of human events. The people had not yet lost the cement, which external perils had given to their sentiments and councils.—Party feuds were unknown — As by inspiration, they felt the expediency of partial sacrifices to their common welfare; and joined, most harmoniously, in the offering.

THE genius of the nation thus invoked, the heroes and patriots of the revolution, united by common toils, and perils, were selected to propitiate its destinies and secure its fortune.—At their head stood WASHINGTON, in whom, whether we regard the unbounded confidence and affection, both of his illustrious associates, and of the whole body of his countrymen; or the train of brilliant and happy events, which led to that confidence and affection, we cannot but look upon him, in some sort, to have been delegated by Heaven; and the high undertaking, which he superintended, to have been watched by the special care of its Divine Providence — As from the womb of this blessed epocha, sprang the constitution, so fair, so mild, so lovely and complete, as to strike the wonder of mankind, with something like the sudden appearance of a new glory.

THE wisdom of all time, must surely hold principles thus elicited and fixed, as sacred and fundamental, in administering the affairs of a nation: Yet, it
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may, withal, be urged, that the constitution came from the hands of men, and, therefore, is imperfect: Nay, that part of its very excellence consists in this,—that it may be altered and amended. But, surely, that provision cannot with safety, or good faith, be turned against its vital springs and fundamental powers; but, should be confined, as was intended, to the melioration of such inferior parts, wherein experience may point out, and the shifting and growing circumstances of the commonwealth call for its application. Of an edifice of Corinthian taste and magnificence, it may be allowable, sometimes, perhaps, to embellish the cornice with fresh ornaments of fashion; to emblaze the columns with the polish of modern elegance; to grace the walls with the images of virtue, and the trophies of art: but, never to raise its stately portico; to fret its massy battresses; or, molest its ample base.

LET us, then, as we would revere the sublime monuments of art, beware how we meddle with the cardinal excellencies of the constitution.—They require not our skill; they want our care.—And should the disastrous crisis really arrive, (for man, and the works of man, wax old and pass away) when radical defects shall be palpably seen, and a reform called for, by necessity; even then ought we, agreeably to the sentiment of a distinguished, modern statesman, who now “Sleeps in blessings,” “To approach its faults, as to the wounds of a father, with pious awe, and trembling solicitude”.—At all other seasons, and upon all other occasions, it should be held sacred; guarded from innovation; and the right of altering, according to the same author, “Kept as its extreme medicine, and not used for its daily bread.”

By the influence of these feelings, and sentiments, alone, can the people of the United States hope to perpetuate the bond of their union, and to swell the tide of their prosperity—By such, only, to live as the children of one household, and to escape the ravages of those terrible convulsions, which now shake the bowels, and overspread the face of Europe, with
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heaps of ruin. Though not covered with the moss of time, or shrouded in the awe and superstition of antiquity, the political edifice, under whose august canopy, with songs of joy and triumph, they now hold the jubilee of independence, is entitled, from its sacred functions, to their deepest veneration — Like the ark of old, it hath upborne their liberties, and fortune, on a desolating flood, which overwhelmed, and swept away, “Thrones, principalities, and powers.” — It is the last sanctuary of republics, expelled from every other quarter of the globe, and taking refuge here. — It is the pledge of their own, and the hope of freedom to future generations. — Let us, then, rally around the constitution; “Let us bind it up with our dearest domestic ties, and adopt its virtues into the bosom of our family affections;” let us so speak of it, and carry ourselves towards it, that the seeds of these affections may be sown in the hearts of the rising generation; “May grow with their growth, and strengthen with their strength.” — Then shall its principles shoot with perennial vigor, and bloom with never fading beauty — Then may we hope for greater length of years to our own republic, than were allotted to those of ancient Greece, and Rome; and for the unspeakable glory of transmitting to our latest posterity, the blessings of liberty, for which, so many thousands are, at this moment, offering the incense of their gratitude to the FATHER OF EMPIRES!

F I N I S.