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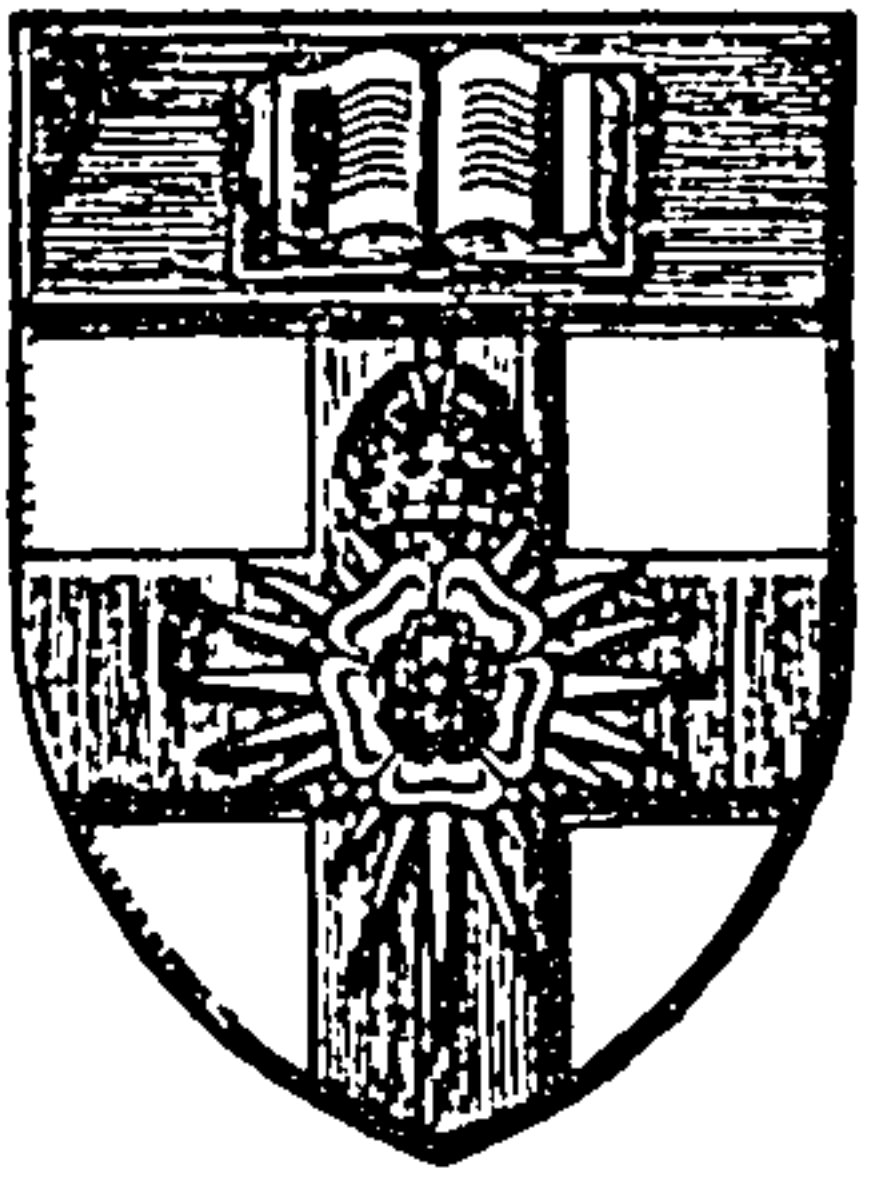

GOLDSMITHS' LIBRARY

AN

ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CITIZENS OF CHARLESTOWN

ON THE

FIFTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

Declaration of the Independence

OF

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

BY EDWARD EVERETT.

CHARLESTOWN:
WHEILDON AND RAYMOND.
BOSTON:
HILLIARD, GRAY, LITTLE AND WILKINS.
1828.

DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO WIT:

District Clerk's Office.

BE it remembered, that on the tenth day of July, A. D. 1823, and in the fifty third year of the Independence of the United States of America, Wheildon & Raymond, of the said District, have deposited in this office, the title of a book, the right whereof they claim as proprietors, in the words following, to wit:—

"An Oration delivered before the Citizens of Charlestown, on the fifty-second anniversary of the Declaration of the Independence of the United States of America. By Edward Everett."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned," and also to an Act, entitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, 'An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned;' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints."

JNO. W. DAVIS,

Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.

CHARLESTOWN:
From the Aurora Press—Wheildon and Raymond.

Charlestown, July 7, 1828.

At a meeting of the Committee of Arrangements for the celebration of the Fourth of July, it was

Voted, That Dr Abraham R. Thompson, and Mr David Devens be a Committee to present to the Hon. Edward Everett, the thanks of this Committee, in behalf of their fellow-citizens, for the Oration delivered by him, on the recent anniversary of our National Independence, and to request a copy of the same for the Press.

Attest—

WILLIAM W. WHEILDON, *Secretary.*

ORATION.

FELLOW-CITIZENS :

THE event, which we commemorate, is all important, not merely in our own annals, but in those of mankind. The sententious English poet has declared, that "the proper study of mankind is man ;" and of all inquiries, which have for their object the temporal concerns of our nature, unquestionably the history of our fellow beings is among the most interesting. But not all the chapters of human history are alike important. The annals of our race have been filled up with incidents, which concern not, or at least ought not to concern the great company of mankind. History, as it has often been written, is the genealogy of princes,—the field-book of conquerors,—and the fortunes of our fellow men have been treated, only so far as they have been affected by the influence of the great masters and destroyers of the race. Such history is, I will not say a worthless study, for it is necessary for us

to know the dark side, as well as the bright side of our condition. But it is a melancholy and heartless study, which fills the bosom of the philanthropist and the friend of liberty with sorrow.

But the History of Liberty,—the history of men struggling to be free,—the history of men who have acquired, and are exercising their freedom,—the history of those great movements in the world, by which liberty has been established, diffused, and perpetuated, form a subject, which we cannot contemplate too closely,—to which we cannot cling too fondly. This is the real history of man,—of the human family,—of rational, immortal beings.

This theme is *one*;—the *free* of all climes and nations, are themselves *a people*. Their annals are the history of freedom. Those who fell victims to their principles, in the civil convulsions of the short-lived republics of Greece, or who sunk beneath the power of her invading foes; those who shed their blood for liberty amidst the ruins of the Roman republic; the victims of Austrian tyranny in Switzerland, and of Spanish tyranny in Holland; the solitary champions or the united bands of high-minded and patriotic men, who have, in any region or age, struggled and suffered in this great cause, belong to that

PEOPLE OF THE FREE, whose fortunes and progress are the most noble theme which man can contemplate.

The theme belongs to us. We inhabit a country, which has been signalized in the great history of freedom. We live under institutions, more favorable to its diffusion, than any which the world has elsewhere known. A succession of incidents, of rare curiosity and almost mysterious connexion, has marked out America as the great theatre of political reform. Many circumstances stand recorded in our annals, connected with the assertion of human rights, which, were we not familiar with them, would fill even our own minds with amazement.

The theme belongs to the day. We celebrate the return of the day, on which our separate national existence was declared; the day when the momentous experiment was commenced, by which the world, and posterity, and we ourselves were to be taught, how far a nation of men can be trusted with self-government,—how far life, and liberty, and property are safe,—and the progress of social improvement secure, under the influence of laws, made by those who are to obey the laws; the day, when, for the first time in the world, a numerous people was ushered into the family of nations, organized on

the principle of the political equality of all the citizens.

Let us then, fellow-citizens, devote the time which has been set apart for this portion of the duties of the day, to a hasty review of the history of Liberty, especially to a contemplation of some of those astonishing incidents, which preceded, accompanied, or have followed the settlement of America, and the establishment of our institutions; and which plainly indicate a general tendency and co-operation of things, toward the erection, in this country, of the great monitorial school of human freedom.

We hear much in our early days of the liberty of Greece and Rome;—a great and complicated subject, which this is not the time nor the place to attempt to disentangle. True it is, that we find, in the annals of both these nations, bright examples of public virtue;—the record of faithful friends of their fellow men,—of strenuous foes of oppression at home or abroad;—and admirable precedents of popular strength. But we nowhere find in them the account of a populous country, blessed with institutions securing the enjoyment and transmission of regulated liberty. In freedom, as in most other things, the ancient nations, while they made surprisingly near approaches to the truth, yet for want of some one

great and essential principle or instrument, came utterly short of it, in practice. They had profound and elegant scholars, but for want of the art of printing, they could not send information out among the people, where alone it is of great use, in reference to human happiness. Some of them ventured boldly to sea, and possessed an aptitude for commerce, yet for want of the mariner's compass, they could not navigate distant oceans, but crept for ages along the shores of the Mediterranean. In freedom, they established popular institutions in single cities, but for want of the representative principle, they could not extend these institutions over a large and populous country. But, as a large and populous country, generally speaking, can alone possess strength enough for self-defence, this want was fatal. The freest of their cities, accordingly, fell a prey, sooner or later, to the invading army, either of a foreign tyrant or of a domestic traitor.

In this way, liberty made no firm progress in the ancient states. It was a speculation of the philosopher and an experiment of the patriot; but not a natural state of society. The patriots of Greece and Rome had indeed succeeded in enlightening the public mind, on one of the cardinal points of freedom, the necessity of an elected executive. The name and the office of a king

were long esteemed not only something to be rejected, but something rude and uncivilized, belonging to savage nations, ignorant of the rights of man, as understood in cultivated states. The word *tyrant*, which originally meant no more than *monarch*, was soon made, by the Greeks, synonimous with oppressor and despot, as it has continued ever since. When the first Cæsar made his encroachments on the liberties of Rome, the patriots even of that age, did boast that they had

——————"heard their fathers say,
"There was a Brutus once, that would have brooked
"The eternal devil, to keep his state in Rome,
"As easily as a King."

So deeply rooted was this horror of the very name of king in the bosom of the Romans, that under their worst tyrants, and in the darkest days, the forms of the republic were preserved. There was no name, under Nero and Caligula, for the office of monarch. The individual who filled the office was called Cæsar and Augustus, after the first and second of the line. The word *emperor*, implied no more than general. The offices of consul and tribune were kept up; although if the choice did not fall, as it frequently did, on the emperor, it was conferred on his favorite officer, and sometimes on his favorite horse. The senate continued to meet and affected to delibe-

rate; and in short, the empire began and continued a pure military despotism, engrafted by a sort of permanent usurpation, on the forms and names of the ancient republic. The spirit indeed of liberty had long since ceased to animate these ancient forms; and when the barbarous tribes of Central Asia and Northern Europe burst into the Roman Empire, they swept away the poor remnant of these forms, and established upon their ruins, the system of feudal monarchy, from which all the modern kingdoms are descended. Efforts were made, in the middle ages, by the petty republics of Italy, to regain the inherent rights, which a long prescription had wrested from them. But the remedy of bloody civil wars between neighboring cities, was plainly more disastrous than the disease of subjection. The struggles of freedom, in these little states, resulted much as they had done in Greece; exhibiting brilliant examples of individual character and short intervals of public prosperity, but no permanent progress in the organization of liberal institutions.

At length a new era seemed to begin. The art of printing was discovered. The capture of Constantinople, by the Turks, drove the learned christians of that city into Italy, and letters revived. A general agitation of public sentiment,

in various parts of Europe, ended in the religious reformation. A spirit of adventure had awakened in the maritime nations, and projects of remote discovery were started; and the signs of the times seemed to augur a great political regeneration. But, as if to blast this hope in its bud; as if to counterbalance at once the operation of these springs of improvement; as if to secure the permanence of the political slavery, which existed in every country of that part of the globe, at the moment when it was most threatened; the last blow at the same time was given to the remaining power of the Great Barons,—the sole check on the despotism of the monarch which the feudal system provided; and a new institution was firmly established in Europe, prompt, efficient and terrible in its operation, beyond anything which the modern world had seen,—I mean the system of standing armies;—in other words, a military force, organized and paid to support the king on his throne, and retain the people in their subjection.

From this moment, the fate of freedom in Europe was sealed. Something might be hoped from the amelioration of manners, in softening away the more barbarous parts of political despotism. But nothing was to be expected, in the form of liberal institutions, founded on principle.

The ancient and the modern forms of political servitude were thus combined. The Roman emperors, as I have hinted, maintained themselves simply by military force, in nominal accordance with the forms of the republic. Their power, (to speak in modern terms), was no part of the constitution even of their own times. The feudal sovereigns possessed a constitutional precedence in the state, which, after the diffusion of christianity, they claimed by the grace of God; but their power, in point of fact, was circumscribed by that of their brother barons. With the firm establishment of standing armies, was consummated a system of avowed despotism, transcending all forms of the popular will, existing by divine right, unbalanced by any effectual check in the state, and upheld by military power. It needs but a glance at the state of Europe, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, to see, that, notwithstanding the revival and diffusion of letters, the progress of the reformation, and the improvement of manners, the tone of the people, in the most enlightened countries, was more abject than it had been since the days of the Cæsars. England was certainly not the least free of all the countries in Europe, but who can patiently listen to the language with which Henry the VIII. chides, and Elizabeth

scolds the lords and commons of the Parliament of Great Britain.

All hope of liberty then seemed lost; in Europe all hope was lost. A disastrous turn had been given to the general movement of things; and in the disclosure of the fatal secret of standing armies, the future political servitude of man was apparently decided.

But a change is destined to come over the face of things, as romantic in its origin, as it is wonderful in its progress. All is not lost; on the contrary all is saved, at the moment, when all seemed involved in ruin. Let me just allude to the incidents, connected with this change, as they have lately been described, by an accomplished countryman, now beyond the sea.*

About half a league from the little sea-port of Palos, in the province of Andalusia, in Spain, stands a convent dedicated to St Mary. Sometime in the year 1486, a poor way-faring stranger, accompanied by a small boy, makes his appearance, on foot, at the gate of this convent, and begs of the porter a little bread and water for his child. This friendless stranger is COLUMBUS. Brought up in the hardy pursuit of a mariner, with no other relaxation from its toils, but that

* Irving's Life of Columbus.

of an occasional service in the fleets of his native country, with the burden of fifty years upon his frame, the unprotected foreigner makes his suit to the haughty sovereigns of Portugal and Spain. He tells them, that the broad flat earth on which we tread, is round ;—he proposes, with what seems a sacrilegious hand, to lift the veil which had hung, from the creation of the world, over the floods of the ocean ;—he promises, by a western course, to reach the eastern shores of Asia,—the region of gold, and diamonds, and spices ; to extend the sovereignty of christian kings over realms and nations hitherto unapproached and unknown ;—and ultimately to perform a new crusade to the holy land, and ransom the sepulchre of our Saviour, with the new found gold of the east.

Who shall believe the chimerical pretension ? The learned men examine it, and pronounce it futile. The royal pilots have ascertained by their own experience, that it is groundless. The priesthood have considered it, and have pronounced that sentence so terrific where the inquisition reigns, that it is a wicked heresy ;—the common sense, and popular feeling of men, have been roused first into disdainful and then into indignant exercise, toward a project, which, by a strange new chimera, represented one half of

mankind walking with their feet toward the other half.

Such is the reception which his proposal meets. For a long time, the great cause of humanity, depending on the discovery of these fair continents, is involved in the fortitude, perseverance, and spirit of the solitary stranger, already past the time of life, when the pulse of adventure beats full and high. If he sink beneath the indifference of the great, the sneers of the wise, the enmity of the mass, and the persecution of a host of adversaries, high and low, and give up the fruitless and thankless pursuit of his noble vision, what a hope for mankind is blasted! But he does not sink. He shakes off his paltry enemies, as the lion shakes the dew-drops from his mane. That consciousness of motive and of strength, which always supports the man who is worthy to be supported, sustains him in his hour of trial; and at length, after years of expectation, importunity, and hope deferred, he launches forth upon the unknown deep, to discover a new world, under the patronage of Ferdinand and Isabella.

The patronage of Ferdinand and Isabella!—Let us dwell for a moment on the auspices under which our country was brought to light. The patronage of Ferdinand and Isabella! Yes,

doubtless, they have fitted out a convoy, worthy the noble temper of the man, and the gallantry of his project. Convinced at length, that it is no daydream of a heated visionary, the fortunate sovereigns of Castile and Arragon, returning from their triumph over the last of the Moors, and putting a victorious close to a war of seven centuries' duration, have no doubt prepared an expedition of well appointed magnificence, to go out upon this splendid search for other worlds. They have made ready, no doubt, their proudest galleon, to waft the heroic adventurer upon his path of glory, with a whole armada of kindred spirits, to share his toils and honors.

Alas, from his ancient resort of Palos, which he first approached as a mendicant,—in three frail barks, of which two were without decks,—the great discoverer of America sails forth on the first voyage across the unexplored waters. Such is the patronage of kings. A few years pass by; he discovers a new hemisphere; the wildest of his visions fade into insignificance, before the reality of their fulfilment; he finds a new world for Castile and Leon, and comes back to Spain, loaded with iron fetters. Republics, it is said, are ungrateful;—such are the rewards of monarchs.

With this humble instrmmentality, did it

please Providence to prepare the theatre for those events, by which a new dispensation of liberty was to be communicated to man. But much is yet to transpire, before even the commencement can be made, in the establishment of those institutions, by which this great object in human happiness was to be effected. The discovery of America had taken place under the auspices of the government most disposed for maritime adventure, and best enabled to extend a helping arm, such as it was, to the enterprise of the great discoverer. But it was not from the same quarter, that the elements of liberty could be derived, to be introduced, expanded, and reared in the new world. Causes, upon which I need not dwell, made it impossible, that the great political reform should go forth from Spain. For this object, a new train of incidents, was preparing in another quarter.

The only real advances which modern Europe had made in freedom, had been made in England. The cause of liberty in that country was persecuted, was subdued; but not annihilated, nor trampled out of being. Out of the choicest of its suffering champions, were collected the brave bands of emigrants, who first went out on the second, the more precious voyage of discovery,—the discovery of a land, where liberty and its consequent blessings, might be established.

A late writer in the London Quarterly Review,* has permitted himself to say, that the original establishment of the United States, and that of the colony of Botany Bay, were pretty nearly modelled on the same plan. The meaning of this slanderous insinuation, is, that the United States were settled by deported convicts, in like manner as New South Wales has been settled by felons, whose punishment by death has been commuted into transportation. It is doubtless true, that, at one period, the English government was in the habit of condemning to hard labor as servants, in the colonies, a portion of those, who had received the sentence of the law. If this practice makes it proper to compare America with Botany Bay, the same comparison might be made of England herself, before the practice of transportation began, and even now; inasmuch as a large portion of her convicts, are held to labor, within her own bosom. In one sense, indeed, we might doubt whether the allegation were more of a reproach or a compliment. During the time that the colonization of America was going on the most rapidly, the best citizens of England,—if it be any part of good citizenship to resist oppression,—were

* For January 1828.

immured in her prisons of state, or lying at the mercy of the law.*

Such were the convicts by which America was settled. Men convicted of fearing God, more than they feared man; of sacrificing property, ease, and all the comforts of life, to a sense of duty, and the dictates of conscience:—men convicted of pure lives, brave hearts, and simple manners. The enterprize was led by RALEIGH, the chivalrous convict, who unfortunately believed that his royal master had the heart of a man, and would not let a sentence of death, which had slumbered for sixteen years, revive and take effect, after so long an interval of employment and favor. But *nullum tempus occurrit regi.* The felons who followed next, were the heroic and long suffering church of ROBINSON, at Leyden,—CARVER, BREWSTER, BRADFORD, and their pious associates, convicted of worshipping God according to the dictates of their consciences, and of giving up all,—country, property, and the tombs of their fathers,—that they might do so, unmolested. Not content with having driven the puritans from her soil, England next enacted, or put in force, the oppressive laws, which colonized Maryland with

*See Mr Walsh's "United States and Great Britain," Sec. II.

Catholics, and Pennsylvania with Quakers. Nor was it long before the American plantations were recruited by the Germans, convicted of inhabiting the Palatinate, when the merciless armies of Louis XIV. were turned into that devoted region; and by the Huguenots, convicted of holding what they deemed the simple truth of christianity, when it pleased the mistress of Louis XIV. to be very zealous for the Catholic faith. These were followed, in the next age, by the Highlanders, convicted of loyalty to their hereditary prince, on the plains of Culloden; and the Irish, convicted of supporting the rights of their country, against an oppressive external power. Such are the convicts by whom America was settled.

In this way, whatsoever was really valuable in European character, the resolute industry of one nation, the inventive skill and curious arts of another, the lofty enterprise of another,—the courage, conscience, principle, self-denial of all, were winnowed out, by the policy of the prevailing governments, little knowing what they did, as a precious seed, wherewith to plant the soil of America. By this singular coincidence of events, our beloved country was constituted the great asylum of suffering virtue and oppressed humanity. It could now no longer be said—as it was

of the Roman Empire,—that mankind were shut up, as if in a vast prison-house, from whence there was no escape. The political and ecclesiastical oppressors of the world, allowed their persecution to find a limit, at the shores of the Atlantic. They scarce ever attempted to pursue their victims beyond its protecting waters. It is plain that, in this way alone, the design of Providence could be accomplished, which provided for the erection of one Catholic school of freedom, in the western hemisphere. For it must not be a freedom of too sectional and peculiar a cast. On the stock of the English civilization, as the general basis, were to be engrafted the languages, the arts, and the tastes of the other civilized nations. A tie of consanguinity must connect the members of every family of Europe, with some portion of our happy land; so that in all their trials and disasters, they may look safely beyond the ocean, for a refuge. The victims of power, of intolerance, of war, of disaster, in every other part of the world, must feel, that they may find a kindred home, within our limits. Kings, whom the perilous convulsions of the day have shaken from their thrones, must find a safe retreat; and the needy emigrant must at least not fail of his bread and water, were it only for the sake of the great discoverer, who was himself

obliged to beg them. On this corner stone the temple of our freedom was laid from the first ;

" For here the exile met, from every clime,
" And spoke in friendship, every distant tongue ;
" Men, from the blood of warring Europe sprung,
" Were here divided by the running brook."

This peculiarity of our population, which some have thought a misfortune, is in reality one of the happiest features of the American character. Without it, there would have been no obvious means of introducing a new school of civilization into the world. Had we been the unmixed descendants of any one nation of Europe, we should have retained a moral and intellectual dependence on that nation, even after the dissolution of our political connexion should have taken place. It was sufficient for the great purposes in view, that the earliest settlements were made by men, who had fought the battles of liberty in England, and who brought with them the rudiments of constitutional freedom, to a region, where no deep-rooted prescriptions would prevent their developement. Instead of marring the symmetry of our social system, it is one of its most attractive and beautiful peculiarities, that, with the prominent qualities of the Anglo-Saxon character, inherited from the English settlers, we have an admixture of almost everything that is valua-

ble in the character of most of the other states of Europe.

Such was the first preparation for the great political reform, of which America was to be the theatre. The colonies of England,—of a country, where the sanctity of laws and the constitution is professedly recognized,—the North American colonies, were protected, from the first, against the introduction of the unmitigated despotism, which prevailed in the Spanish settlements;—the continuance of which, down to the moment of their late revolt, prevented the education of those provinces, in the exercise of political rights; and, in that way, has thrown them into the revolution, inexperienced and unprepared,—victims, some of them, of a domestic anarchy, scarcely less grievous than the foreign yoke they have thrown off. While, however, the settlers of America brought with them the principles and feelings—the political habits and temper—which defied the encroachments of arbitrary power, and made it necessary, when they were to be oppressed,—that they should be oppressed under the forms of law; it was a necessary consequence of the state of things,—a result perhaps of the very nature of a colonial government,—that they should be thrown into a position of controversy with the mother country; and thus become fa-

miliar with the whole energetic doctrine and discipline of resistance. This formed and hardened the temper of the colonists, and trained them up to a spirit, meet for the conflict of separation.

On the other hand, by what I had almost called the accidental circumstance, but which ought rather to be considered as a leading incident in the great train of events, connected with the establishment of constitutional freedom in this country, it came to pass, that nearly all the colonies—founded as they were on the charters, granted to corporate institutions, in England, which had for their object, the pursuit of those branches of industry and trade, pertinent to a new plantation,—adopted a regular representative system; by which,—as in ordinary civil corporations.—the affairs of the community are decided by the will and voices of its members, or those authorized by them. It was no device of the parent governments, which gave us our colonial assemblies. It was no refinement of philosophical statesmen, to which we are indebted for our republican institutions of government. They grew up, as it were, by accident, on the simple foundation I have named. "A house of burgesses," says Hutchinson, "broke out in Virginia, in 1620;" and "although there was no color for it in the charter of Massachusetts, a house of

deputies appeared suddenly in 1634." "Lord Say," observes the same historian, "tempted the principal men of Massachusetts, to make themselves and their heirs, nobles and absolute governors of a new colony, but under this plan, they could find no people to follow them."

At this early period, and in this simple, unpretending manner, was introduced to the world, that greatest discovery in political science, or political practice, a representative republican system. "The discovery of the system of the representative republic," says M. de Chateaubriand, "is one of the greatest political events that ever occurred." But it is not *one* of the greatest, it is the very greatest;—and combined with another principle, to which I shall presently advert, and which is also the invention of the United States, it marks an era in human things;—a discovery in the great science of social happiness compared with which, everything, that terminates in the temporal interests of man, sinks into insignificance.

Thus then was the foundation laid, thus was the preparation commenced, of the grand political regeneration. For about a century and a half, this preparation was carried on. Without any of the temptations, which drew the Spanish adventurers to Mexico and Peru, the colonies

throve almost beyond example, and in the face of neglect, contempt, and persecution. Their numbers, in the substantial middle classes of life, increased with singular rapidity. There were no prerogatives to invite an aristocracy, no vast establishments to attract the indigent.—There was nothing but the rewards of labor and the hope of freedom.

But at length this hope, never adequately satisfied, began to turn into doubt and despair. The colonies had become too important to be overlooked;—their government was a prerogative too important to be left in their own hands;—and the legislation of the mother country decidedly assumed a form, which announced to the patriots, that the hour at length had come, when the chains of the great discoverer were to be avenged; the sufferings of the first settlers to be compensated; and the long deferred hopes of humanity were to be fulfilled.

You need not, friends and fellow-citizens, that I should dwell upon the incidents of the last great act in the colonial drama. This very place was the scene of some of the earliest, and the most memorable of them;—their recollection is a part of the inheritance of honor, which you have received from your fathers. In the early councils, and first struggles of the great revolu-

tionary enterprize, the citizens of this place were among the most prominent. The measures of resistance which were projected by the patriots of Charlestown, were opposed but by one individual. An active co-operation existed between the political leaders in Boston and this place. The beacon light, which was kindled in the towers of Christ Church, in Boston, on the night of the eighteenth, was answered from the steeple of the church, in which we are now assembled. The intrepid messenger, who was sent forward to convey to HANCOCK and ADAMS the intelligence of the approach of the British troops, was furnished with a horse, for his eventful errand, by a respected citizen of this place. At the close of the following momentous day, the British forces,—the remnant of its disastrous events,—found refuge, under the shades of night, upon the heights of Charlestown ;—and there, on the ever memorable seventeenth of June, that great and costly sacrifice, in the cause of freedom, was awfully consummated with fire and blood. Your hill-tops were strewed with the illustrious dead ; your peaceful homes were wrapped in devouring flames ; the fair fruits of a century and a half of civilized culture, were reduced to a heap of bloody ashes ;—and two thousand men, women, and children, turned

houseless upon the world. With the exception of the ravages of the nineteenth of April, the chalice of woe and desolation, was in this manner, first presented to the lips of the citizens of Charlestown; and they were called upon, at that early period, to taste of its extreme bitterness. Thus devoted, as it were, to the cause, it is no wonder that the spirit of the revolution should have taken possession of their bosoms, and been transmitted to their children. The American, who, in any part of the union, could forget the scenes and the principles of the revotion, would thereby prove himself unworthy of the blessings, which he enjoys; but the citizen of Charlestown, who could be cold on this momentous theme, must hear a voice of reproach from the walls, which were reared on the ashes of the seventeenth of June; a cry from the very sods of the sacred hill, where our fathers shed their blood.

The revolution was at length accomplished. The political separation of the country from Great Britain, was effected; and it now remained to organize the liberty, which had been reaped on bloody fields;—to establish, in the place of the government, whose yoke had been thrown off, a government at home, which should fulfil the great design of the revolution, and sat-

isfy the demands of the friends of liberty at large. What manifold perils awaited the step! The danger was incalculable, that too little or too much would be done. Smarting under the oppressions of a government, of which the residence was remote, and the spirit alien to their feelings, there was great danger, that the colonies, in the act of declaring themselves sovereign and independent states, would push to an extreme the prerogative of their separate independence, and refuse to admit any authority. beyond the limits of the particular commonwealths which they severally constituted. On the other hand, achieving their independence beneath the banners of the continental army, ascribing, and justly, no small portion of their success, to the personal qualities of the beloved Father of his Country, there was danger not less eminent, that those, who perceived the evils of the opposite extreme, would be inclined to confer too much strength on one general government; and would, perhaps, even fancy the necessity of investing the hero of the revolution, in form, with that sovereign power, which his personal ascendancy gave him in the hearts of his country. Such and so critical was the alternative, which the organization of the new government presented, and on the successful issue of

which, the entire benefit of this great movement in human affairs, was to depend.

The first effort to solve the great problem, was made in the progress of the revolution, and was without success. The articles of confederation verged to the extreme of an union too weak for its great purposes; and the moment the pressure of the war was withdrawn, the inadequacy of this first project of a government was felt. The United States found themselves overwhelmed with debt, without the means of paying it. Rich in the materials of an extensive commerce, they found their ports crowded with foreign ships, and themselves without the power to raise a revenue. Abounding in all the elements of national wealth, they wanted resources, to defray the ordinary expenses of government.

For a moment, and to the hasty observer, this last effort for the establishment of freedom, had failed. No fruit had sprung from this lavish expenditure of treasure and blood. We had changed the powerful protection of the mother country, into a cold and jealous amity, if not into a slumbering hostility. The oppressive principles, against which our fathers had struggled, were succeeded by more oppressive realities. The burden of the British navigation-act was removed, but it was followed by the impossibil-

ity of protecting our shipping, by a navigation-law of our own. A state of general prosperity, existing before the revolution, was succeeded by universal exhaustion ;—and a high and indignant tone of militant patriotism, into universal despondency.

It remained then to give its last great effect to all that had been done, since the discovery of America, to establish the cause of liberty in the western hemisphere, and by another more deliberate effort, to organize a government, by which, not only the present evils, under which the country was suffering, should be remedied, but the final design of Providence should be fulfilled. Such was the task, which devolved on the council of sages, who assembled at Philadelphia, on the second Monday of May, 1787, of which, General Washington was elected President, and over whose debates your townsman, Mr Gorham, presided, as chairman of the committee of the whole, during the discussion of the plan of the federal constitution.

The very first step to be taken, was one of pain and regret. The old confederation was to be given up. What misgivings and grief must not this preliminary sacrifice have occasioned to the patriotic members of the convention ! They were attached, and with reason, to its simple ma-

jesty. It was weak then, but it had been strong enough to carry the colonies through the storms of the revolution. Some of the great men, who led up the forlorn hope of their country, in the hour of her dearest peril, had died in its defence. Its banner over us had been not love alone, but triumph and joy. Could not a little inefficiency be pardoned to a Union, with which France had made an alliance, and England had made peace? Could the proposed new government do more or better things than this had done? And above all, when the flag of the old thirteen was struck, which had never been struck in battle, who could give assurance, that the hearts of the people could be rallied to another banner?

Such were the misgivings of some of the great men of that day,—the Henrys, the Gerrys, and other eminent anti-federalists, to whose scruples, it is time that justice should be done. They were the sagacious misgivings of wise men, the just forebodings of brave men; who were determined not to defraud posterity of the blessings, for which they had all suffered, and for which some of them had fought.

The members of that convention, in going about the great work before them, deliberately laid aside the means, by which all preceding legislators, had aimed to accomplish a like work.

In founding a strong and efficient government, adequate to the raising up of a powerful and prosperous people, their first step was, to reject the institutions to which other governments traced their strength and prosperity. The world had settled down into the sad belief, that a hereditary monarch was necessary to give strength to the executive. The framers of our constitution provided for an elective chief magistrate, chosen every four years. Every other country had been betrayed into the admission of a distinction of ranks in society, under the absurd impression, that privileged orders are necessary to the permanence of the social system. The framers of our constitution, established everything, on the pure natural basis of an uniform equality of the elective franchise, to be exercised by all the citizens, at fixed and short intervals. In other countries, it had been thought necessary to constitute some one political centre, toward which all political power should tend, and at which, in the last resort, it should be exercised. The framers of the constitution devised a scheme of confederate and representative sovereign republics, united on a happy distribution of powers, which, reserving to the separate states all the political functions, essential to the public peace and private justice, —bestowed upon the general government, those

and those only, required for the service of the whole.

Thus was completed the great revolutionary movement; thus was perfected that mature organization of a free system, destined to stand forever as the examplar of popular government. Thus was discharged the duty of our fathers to themselves, to the country, to the world.

The example thus set up, in the eyes of the nations, was instantly and widely felt. It was immediately made visible to sagacious observers, that a constitutional age had begun. It was in the nature of things, that, where the former evil existed in its most inveterate form, the reaction should also be the most violent. Hence the dreadful excesses, that marked the progress of the French revolution, and for a while, almost made the name of liberty odious. But it is not less in the nature of things, that, when the most indisputable and enviable political blessings stand illustrated before the world,—not merely in speculation and in theory, but in living practice and bright example,—the nations of the earth, in proportion as they have eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hands to grasp, should insist on imitating the example. Imitate it they have, and imitate they will. France clung to the hope of constitutional liberty through thirty years of appalling

tribulation, and now enjoys the freest Constitution in Europe. Spain, Portugal, the two Italian Kingdoms, and several of the German States have entered on the same path. Their progress has been and must be various; modified by circumstances; by the interests and passions of Governments and men, and in some cases seemingly arrested. But their march is as sure as fate. If we believe at all in the political revival of Europe, there can be no really retrograde movement in this cause, and that which seems so, in the revolutions of government, is like those of the heavenly bodies, a part of their eternal orbit.

There can be no retreat, for the great examplar must stand, to convince the hesitating nations, under every reverse, that the reform they strive at, is practicable, is real, is within their reach. Institutions may fluctuate; they may be pushed onward, as they were in France, to a premature simplicity, and fall back to a similitude of the ancient forms. But there is an element of popular strength abroad in the world, stronger than forms and institutions, and daily growing in power. A public opinion of a new kind has arisen among men,—the opinion of the civilized world. Springing into existence on the shores of our own continent, it has grown with our growth and strengthened with our strength;

till now, this moral giant, like that of the ancient poet, marches along the earth and across the ocean, but his front is among the stars. The course of the day does not weary, nor the darkness of night arrest him. He grasps the pillars of the temple where oppression sits enthroned, not groping and benighted, like the strong man of old, to be crushed himself beneath the fall; but trampling, in his strength, on its massy ruins.

Under the influence, I might almost say the unaided influence, of public opinion, formed and nourished by our example, three wonderful revolutions have broken out in a generation. That of France, not yet consummated, has left that country, (which it found in a condition scarcely better than Turkey), in the possession of the blessings of a representative constitutional government. Another revolution has emancipated the American possessions of Spain, by an almost unassisted action of moral causes. Nothing but the strong sense of the age, that a government like that of Ferdinand ought not to subsist, over regions like those which stretch to the South of us, on the continent, could have sufficed to bring about their emancipation, against all the obstacles, which the state of society among them, opposes at present, to regulated liberty and safe independence. When Mr Canning said of the emancipa-

tion of these States, that "He had called into existence a new world in the West," he spoke as wisely as the artist, who, having tipped the forks of a conductor with silver, should boast that he had created the lightning, which it calls down from the clouds. But the greatest triumph of public opinion is the revolution of Greece. The spontaneous sense of the friends of liberty at home and abroad,—without armies, without navies, without concert, and acting only through the simple channels of ordinary communication, principally the press, has rallied the governments of Europe to this ancient and favored soil of freedom. Pledged to remain at peace, they have been driven, by the force of public sentiment, into the war. Leagued against the cause revolution, as such, they have been compelled to send their armies and navies, to fight the battles of revolt. Dignifying the barbarous oppressor of christian Greece, with the title of "ancient and faithful ally," they have been constrained, by the outraged feeling of the civilized world, to burn up, in time of peace, the navy of their ally, with all his antiquity and all his fidelity; and to cast the broad shield of the Holy Alliance over a young and turbulent republic.

This bright prospect may be clouded in; the powers of Europe, which have reluctantly taken.

may speedily abandon the field. Some inglorious composition may yet save the Ottoman empire from dissolution, at the sacrifice of the liberty of Greece, and the power of Europe. But such are not the indications of things. The prospect is fair, that the political regeneration, which commenced in the West, is now going backward to resuscitate the once happy and long deserted regions of the older world. The hope is not now chimerical, that those lovely islands, the flower of the Levant,—the shores of that renowned sea, around which all the associations of antiquity are concentrated, are again to be brought back to the sway of civilization and christianity. Happily the interest of the great powers of Europe seem to beckon them onward in the path of humanity. The half deserted coasts of Syria and Egypt, the fertile but almost desolated Archipelago, the empty shores of Africa, the granary of ancient Rome, seem to offer themselves as a ready refuge for the crowded, starving, discontented millions of Western Europe. No natural nor political obstacle opposes itself to their occupation. France has long cast a wistful eye on Egypt. Napoleon derived the idea of his expedition, which was set down to the unchastened ambition of a revolutionary soldier, from a memoir found in the cabinet of Louis

XVI. England has already laid her hand, an arbitrary but a civilized and christian hand, on Malta and the Ionian Isles, and Cyprus, Rhodes and Candia must soon follow,—while it is not beyond the reach of hope, that a representative republic may be established in Central Greece and the adjacent islands. In this way, and with the example of what has here been done, to extend the reign of civilization and freedom, it is not too much to anticipate, that many generations will not pass, before the same benignant influence will revisit the awakened east, and thus fulfil, in the happiest sense, the vision of COLUMBUS, by restoring a civilized population to the primitive seats of our holy faith.

Fellow-Citizens, the eventful pages in the volume of human fortune, are opening upon us, with sublime rapidity of succession. It is two hundred years this summer, since a few of that party, who in 1628, commenced, in Salem, the first settlement of Massachusetts, were sent by Governor Endicott, to explore the spot, where we stand. They found that one pioneer, of the name of WALFORD, had gone before them, in the march of civilization, and had planted himself among the numerous and warlike savages in this quarter. From them, the native lords of the soil, these first hardy adventurers derived their

title to the lands, on which they settled; and by the arts of civilization and peace, opened the way for the main body of the colonists of Massachusetts, under Governor WINTHROP, who two years afterwards, by a coincidence which you will think worth naming, arrived in Mystic River, and pitched his patriarchal tent, on Ten Hills, upon the *seventeenth day of June*, 1630. Massachusetts, at that moment, consisted of six huts at Salem, and one at this place. It seems but a span of time, as the mind ranges over it. A venerable individual is living, at the seat of the first settlement, whose life covers one half of the entire period: but what a destiny has been unfolded before our country!—what events have crowded your annals!—what scenes of thrilling interest and eternal glory have signalized the very spot where we stand!

In that unceasing march of things, which calls forward the successive generations of men to perform their part on the stage of life, we at length are summoned to appear. Our fathers have passed their hour of visitation;—how worthily, let the growth and prosperity of our happy land, and the security of our firesides, attest. Or if this appeal be too weak to move us, let the eloquent silence of yonder venerated heights,—let the column, which is there rising in simple ma-

jesty, recall their venerated forms, as they toiled, in the hasty trenches, through the dreary watches of that night of expectation, heaving up the sods, where they lay in peace and in honor, ere the following sun had set. The turn has come to us. The trial of adversity was theirs: the trial of prosperity is ours. Let us meet it as men who know their duty, and prize their blessings. Our position is the most enviable, the most responsible, which men can fill. If this generation does its duty, the cause of constitutional freedom is safe. If we fail: if we fail;—not only do we defraud our children of the inheritance which we received from our fathers, but we blast the hopes of the friends of liberty throughout our continent, throughout Europe, throughout the world, to the end of time.

History is not without her examples of hard fought fields, where the banner of liberty has floated triumphantly on the wildest storm of battle. She is without her examples of a people, by whom the dear-bought treasure has been wisely employed and safely handed down. The eyes of the world are turned for that example to us. It is related by an ancient historian,* of that Brutus who slew Cæsar, that he threw himself on his sword, after the disastrous battle

* Deo Cassius, lib. XLVII. in fin.

of Phillippi, with the bitter exclamation, that he had followed virtue as a substance, but found it a name. It is not too much to say, that there are, at this moment, noble spirits in the elder world, who are anxiously watching the march of our institutions, to learn whether liberty, as they have been told, is a mockery, a pretence, and a curse, or a blessing, for which it becomes them to brave the rack, the scaffold, and the scimitar.

Let us then, as we assemble, on the birthday of the nation, as we gather upon the green turf, once wet with precious blood, let us devote ourselves to the sacred cause of constitutional liberty. Let us abjure the interests and passions, which divide the great family of American freemen. Let the rage of party spirit sleep today. Let us resolve, that our children shall have cause to bless the memory of their fathers, as we have cause to bless the memory of ours.