

W. Hamelton

AN ORATION,

DELIVERED

Bailey 20:4.

IN ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH,

BEFORE AN ASSEMBLAGE OF THE

INHABITANTS OF CHARLESTON,

ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1810,

IN COMMEMORATION OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE;

BY APPOINTMENT

OF THE

SEVENTY-SIX ASSOCIATION,

AND

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THAT SOCIETY.

—BY LANGDON CHEVES,—

A MEMBER OF THE '76 ASSOCIATION.

CHARLESTON:

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AN ORATION.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,

WHAT glowing emotion must swell the bosom of the votary of Freedom, in whatever clime or country his lot may have been cast, when in recurring to the events of this day, he beholds the heroes and statesmen of '76, rising in their exalted patriotism and mighty spirit, and, with a creative voice, calling this great nation into political being!—What must be our just feelings of national pride, when we see the wise and venerable Congress of that era, animated by a pure and unadulterated love of liberty, unawed by the base motive of fear, unmoved by the diabolical spirit of revenge, not in some midnight intrigue, but in the face of an admiring and astonished world; appealing to the Supreme Judge of the Universe for the rectitude of their intentions, invoking his blessing on the deed, and in his awful presence, proclaiming their beloved country Free, Sovereign and Independent!—Must not the contemplation of this scene wrap our souls in ecstasy and elevate our minds to enthusiasm almost supernatural!

“ Look ye abroad thro’ nature, to the range
“ Of Planets, Suns and adamantine spheres,
“ Wheeling unshaken thro’ the void immense
“ And speak O man! does this capacious scene
“ With *half* that kindling majesty dilate
“ Thy strong conception.” (*)

Whither

(*) The remainder of this beautiful passage will illustrate its application.

“ ————— As when Brutus rose
Refulgent from the stroke of Cæsar’s fate
Amid the crowd of patriots; and his arm
Aloft extending, like eternal Jove,
When guilt brings down the Thunder, call’d aloud
On Tully’s name, and shook his crimson’d steel
And bade the Father of his country hail!
For lo! the Tyrant prostrate on the dust
And Rome again is free!

Whither then shall we look for a spectacle so august, so splendid, so sublime! In antiquity? Its greatest lights have not cast upon it the lustre of an event so worthy of renown. In the hopes of posterity? The most vivid imagination, tho' mounting to "the highest Heaven of invention," hath not conceived a parallel.

It is not arrogant, fellow-citizens, to declare, that we are assembled to commemorate the greatest event that is recorded in the history of nations. It hath been eloquently said, "that on this day a nation was born at once, a new order of things arose and an illustrious era in the history of human affairs commenced." The struggle for American liberty was greatly distinguished from all others in all its characteristics. In the motive it was magnanimous beyond the examples of ancient or modern times. We have not unfrequently had presented to our view, in the historic page, a people borne down by oppression and tortured beyond endurance, bursting, as it were, by a morbid effort in which the energies of the mind were scarcely discoverable, the fetters which bound them, and standing forth regenerated and disenthralled. But their motive was emancipation from great oppression long endured; and that nations suffering under such inflictions, should so patiently bow beneath the rod of unjust and merciless power, and "make calamity of so long date," first excites our astonishment and denies to the action half the merit which it would otherwise challenge. We have seen the power and influence of a Patrician family, forcing the sceptre from the hands of an impious and unnatural tyrant, and driving him into banishment as the just punishment of his crimes, by which a portion of liberty was gained to the state. But the motive was the revenge of an individual, whose power and whose disposition, perhaps, to oppress the citizen were little less than those of the dethroned tyrant; and to whose wrongs rather than his virtues, Rome was indebted for her liberty. In more modern times, we behold the Barons of England wresting from their tyrant king a power which was only obnoxious in their eyes, as it denied to them the exclusive privileges of a distinct order of men as inconsistent with the natural and imprescriptible rights of man as the injustice against which they magnanimously strove. Yes, notwithstanding these efforts, the names of plebeian and commoner still marked out the mass of mankind as the slaves and victims of the few.

Many nations have exhibited statesmen and generals climbing the ladder of ambition, by the prostration or diminution of royal authority, and giving to their country some of the blessings of liberty as the consequences of their triumphs. But their motive was their personal distinction and aggrandizement, not the people's freedom or their country's good. In others, as in unhappy revolutionary France, a savage fury involving the wreck of all morality and religion, the violation of all ties, social, moral and divine, has dishonored the motive and debased the spirit of liberty, while it hath "shut the gates of mercy on mankind," without purchasing one of the blessings which liberty, temperately and rationally enjoyed, so profusely dispenses to its votaries. Thrice happy America! Not one of these debasing circumstances cast a suspicion on the purity of thy motive, diminished the brilliancy of thy honorable career, or tarnished the glory of thy triumph.

It was the peculiar blessing and the ennobling gift of a kind and beneficent Providence, to make us feel a true, genuine and uncorrupted love of universal, equal, rational liberty. To enjoy this great blessing we were happily fitted by our habits, manners, education and local circumstances. We had, indeed, never ceased to enjoy it, for the delight with which we were taught to behold it when reason yet was young, the ardent love with which we fostered it in riper years, and the fast embrace in which matured reason, habit and feeling bound us to the invaluable possession, never suffered either the strength of power or the fraud of political cunning to tear it from us. It is our proud boast, that tho' our liberties were in danger, we never ceased to be free. That being the descendants of men who fled from European oppression, to a wilderness before untrodden by the foot of civilized man, to cherish even amidst savage beasts and more savage men their darling liberty; the principle was implanted in the very matrices of our nature. Born free and nurtured in the belief, that with freedom no earthly blessing could be compared, ours was a noble exertion to preserve it, not the mortifying task of regaining lost liberty. We did not on this day declare ourselves a nation of emancipated slaves. Our sensibility felt oppression's lightest finger like a mountain, and made us start with indignant emotion from the first unhallowed touch. Nor did we seek the preservation of some imperfect mutilated privileges, which were to be found in a charter

ter or statute, recorded as an act of the policy, or the charity, or the fear, or the caprice of a royal donor. We looked into the great archives of nature and drew from thence the whole volume of the rights of man.—What treasure so inestimable! What motive so noble as that of its preservation!

Such was the motive, and alike distinguished was the conception and conduct of this great act. For America was reserved to conceive the magnanimous idea and set the magnificent example of numerous and dispersed societies, covering a vast and extended continent, of various origin, different religions, dissimilar local interests, and distinct municipal associations; uniting in a bond of political and social love, as one people and by one great resolve, the result of deliberate reason, consummate wisdom and unequalled firmness, becoming a mighty, free and independent nation.

The assumption of political independence and the commencement of the revolution, were distinguished by a spirit and manner so elevated, an enterprize so rare and astonishing, and a determination so bold, as lifted us immediately high above the political horizon to the view of a wondering universe. Other militants in the cause of liberty, have waited for occasions favorable to success, and have risen against their tyrants and oppressors when they were smitten by the decrepitude of age, the debility and rottenness of luxury, or the adverse fortune of battle. But at this period Great Britain was in the zenith of her power and prosperity. Rich in her treasures, flourishing in her commerce and the terror of the world in arms. She bore on the ocean the trident of Neptune and an equal glory crowned her in the field. In the preceding war she had severely humbled the pride and power of France and Spain. In either hemisphere she had discomfited their legions. In Europe she had insulted their shores and invaded their territories—and in America had torn from them their finest colonies. The plains of Abraham and the walls of Quebec will be deathless monuments of the prowess and glory of her arms. Alas! that this glory, in which we proudly and affectionately claimed more than the rights of affiliation, should have been so soon tarnished and its bright rays obscured with the blood of a *savage* war. But the United Colonies, fearless of this gigantic power, emboldened by a presentiment of their great destinies, looking at the majestic works of nature which cover their bosom or surround them,

them, (their lakes, their rivers and their mountains—at Huron and Superiour, the Mississippi and the St. Laurence, the Alleghanies and the Andes!) and borrowing from them a corresponding sentiment of magnanimity which can receive no lustre from the most finished glory of Greece, or the most splendid renown of Roman achievement; became the great competitor of the mighty power of Britain, and with undaunted spirit took equal ground with the proud oppressor; established governments, raised armies, imposed taxes, formed alliances and cloathed themselves in all the attributes of a great sovereign. They had no period of infancy, none of puberty, none of progression—unborn to-day, the next beheld them exhibit a giant's stature. At once they were distinguished by the wisdom of their Senators, the eloquence of their Orators, the skill of their Generals, the valor of their Troops and the glory of victory; but above all by the unequalled patriotism of their people. This, this, "bear witness Earth and Heaven!" was the godlike spirit of '76. It glowed in the hearts and shone in the actions of every son and daughter of America. It was the seminal principle of the first efforts which gave us confidence and hope. It was the vital energy of that colossal figure of victory, whose sword in so many triumphs conquered the power and finally smote down the tyranny of the mother country. It was this spirit which dawned in so much splendor on Bunker's Hill, and played in bright and cheering corruscations on the cradle of our liberties. It stood like a pillar of fire to guide our armies, and like a pillar of a cloud to confound and mislead our enemies at Trenton and Princeton. It gleamed on the mountains of Vermont in the brilliant success of Bennington. It poured out in the many victories of the war a flood of glory, and under the pressure of the no less honorable misfortunes of our arms, cheered with its light and comforted with its warmth the naked, famished, perishing soldier of liberty—made him suffer and even made him die with joy and exultation. It was the same spirit which gently glided through the lattice of the imprisoned citizen, whose inflexible fidelity had consigned him to a dungeon—there turned his scanty morsel into a supply as unobtrusive as the widow's cruise, tinged his little urn of water with heaven-sent nectar, and all the while he spoke and while he thought of the triumph of his country's liberty, cast its mystic mantle o'er his galling

chains and wide extended it to all the evils of his life. (†) May we hope that we have cherished a spark of this sacred flame! As it was more holy, so it ought to have been more religiously guarded than the vestal flame of antiquity. Yes, it still exists! It hath its temples (less gorgeous indeed than Roman pomp, yet more noble) in our free and happy public institutions. And its altars (less splendid yet more pure) in the fervent hearts of a patriotic people. You, fellow-citizens, are the guardians and dispensers of the sacred rites. Be ye, the members of the '76 Association, the humble but faithful and assiduous ministers of the holy function—trim its lamp with diligence, purify and encrease its flame by the patriotism of your actions, by your heroism in the field of battle when thither you are called, and there the just vengeance of an injured country may too soon lead you; by your wisdom, honor and fidelity in the councils of the nation, into which the talents of some of you, in this land of equal rights, where “all start fair in the race of life,” will be a sufficient passport; by your eloquence in the place, from whence a too feeble minister now addresses you, on the recurrence of this great day, for the time may arrive when from hence you may as effectually defend the liberties which *you* conquered or *you* inherited, as in the field of battle. From hence your country's honorable achievements will inspire you to sound her praise, and from hence her wrongs will fire you with indignation and make you *fulmine* (‡) against the insolent and audacious foe. From hence you will rouse the honorable pride, excite the patriotism, confirm the resolution and nerve the arm of the citizen and the soldier who shall be called to defend her honor or support her glory. Do you, sir, (§) who bear the name and perpetuate the lineage of the hero of the 28th of June, be heir to his virtues and you may be heir to his immortal renown. Do you, gentlemen, (||) in whose veins flows the kindred blood of the martyred Hayne, catch a spark from his patriotism and heroic firmness and you will be your country's pride and blessing. Let that revolutionary hero (¶) be your guide, who with the same nobleness of mind in which he raised your thunder on the main
and

(†) Sterne.

(‡) “As Demosthenes

————— *Fulminated over Greece*

To Macedon and Artaxerxes Throne.”

(§) William Moultrie, Esq. a member of the Society.

(||) Two gentlemen of the name of Hayne, members of the Society.

(¶) Captain George Cross, the present President.

and bore your glory on the mountain wave, became the supporter by becoming the associate of this institution. Sieze and emulate the example of the gallant and beloved veteran, (**) of whom inexorable death has just bereaved you. He is not wholly lost to us. Tho' his mortal part hath been reposed in the silent tomb, embalmed in the sorrows of his friends, and his immortal soul hath risen to its God, the spirit of '76 continues to shine in the record of his deeds, which history and the grateful recollections of his country will bear down to future times.

“ The *Laurel* leaf of shining green
 “ Will, still, amid the gloom, be seen.”

Imitate the virtues of such an ancestry and such associates, and you will turn back the tide of glory, even on the times and achievements of '76, while you will pour it with augmented abundance on a distant and happy posterity.

Fellow-citizens, reverentially to contemplate, enthusiastically to admire and humbly, yet zealously to labor in the goodly work of keeping alive this holy spirit, was the original purpose and is the present object of this institution. What ingenuous mind can condemn our motive? What patriotic citizen will hesitate to advance our object?—Approach and enter the fane of our deliberations! There is no veil which obscures a mystery intended to be hidden from the common eye. Come foreigner and native fraternize with us? Come into this holy temple! Behold the fragrant flower blooming at the foot of the altar, cherished by its blessing and sprinkled with the sacred dews of virtuous intention! Who would extend the spoiler's hand? not, I am sure, this benevolent community.

But, ceasing to digress, though the colonies with unexampled boldness took equal ground with the enemy, it was in the greatness of their resolve, in the wisdom of their counsels and in the firmness of their courage; for at the commencement of our exertions, the operations of the field were embarrassed by every disadvantage, without troops, without money, without arms, and all the other requisites to create armies, except undisciplined men, the veteran and victorious legions of Great Britain were to be encountered and subdued or the cause of America was forever lost. A particular detail of the events of the revolution shall not be attempted, tho' we cannot believe that it would be tedious or uninteresting to an American. In every victory, and little less in every defeat, would he read his country's glory.

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The

(**) Captain John Blake, the late Vice-President.

The Romans are said to have considered *Fortune* as a personal and national virtue, and if they reasoned well, we might confidently build this merit on our many great and unexpected successes. But we will more rationally and piously, we conceive, consider them as the evidence of particular providential favor. Thro' the whole contest there appeared not only an inspired vigor which left at a distance all common examples, but there was also remarkably displayed, on many occasions, an assisting providence, that rescued us from the fatal issues of events which human means were unable to controul. As Homer makes the Gods of the ancient mythology descend into the plain and fight on the side of his sinking heroes, so (may we speak it without impiety, we do with infinite gratitude and reverence) the great God of Hosts, in numberless instances, when our strength failed, our spirits fainted and our ruin seemed inevitable, joined the battle, raised his mighty arm and gave the victory to the shattered phalanx of liberty. Is he not the infatuated victim of sceptical delusion and ingratitude, who does not believe that we were supernaturally aided at Lexington and Bunker's Hill?— Let him compare these events with any in history, of the conflicts of undisciplined troops with regular armies (even with the combats of the heroic Tyrolian) and he will no longer search merely in human means for the causes of these unexampled exertions. The soldiers of liberty, on these fortunate occasions, for so we must call them though they were not victories, were then for the first time drawn from the occupations of their husbandry and other peaceful labors, and the sun which rose on these blessed exercises did not set until his descending rays had mingled with the light of their military glory. Nor did the fate of the revolution less depend on these events, however apparently inferior, than on the capture of Burgoyne or the surrender of York-Town. The popular belief was, that British discipline and British valor were invincible, and it was only (urged on by our destiny) in the sanguiness of youthful hope and a holy reliance on the justice of the God of battles, that America dared to rise. Had a disgraceful discomfiture of their first efforts confirmed the fears of the colonies, despair would have succeeded hope, and panic terror have occupied the places of faith and confidence. Was not the arm of Providence laid bare and visible to human eyes, on York Island, when on the flight of some of the American troops, the great hero of the revolution determined to hide the shame which he felt in a voluntary.

tary death, but was saved by the power and blessing of Heaven, for the great purposes it had destined him to achieve? He was the Achilles of the war, without whose arm we could not conquer and was preserved to secure the final victory of our exertions and the accomplishment of our independence.

After the evacuation of New-York and the retreat through the Jerseys, hope appeared to sink in the stoutest bosoms, and while patriotism did not cease to warm the heart of the republic, despair had siezed with an icy grasp the functions of the public life.—Even the cool determination and firmness of Washington looked beyond the Alleghanies for the refuge and abode of liberty. (††) But at this moment of great and general dismay, a cause apparently not human, unexpectedly checked the progress of the British army, which had prosecuted the objects of the campaign with the greatest activity and with irresistible effect, until the Americans crossed the Delaware. Here the march and the salvation of the favored people of God appeared to be typified in the retreat and safety of our broken forces. The Delaware did not indeed, like the red sea, divide its waters to let them pass over, nor did its waves swallow up their enemies. But, astonishing to relate, the British army, possessed of wealth and art to bring within its reach all human aid, struck as it were by fatuity, had not provided the means of passing a river which lay in its route, and was thus unable to pursue the flying Americans across the Delaware.—In this auspicious moment the genius and the enterprize of the American commander, projected and executed the intrepid and fortunate expeditions of Trenton and Princeton. By these successes the drooping cause of America was again lifted up to the benign influence of the rays of hope, and human actors,

with

(††) To human wisdom, says the historian of the times, it appeared probable at this period, that some small section of the history of England would have recorded our political rise and fall in the following contemptuous language:—"A fickle people, impatient of the restraints of regular governments, in a fit of passion, abolished that of Great Britain and established in its room free constitutions of their own, but these new establishments, from the want of wisdom in their rulers or of spirit in their people, were no sooner formed than annihilated. The leading men in their respective governments and the principal members of Congress, (for by this name the insurgents distinguished their supreme council) were hanged and their estates confiscated. Washington, the gallant leader of their military establishments, worthy of a better fate, deserted by his army, abandoned by his country, rushing on the thickest battalions of the foe, provoked a friendly British bayonet, to deliver him from an ignominious death."

Ramsay.

with human means, were left and encouraged to struggle for the accomplishment of its great object.

But while the war was continued with unequal means on the part of America, not only was the British army, which had been destined to act in the middle and southern states, increased in numbers, and by frequent victory animated to boldness, but Great Britain also poured her veteran and disciplined legions from the north, under the command of a General of great talents and celebrity, who had pledged his fame as well for immediate victory as ultimate success. At the same time, the fell and merciless resolve of the British councils, from which the matchless eloquence of the Great Chatham, their country's glory and their senate's pride, could not dissuade them, was completely and fatally realized. The savage hords burst forth as their allies—the terrific yell, the torch, the tomahawk, the scalping knife and the human sacrifice, were added to the strength, and the helpless woman and the smiling babe to the victims of British prowess. But they tarnished the arms of the nation and withered the laurels which had so lately grown up and flourished in the same scenes. The march of Burgoyne was irresistible—terror moved before him—victory perched upon his banners and desolation followed in his rear. The junction of his arms with those of Sir Henry Clinton, seemed certain—the fate of America inevitable!—But indignant Heaven could not smile upon such savage deeds nor crown with success such unholy means. It determined to check the career and confound the arrogance which thus despised its will and trampled on its laws. For this purpose the hero of Bennington, the venerable Stark, the declining rays of whose patriotism still shed lustre and blessings on his country, was its chosen instrument. At Bennington a patriotic band of *eight hundred* undisciplined militia, without bayonets and without artillery, attacked and vanquished a large detachment of the regular troops of Great Britain, advantageously posted behind intrenchments. And, combining the firmness and perseverance of veteran soldiers, with the enthusiastic valor of freemen, on the same day and on the same spot, partially assisted by a regiment of continentals, encountered another division of the enemy, and did not leave the field till they were crowned with a second victory and had taken *seven hundred* prisoners. This event again raised the sinking hopes of the states, checked the flight of their armies and animated

mated them to resistance. But the great and providential result of this advantage was the deprivation of the main army under Burgoyne of supplies.—From this cause its operations were restrained until the American forces were concentrated, and, under the cheering influence of this partial success, increased to an equality with the foe. Victory at Saratoga declared in our favor, and the army, which a few weeks before calculated on the conquest of the whole country, as a certain and inevitable event, became prisoners of war to a portion of our forces.

So, had not Providence thrown the wealth, which had been accumulated at St. Eustatia, before the commander of the British fleet, like the apples of Atalanta, to tempt his cupidity, the surrender of York-Town would not have completed the triumph of our arms and sealed, as it did, the declaration of independence. Rodney would not have been obliged, for the security of his plunder, to divide his force—De Grasse would not have gained a naval superiority in the Chesapeake—Lord Cornwallis would have been reinforced and instead of surrendering his whole army to the allied forces of France and America, would probably have driven them from his lines and signalized his arms by their defeat or flight. Thus miraculously was the portentous power of the enemy dissipated, and his great and veteran armies, assisted by an immense maritime force, beaten and led captive! Is it possible, in this review, not to perceive the Almighty accomplishing, by an immediate Providence, his great and eternal ends in the happy triumph of America!

But while we ascribe so much to a particular interposition of the power and goodness of God, there is abundant cause for the claims of human merit and ample foundation on which to establish the glory of our country and the imperishable fame of her heroes. As much valor, scientific design, happy execution, heroic enterprize, patient suffering, and perfect discipline characterized the American armies, as the history of military operations, in any age or country hath displayed; and these were crowned, under the blessing of Heaven, with more complete success.

Such was the happy progress and such the fortunate issue of our military exertions. But for these we were no less indebted to the wisdom and firmness of our councils than to the skill of our Generals and the valor of our troops. The Continental Congress

Congress was composed of men of the greatest minds and the most exalted sentiment, warmed, animated and excited by the most glowing patriotism—(††) no success elevated them to unmanly pride or enflamed them to intemperate rashness. No reverse of fortune confounded them with fear or sank them into despondency. After the declaration of independence, in no instance, under no circumstances, however trying, severe or embarrassing, though they combined force, distress, fraud, artifice and persuasion, was Congress induced to entertain the most distant idea of purchasing peace by returning to the condition of British subjects. Trusting the event to Providence, their own wise councils and the heroic exertions of their armies, they stood like Mount Atlas ;

“ When storms and tempests thunder on his brow,
“ And Oceans break their billows at his feet.”

The happy result of the united exertions of such councils and such arms, confirmed to us the independence which we boldly declared on this auspicious day, and entwined the olive of peace with the laurel of victory.

Yet, let us not ungratefully forget the patriotic Fair of our country, who equally participated in the glorious struggle.—Yielding even love to patriotism, they would have corrected the imagination of the poet and taught him to sing in more exalted strains :

Omnia vincit amor patriæ.

Cloathed in all the softness and amiable delicacy of the sex, they bore with more than manly firmness every privation, insult and injury which a dominant and unprincipled soldiery could inflict. During a long and calamitous contest, the naturally gloomy shades of which were darkened by the deeper tints of civil war, they cheered, animated and supported the suffering sons of liberty with the kind influence of their approving smiles, and crowned their toils and dangers with the great reward of their constancy and love.

To those venerable matrons who still linger in the twilight of
life

(††) They are thus characterised by the great Chatham, who, in one of his healing and warning speeches, said, “ I must declare and avow, that in all my reading and observation, and these have been my favorite studies ; I have read Thucydides and have studied and admired the master states of the world, that for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity and wisdom of conclusion, in such a complication of difficult circumstances, no nation or body of men can stand in preference to the General Congress at Philadelphia.”

life, on the confines of these mortal shores, reluctant, even for higher joys, to quit the bliss their virtues so much assisted to win; to her who was deprived of a beloved brother, from whom was torn a tender and affectionate husband, or who was bereaved of a darling son; to that lone mother who in the morning of this dire conflict saw her daughters go forth, blooming and beautiful as the flowers of Eden—love and pleasure beaming in their eyes: But anon sees them fly for shelter from the gathering storm, to the venerated shade which was wont to shield them even from the too refulgent beam of day, and there beholds the lightning of the wrathful war descend the parent stalk (which not averts but conducts the fatal fluid) and blast at its foot these young and beautiful scyons, involving all in one ruthless ruin: To her who thus widowed and bereaved, yet rejoiced in her country's liberty; to all these matchless women, and to you their fair and lovely daughters, I would in vain attempt to pour out the copious libation of your country's gratitude—receive it, then from the overflowing fountains of their hearts!

The United States now crowned, through these great, happy and concurring causes, with peace, liberty and independence, were left to the undisturbed enjoyment of their inestimable fruits, in which they were more blest than in all the other consequences of the revolution. These are summed up in the full enjoyment of the unspeakable advantages of a free government. Every right and every benefit that Heaven hath put within the sublunary reach of man, are secured and improved—the poorest inhabitant of the country is alike protected and can obtain as ample and as speedy justice as the richest and most distinguished citizen. All that magna charta granted—nay, all that nature gave is confirmed by our free and happy public institutions, with no other abridgments than those which are established by the eternal and immutable principles of morality and religion.—They combine all the freedom of a state of nature with all the protection and strength of civil government. Such is the charm of our free political institutions and so much do they transcend the establishments of arbitrary power, in their energy as well as in their equity, that the straw built shed (if such an one this happy country did exhibit) which shields its inhabitants from no single element of Heaven, through which the winds pierce, the floods pour, the storms howl and the forked lightning speeds its evan-

except, course, untamed by resistance, would be held as sacred as the temple or the palace.

But it is a proud, legal and constitutional *equality*, which most distinguishes and most enhances the value of these institutions. Let no reviler of political liberty charge me with espousing or recommending that levelling spirit, that would beat down the mounds of the social compact, which it is the interest of the free citizen, above all others, to eternize and render imperishable. I speak not of that demoralizing and licentious equality which would deny to property security, to industry its advantages and to merit and virtue their rewards; which would be no less than fraud, and robbery, and violence. I mean that legal, constitutional, wholesome political equality which denies the unjust pretensions of accident and fortune, of privileged orders, of birth or possessions, which founds distinction on merit and limits its duration to good behaviour; which while it is impartially just to the rich and great, will take the poorest citizen by the hand, and, if he deserve them, lead him up to her seats of honor and crown him with her civic rewards. On earth there is not a country—there never was a government but your own, in which this cheering and ennobling principle hath blessed the citizen. The almost universal right of public suffrage, the almost universal eligibility to public office, the universal abolition of the barbarous and unnatural claims of primogeniture and the consequent equalization of the rights of inheritance, the operation of which casts the citizen in the happy medium between the spiritless acquiescence of submissive poverty and the bloated arrogance of pampered wealth; (§§) at once constitute and secure this great blessing.

Such is a picture, not too highly coloured, of the political liberty enjoyed by every state in this glorious confederation.—Then over all, the sacred spirit of national union, like old creation, spreads her brooding wings, attracts, concentrates all—diffuses vital warmth and vigor through the general mass, and “downward purges the black tartareous dregs, adverse to life,” while the great federal fabric, springing from the purified elements, like this fair globe from the Almighty hand,

“Self balanc’d on its centre hangs.”

These are the fruits of our political independence—this is freedom—this is republicanism! How,

How, fellow-citizens, shall I now describe, in language strong enough, in colours sufficiently vivid our greatly happy lot?—Placed in a land flowing, like the land of promise, with milk and honey—where genius wants no other patron than industry—where the labors of vigorous manhood provide abundantly for the infirmities of declining years, and children need no inheritance but health to build up their own fortunes. See, too, before you, yonder boundless forests,

“Where the rude ax with heaved stroke
“Was never heard.”

which will provide for your descendants to the thousandth generation. Look at the vast navigable rivers; which fertilize your soil and carry on their bosoms its produce to distant and profitable markets—at your cultivated fields, the rich luxuriance of their vegetation and the golden ear—at your abundant granaries—at your numerous flocks and herds and at the many other good gifts of Heavenly beneficence, which are scattered in rich profusion over your happy land, and adore and thank the divine giver!—Yet, with all these, thou wert not blest without thy political liberty. “Disguise thyself as thou wilt, still, slavery, thou art a bitter draft, and though thousands in all ages have drunk of thee, thou art no less bitter on that account. ’Tis thou thrice gracious Goddess, Liberty, whom all in public and in private worship; whose taste is grateful and ever will be so ’till nature herself shall change—no tint of words can spot thy snowy mantle or chemic power turn thy sceptre into iron.”

It is indeed true, (as it hath become too fashionable despondingly to say) that liberty, fair, beautiful and blessed as she is, hath yet her blemishes. That the rights of the citizens *may* be abused? That the licentiousness of the people *may* shake the stability of the government—that popular delusion *may* sieze the pillars of the state and pull down the magnificent edifice of our freedom. But whither do these doubts tend? I much suspect he does not love who despairs of the republic. Shall you renounce the invaluable gift of political liberty or cease to prize it beyond all other earthly blessings, because it *may* be lost or abused?—Would you therefore despoil yourselves of the erect and noble character of free citizens, which this day makes you a spectacle which God and man must delight to behold and become a nation of crouching slaves? For my part,

“I had as lief not be, as live to be
“In awe of such a thing as I myself.”

Away,

Away, then, with such ignoble and unpatriotic doubts. Believe this truth. It is shed upon you in the light of all history, and is confirmed by your reason, by your joys and by your fears. Liberty is happiness! It is a jewel which, like the diamond, will sparkle in the darkest hour. Greece and Rome, it hath been said, were happy in the midst of civil wars. In these ancient states, under the influence of this animating principle, the energies of the human mind were carried to bounds which have not been reached by the happiest labors of modern times. Though they were almost incessantly engaged in wars, they furnished those exquisite models in oratory, poetry and the fine arts, (the highest results of peace and security) which genius now viewing with wonder and admiration, but despairing to equal, sickens to behold. Yet, the histories of these great and fortunate nations are held up as the prompters of our insidious fears, when they should only serve to establish our confidence in that government, which hath been justly and eloquently called "this world's best hope!"—They know not how to value or enjoy a popular government, and I will consent to call no other a free government, who are dejected or disgusted by the occasional effervescence of its principles. Liberty, the last and best gift of God to his creatures, must be taken just as she is; you may pare her down into bashful regularity and shape her into a perfect model of theoretical sobriety, but she will be liberty no longer, and you must be content to suffer and die under the lash of a capricious, irascible and cruel tyranny, which you will have exchanged for the banner of freedom. (III) That banner is the glorious emblem of the day we celebrate—will you sacrifice it to ignoble and unfounded fears? No, you reply. No, will be the chorus of the whole United States—the grand symphony of the universe. Do you, then, fellow-citizens, do the duty of the present generation—transmit it unimpaired to your sons, and e'er some of the youth who now hear me shall go down to the grave, it will wave over an hundred millions of people, who will exclaim, with one enthusiastic burst of joy and thankfulness, in the spirit of their fathers, may it never be exchanged by folly or forfeited by vice, but flourishing and triumphing under it, may the liberties of this grateful and happy people be immortal!