

ORATION

DELIVERED

IN CHARLESTOWN,

IN

VIRGINIA,

ON THE FOURTH OF JULY,

1805;

BY FERDINANDO FAIRFAX.

WITH A FEW ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS,
MADE SOON AFTER.

—:—
WASHINGTON:

PRINTED BY R. C. WEIGHTMAN.

.....

1808.

District of Columbia, to wit:

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the sixteenth day of January, in the thirty second year of American independence, Ferdinando Fairfax, of Jefferson county, Virginia, hath deposited in this office, the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as author, in the words following, to wit: “**ORATION** delivered in Charlestown, in Virginia, “on the fourth of July, 1805. By Ferdinando Fairfax. “With a few alterations and additions, made soon after.” In conformity to the act of 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 time “therein mentioned.”

[SEAL.]

WM. BRENT,

*Clerk of the Circuit Court of the district
of Columbia, for the county of Wash-
ington.*

AN ORATION.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS!

THIS is a day, sacred to memory, and to feeling. Whilst, by aiding your recollections of the *past*, I would heighten your enjoyment of the *present*; it is not a little gratifying to me, to know, that my respectable auditory is predisposed to enter into the sensations which belong to the occasion.

Delightfully sensible of the blessings we possess, in this favored land of freedom; our minds naturally look back, to the causes and instruments of such distinguished national happiness—in the events of our revolution. This retrospect fills our hearts, with the mingled emotions, of generous regret for the deep-felt suffer-

ings of our country, at that dreary period; love and veneration for those, who nobly despised every personal loss and danger, to procure for us our present felicity; and humble gratitude to the giver of all good. And, when we behold, in boundless prospect, the magnificent effects of that glorious event, in the future greatness of this nation of freemen, and in its influence on the general happiness of man; our minds are expanded with the noblest sentiments, the most sublime conceptions, of which they are capable!

The emotions peculiar to the occasion, are, indeed, sweet and heavenly: but it is from your recollections of events, in which some of you did personally participate—your fervor of feeling—that my deficiencies must be supplied. I am desirous that the humble orator of the day, may, thro' your kind indulgence, be enabled to lose, in the superior importance of his subject, all those personal considerations, which

might still more unfit him, for this his *first* public exhibition. Thus shall his task (equally new and unsolicited on his part) be yet—not unpleasant.

Upon this national commemoration, which annually employs the best writers, and the ablest orators of these states, little *new* remains to be said. The most obvious path, hath been much trodden; and the numerous passengers who have preceded me, have gathered in their route, both the fruits and the flowers which hung within reach. They have culled the choicest topics, and the handsomest ornaments of style, which the occasion affords. If, then, to obtain the necessary refreshment, for myself and the friends who accompany me, I should, now and then, deviate a little from the beaten track, I hope to be excused: and should I, unwittingly, pick up a sprig or a blossom which had been gathered by another, you will not be surprized. Knowing, how-

ever, that your tastes are truly American, I promise to offer you nothing unpalatable.

It accords not with the spirit of this festival, or with my own feelings, to *detail* the incidents of the revolution. From the orator you will not expect the method of the historian—even in epitome. It is *his* province, to catch and to exhibit, in strong lights, and sometimes in glowing colours, the distinguishing features of the events which he would describe : but you have a right to expect that what he does exhibit, and the inferences and principles which he deduces, shall be conformable to fact, and agreeable to nature and experience. This task, however conscious of incompetence to its proper execution, I must attempt.

When, by ceaseless exertion of enterprise and industry, the British colonies on this continent began to attract, the avarice and ambition—not the affection—of

the mother country; she commenced what were called, by her ministers of the day, her protecting measures. She supplied them liberally, with governors and other officers; and although she had not afforded them, in their infancy, when most required, military aid against the savage foe of their frontiers; yet, when it became useful, to humble the pride or curtail the power of her old enemy, France, *this* also, was furnished. It served, likewise, the secret purpose, of increasing the patronage and influence of the ministry—for views which were afterwards developed.

The monopolizing spirit of Britain, had restricted our commerce to a narrow channel, and discountenanced our manufactures; and under the specious pretence of regulating trade, and the department of the post-office, actually derived from us a disposable revenue.

It is the property of ambition to en-

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available

Englishman—and established by the revolution in that country, almost a century before! What though those rights and privileges were, at every stage of these unjust encroachments, set forth and claimed by the colonists, in terms the most respectful, the most moving, and the most convincing? We all know, who are acquainted with the history of the British government,—indeed it is not attempted to be denied by her best informed subjects—that the prime minister, so long as he avoids palpable loss or disgrace to the individual members, can carry in the parliament what measure he pleases. The boasted representation of that people is a mockery of the good sense of the world. It is a skreen, behind which the secret movements of the minister are ill concealed: whilst, by the allurements of a wide-spread system of corruption, (with a security and a freedom from responsibility, unknown in an absolute monarchy,)

he heaps burthensome debts upon the groaning nation ; adds tax to tax, till ingenuity itself is exhausted of its devices, for draining the sources of domestic ease and comfort ; and, under pretence of defending the people from foreign aggression, which *he* has wantonly provoked, strips them, one by one, of their rights and liberties.

It is this sinister influence of an aspiring ministry, in a venal and ill-constituted government, which must explain the iniquity and folly of the parliamentary measures of that period. How, else, shall we account for their disregard of all those considerations, of honor, interest, and policy, which ever actuate a sensible and generous people—such as those of England &c.—when acting for themselves?—Did national glory engage their regard?—This was most effectually to be secured by augmenting the population and improvement of her colonies, by every

possible encouragement. Already had they, in spite of *discouragement*, made an advancement unprecedented, in population, agriculture, and commerce: and, in the late war with France, had demonstrated the importance of their aid in the common cause; and manifested their disposition, if applied to through their own representatives, to pay all expenses necessary to their defence. Did a liberal view of interest govern? The commerce with America was becoming the most considerable in magnitude, of any that England was engaged in; and, under existing regulations—not then complained of—was unequalled in profit, to the mother country. Did true policy prevail? This would have dictated the cherishing of all those national and individual advantages, even by extending to the colonists, indulgences not allowed to the inhabitants of the mother country;—and much more would it have preserved to them, privileges which

were common to both. But what people would have been indifferent, or insensible, to the *peculiar* ties which connected the inhabitants of these provinces with those of Great Britain?—Were we not their brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters? and ought not those feelings which belong to the tender charities of life, to have superseded the necessity of an appeal, on our part, to their justice, or generosity? On the *true* representatives of such a people, would the awful warning of the heaven-inspired Chatham have been lost? No.—Whilst, with the convincing energy of intuitive intelligence, he pointed out the true path of policy and of national honor; whilst his hearers regarded, with deep attention, the great considerations and weighty motives, which he urged; whilst their ravished ears drank with delight the copious stream of eloquence which flowed from his lips;—their hearts, touched with the electric fire of his genius, would have

yielded a sweet assent to justice and to truth: and, in harmonious accord, they would have united, in the steady purpose and pursuit—of measures, magnanimous, wise, and humane.

But the British parliament were *not* the true representatives of the nation. They therefore entered into the ministerial system of exaction and encroachment,—against the most loyal and faithful subjects of the crown. And are we not warranted, from our knowledge of human nature, to believe, that the actors under this system, being individually free from even the *semblance* of responsibility, in what regarded us; were influenced by the consideration, that they might, with impunity, lay their hands upon our wealth? Like the robber, they determined to seize the booty, without regard to the owner: “Feeling power, they forgot right.”

I cannot, perhaps, offer you, in this place, any thing more acceptable, than

a short quotation from the memorable speech of colonel Barre, of the house of commons, in the debate on the stamp-act: which presented a just view of the measures of administration relative to the colonies (applicable, alike, to each of their attempts at taxation); and was remarkably prophetic of their consequences. Taking up the concluding words of the minister, he thus proceeds: “ *They planted by your care!* No, your oppressions planted them in America.— They fled from your tyranny, to a then uncultivated and inhospitable country, where they exposed themselves to almost all the hardships to which human nature is liable; and, among others, to the cruelties of a savage foe, the most subtle, and, I will take upon me to say, the most formidable upon the face of the earth. And yet, actuated by principles of true English liberty, they met all hardships with pleasure, compared with what they had suf-

ferred in their own country, from the hands of those who should have been their friends. ‘*They nourished by your indulgence*’! They grew by your neglect of them. As soon as you began to care about them, that care was exercised in sending persons to rule them in one department or another, (who were, perhaps, the deputies of deputies to some members of this house) sent to spy out their liberties, to misrepresent their actions, and to prey upon them.—Men, whose behavior, on many occasions, has caused the blood of those *sons of liberty* to recoil within them;—men promoted to the highest seats of justice; some of whom, to my knowledge, were glad, by going to a distant country, to escape being brought to the bar of justice in their own. ‘*They protected by your arms*’! They have nobly taken up arms in *your* defence; have exerted a distinguished valour, amidst their constant and laborious in-

dustry, for the defence of a country, whose frontier was drenched in blood, whilst its interior yielded all its little savings to *your* emolument. And, believe me—remember I this day told you so—the same spirit of freedom which actuated that people at first, will accompany them still :—but prudence forbids me to explain myself further. God knows, I do not at this time speak from motives of party heat :—what I deliver are the genuine sentiments of my heart. However superior to me, in general knowledge and experience, the respectable body of this house may be, yet I claim to know more of America than most of you—having seen and been conversant in, that country. The people are, I believe, as truly loyal as any subjects the king has ; but a people who are jealous of their liberties, and will vindicate them, if ever they should be violated :—But the subject is too delicate :—I will say no more.”

The stamp-act was passed ; and preparations were made, to carry it into execution : against which, the murmuring discontent of the colonists, would have proved equally unavailing, as had been their remonstrances. But the “*sons of liberty*” were roused. They sounded an alarm through this continent. Committees were appointed in the several colonies, to correspond with each other, and to concert measures of redress. They formed associations against the importation of goods from England ; and adopted other plans, too formidable, not to command attention from the ministry. Even their minions in this country advised to lenient measures ;—and the law was repealed.

But the spirit of inquiry, the renewed attachment to liberty, and the experimental knowledge, acquired by our citizens, of the efficacy of union and concert— which this foolish measure procured ;—

croach with power ; and it was not long before the ministry of England, avowed their intention of taxing the colonies. In the course of ten years, several successive attempts were made, by acts of parliament, to draw from the pockets of our industrious citizens, the hard-earned pittance of their exertions ; to be applied—how?—lavished on courtiers and favorites, who, on removal to this country, would be zealous promoters of the *further* designs of the ministry, upon our inestimable rights.

What availed it, that these attempts not only were palpably contrary to the chartered rights of the colonies ; but manifestly tended to involve and to sweep away, in the vortex of ministerial ambition and power, the known and acknowledged privileges of British subjects?—privileges which, though often contended against by the kings of England, had been defined by the great charter—the boast of every

long remained. This result of experience, furnished the ready self-defensive weapons, for parrying other similar blows, which were successively aimed at the vital existence of liberty in these states. The government of England, in grasping at uncontrolled power, furnished the colonists with means, successfully to contend against that, which they had before suffered to be exercised, without dispute. The people began to see the evil of being controlled, by any law whatever, of a body, in which their feelings, wishes, and interests, were not represented: and they felt the pernicious influence of spies and informers, in procuring from that body, by means of false or partial statements, the most injurious regulations, and the most destructive restrictions. They questioned the authority of parliament over them, in any case whatever: and a few discerning spirits—caught a *distant* glimmer of the glory of INDEPENDENCE.

By the feeling of injury, our people were roused to the contemplation of political rights; to an investigation of the origin and just extent of the powers of government. Whatever knowledge, upon this subject, the best informed men amongst them, had derived from history and from political writers, had been merely theoretical, and, until this time, had lain dormant. But the menacing pretensions of their rulers, called it forth; and, through the medium of common interest and common feeling, procured for it a welcome reception, in every patriotic bosom. Thus was formed a new school of statesmen in this western world; thus became practical, the theory of a just and free constitution of political society: and thus was laid the foundation—not of a war only; but of a grand revolution; which the philosophers of the old world might contemplate, with wonder and delight.

Not deterred, but rendered more cunning and cautious, by defeat, the British ministry projected other schemes, for the subjugation of the colonies. Various was their complexion, and various the means employed to give them success; but the insidious design of establishing the supremacy of parliament, was visible in each: and the jealousy of the people was too vigilant, to suffer their discernment to sleep. The former associations were renewed: and several of those ministerial schemes, were, after a short experiment, laid aside. Their obnoxious principle, however, was never abandoned; but, finally, was attempted to be brought into operation, by a duty on a favorite article of consumption, sent to this country by the East India company. Quickly—like the electric shock, not retarded by time, not lessened by distance—did the spirit of freedom awaken the energies of our people. Roused at the same moment, they

acted as one man, throughout these states. They renewed their concert and correspondence, resolved to sustain whatever privations the common interest should render necessary ; and, intent upon guarding their political rights, rose superior to personal considerations. The determined resolution which, at Boston, committed to the bosom of the deep, the obnoxious dutyable article, when, after repeated solicitation, the consignees refused to send it back ; was but an earnest of that steady resistance, which the government was to expect, should it persevere. But conciliation was not of its councils : and this spirit of resistance only brought down upon that devoted city, and the state of which it was the capital, the aggravated severity of vindictive oppression. The province at large was, by an act of parliament equally arbitrary and unexpected, deprived of its chartered rights : and thousands of unoffending people, of all ages and sexes,

were, by the operation of a similar act, suddenly thrown out of their accustomed employments—which depended upon active commerce—; and must have perished, but for the charitable contributions of their sympathising fellow citizens, in every part of the country; who generously declared, they considered them as suffering *in the common cause*.

How did our countrymen meet this awful crisis in their affairs? Prudent—but firm; desirous of accommodation, and sincerely deprecating the horrors of civil war—but determined to support their rights; free, alike, from the blind fury of lawless insurgents, and the timidity of the vassals of tyranny;—what was their conduct? By their provincial assemblies, where these were allowed to meet, by committees acting during their recess, or in conventions of delegates of the people; called together on the special emergency of the occasion; they adopted various

measures of precaution, but carefully avoided every act of intemperence. They wished nothing so anxiously as, by the restoration of harmony with the mother country, to be permitted to enjoy the calm of peace ; but those more immediately threatened with the thunder of her power, prepared for the coming storm : and more than ever, sensible of the critical importance of a union of counsel and of strength, they appointed delegates to a **GENERAL CONGRESS.**

This congress met—the true representatives of the nation. Their proceedings, and those of their immediate successors, constitute the best criterion of the temper of their constituents, at different successive periods;—the truest display of the necessary effect of repeated aggressions on the part of government, in widening the breach of good understanding with the colonies: until irreconcilable aversion, took place of the affectionate

regret and horror, at the bare idea of a separation, with which the colonists at first regarded the contest with Great Britain.

The genuine love of liberty is a genial fire: which sheds new rays of light on the understanding of man; communicates fresh vigor to the best impulses of his heart; gives birth to his noblest qualities; and, when brought forth into action, forms his most exalted character. The *commencement* of this new era in human affairs, was indicative of the grandeur of its *future course*.

When I recur to the acts and resolutions of this general congress, I sink under the consciousness of my inability, to render justice to their spirit and expression.—Whether, by solemn declaration, they exhibit, in luminous display, the natural and chartered rights of the colonies, and shew how they have been wantonly disregarded and infringed, by various acts of usurpation; whether, by memorial to

their sister provinces, they demonstrate the actual hardships, and certain consequences, of their oppressions—warn them against the insidious designs of the ministry—and urge them by every consideration of common interest, to unite in the common cause; whether by address to the people of England, they obviate the effects of ministerial misrepresentation—declare their real wishes “to be placed in their former situation—in the enjoyment of peace, liberty, and safety”—and conjure them, by a remembrance of the public spirit of their common ancestors, and by a regard to their intimate connexion, mutual interest, and common rights, to eradicate the existing evil, and avert the impending danger, by a magnanimous exercise of their elective privileges, in choosing wise and independent members to the *new parliament*; whether, in return for the generous sympathy of the *Irish people*, they justify themselves, by a true statement

of the colonial motives and objects—anticipate the happy issue of the deprecated contest, and the reverence which will be paid to the memory of those patriots, who shall have suffered in the cause of liberty ; and congratulate that suffering people, “ to whom even the tender mercies of government had long been cruel,” “ that the “ design of subjugating us has persuaded “ administration, to dispense to Ireland, “ some vagrant rays of ministerial sunshine” ; whether, by humble petition to their sovereign, they express their earnest desire, that he would be pleased, to devise some effectual means for the accommodation of the unhappy dispute, by a redress of their wrongs, without a diminution of his royal prerogative—and seek to engage in their behalf, all the noble qualities of a good prince ; or whether, after a contemptuous rejection of this offering of peace, they publish to the world, “ the causes and necessity of taking up arms” ;

appealing, with humble confidence in the justice of their cause, to “the supreme and impartial judge and ruler of the universe” :—in all these acts, these untutored statesmen, display a character so truly dignified, an eloquence so convincing and pathetic, and a language so perspicuous and pure ; that I cannot better conclude this brief notice of their early proceedings, than in the words of the great Chatham. “For genuine sagacity, for singular moderation, for solid wisdom, manly spirit, sublime sentiments, and simplicity of language—for every thing respectable and honorable ; the congress of Philadelphia shine unrivalled.”—But they were yet to derive to themselves, still higher praise and admiration.

Since the first existence of congress (a period less than two years) events, pregnant with the most important consequences, had happened, in rapid succession : The loss of the honored few, whose

blood had been poured out at Lexington—the first offering at the shrine of liberty—had touched the lively sympathies of their countrymen ; and kindled a fire of patriotic enthusiasm, which quickly set in flame the combustible materials of the continent, and gave fancied charms to death itself. The din of warlike preparation, had, on all hands, taken place of the busy hum of commerce, the cheerful note of mechanical industry, and the simple, but sweet and innocent sounds of rural occupation : and the gentle bosoms of the tender sex, had been made to throb, with apprehensions of scenes, still less congenial with their natures. An army of undisciplined provincials had been collected, rather through public spirit, than by public authority (though the recommendation of their representatives, had with them all the force of law) ; and congress had appointed, from amongst themselves, to bring into use this mass of raw materials,

a beloved commander : whose well known integrity should prove a bulwark to liberty, against the calumnious shafts of her enemies ; and whose active zeal, and consummate discretion, might supply the want of long experience in war. The earnest wishes of the colonists, for amicable adjustment of differences—expressed in repeated petitions from congress, and other representative bodies—had, by the British government, been treated with increased contempt ; or answered only by the voice of her cannon, in burning their towns, or wantonly laying waste their most valuable possessions. Operations of necessary precaution, on our part, had hastened the grand crisis ; and hostilities had commenced, with portentous earnestness. The souls of the noble Montgomery, and of the brave and humane Warren, with many others, their gallant companions in arms, had been wafted to eternity : but not without leaving to their

countrymen the heart-cheering hope, of final success in the great cause, by the exertion of similar bravery and firmness. For, the haughty troops of Britain, had, at the little redoubt of Breed's hill, been taught the mortifying lesson, not to despise even the undisciplined defenders of liberty: and, before the half finished fort, which afterwards bore the justly honored name of its brave defender Moultrie, the glory of the British navy had suffered a depression, in the defeat of one her distinguished commanders Parker; who—dispatched from England, to pour forth on our shores the myrmidons of death and desolation—had been forced to retire, with a loss unprecedented, and with a reluctant acknowledgement, of the bravery and good conduct which had opposed him.

From the operation of these events; from the necessary assumption, by the people in the different states, of the pow-

ers of government—abused or abandoned by their late governors—; and, above all, by the forcible artillery of a free press, employed against the vices, abuses, and fundamental defects, of that ruling power whose injustice they had so sensibly felt; the minds of the colonists had undergone a gradual, but rapid change. By adjournment, their representatives in congress had reinvigorated their minds from the source of their authority: They inhaled and breathed forth the spirit of the nation. It was a spirit the more noble, because attended with a consciousness, of the arduous difficulties, and perilous risks, which it must encounter. **THIS BAND OF PATRIOTS** knew, full well, the formidable power of Britain. Her well-appointed armies were veterans in war; and their gallant commanders had been crowned with victorious laurels, gathered in the four quarters of the globe. Old Ocean's self had often trembled, to his deepest

abyss, beneath her thundering navy; and distant, old, and powerful nations, had received from her the laws of navigation, with silent submission. True it was, that some of the raw provincial troops had, recently, in one or two instances, measured their strength with British soldiers; and learnt to respect themselves. True it was, that a particular emergency might always be expected to call forth, from amongst our citizens, a large portion of *such* dauntless spirits. But what could bravery effect, in the incidents of a war, without discipline? How could discipline be had without experienced officers? and what would even experience, discipline, and bravery, avail, without the implements of warfare? What public service could be long supported, without the certain resource of a stable revenue? and what army (however patriotic the individuals of which it might be composed) could be expected to endure regular service, with-

out a regular supply of the necessaries of life? All these requisites were wanting, to the formation of efficient armies, for the defence of the colonies. Congress knew, also, what was more dreadful to contemplate—the vindictive spirit of ministerial ambition: They had cast their eyes upon other victims of that ambition. In case of defeat, what were *rebels* to expect, from the merciless conquerors of the unoffending nations of India—the relentless oppressors of Ireland? Should they escape annihilation, how dreadful a bondage was in store for them! What relief was to be expected, from the rapacious grasp of hungry viceroys, stationed in different quarters of this extensive country? They remembered those scandals on humanity—the mock prosecutions in England, of the wicked agents of that gigantic monopolist, the East India company.—By present submission, they and their cotemporaries, might escape these hor-

rors. They knew there were many true lovers of their country, who condemned the plan of a separation from the parent state ; because its doubtful prospect of success, lay through the scenes of a bloody civil war : and they knew, that, although that plan had been recommended to their consideration by several of the states ; they would not be considered responsible, should they refuse to adopt it. But temporising or selfish expedients, were not accordant with the motives of these genuine representatives. They had before declared to the world, “ We are reduced
“ to the alternative of unconditional sub-
“ mission to the tyranny of irritated mas-
“ ters, or resistance by force.—The latter
“ is our choice.—We have counted the
“ cost of this contest, and find nothing so
“ dreadful, as voluntary slavery.—Honor,
“ justice, and humanity, forbid us, tamely
“ to surrender that freedom, which we
“ received from our gallant ancestors, and

“ which our innocent posterity have a
“ right to expect from us. We cannot
“ endure the infamy and guilt, of resign-
“ ing succeeding generations, to that
“ wretchedness which inevitably awaits
“ them, if we basely entail upon them he-
“ reditary bondage. Our cause is just—
“ our union is perfect.”——From the
haughty tone of the ministry, and the per-
severing neglect of their still repeated,
and humble overtures for accommoda-
tion; congress had certainly no reason to
change their determination. But, when
this haughty neglect is accompanied with
the formidable proof—by increased mili-
tary preparation—that government will,
indeed, receive nothing short of “ uncon-
ditional submission” to arbitrary exac-
tion; it only remains for this august
body,—after reciting their rights, their
grievances, and oppressions,—solemnly
to declare “ That these united colonies
“ are, and of right ought to be, FREE and

“ INDEPENDENT STATES ; that they are
“ absolved from all allegiance to the Bri-
“ tish crown ; and that all political con-
“ nexion, between them and the state of
“ Great Britain, is, and ought to be, to-
“ tally dissolved : and that, as free and
“ independent states, they have full pow-
“ er, to levy war, conclude peace, contract
“ alliances, establish commerce ; and to
“ do all other acts and things, which in-
“ dependent states may of right do. And,
“ for the support of this declaration, with
“ a firm reliance on the protection of
“ DIVINE PROVIDENCE, we mutually
“ pledge to each other, our lives, our for-
“ tunes, and our sacred honor.”——

This FIAT OF LIBERTY, which, to the astonishment of the listening world, spoke a nation into existence,—hung, in fearful suspense, the high destinies of man ; and involved a decision upon the happiness or misery, the liberty or bondage, of this great continent !!

Having decided the great principle of action ; neither personal danger, nor general calamity, nor destruction of property, nor loss of friends,—could deter them from their purpose. Then it was—“ in times which tried men’s souls”—that a Jefferson, a Nelson, a Lee, a Franklin, an Adams, a Livingston, a Rutledge, and numerous other worthies (whose names alone, would swell beyond proportion, this little address) exhibited themselves to the admiring eyes of their countrymen, in their true colours. Then it was, too, that the martial spirit of the land, was a second time roused, from Maine to Georgia : and our little armies sprung into sudden existence, at the call of their country. Then it was, that the individuals of those armies, displayed innate faculties and powers, before unknown to themselves.—The fall of their comrades in battle ; the groans of their fellow citizens, issuing from the noisome jails, or floating dun-

geons of the enemy; the despair of their wives, sisters, and daughters, compelled to flee before the destroying fury of British soldiers, the more ruthless rage of their savage allies, or the still more merciless revenge of domestic traitors; the flames which, amidst the gloom of night, ascended from their ravaged towns; and the devastation of their peaceful, rural homes;—served but as so many incentives, to rekindle their just resentment; invigorate their courage; and implant in each patriot bosom, the virtuous determination of every true soldier of liberty—“to conquer or to die.”

Various, and doubtful, was the arduous contest, for many tedious years.—Clouded, and often dark, was the prospect, through every quarter of the horizon. Often were the heroes of our armies compelled to make full trial of their fortitude and patience; often were they compelled to bear the complicated severities

of cold, hunger, sickness, and fatigue. Yes, my friends, history informs us, that that little band of heroes, Washington's army, on which rested—shall I say the hopes?—No—the fearful expectations of their country (for every thing was then enveloped in the gloom of despondency); that little army, destitute of the necessaries of life, retreating before a powerful enemy, traced, with the blood of their half frozen feet, their devious marches through the snows of winter—without murmur or complaint!—The genius of liberty, still hovering around them, sustained their drooping hopes; retouched their souls with the fire of patriotism—and beckoned them on to victory. Union was the sheet anchor of the little bark, in which we had adventured our lives and fortunes: and the thunders of tyranny, the tempests of war, and the billows of faction, beat in vain against it.

This constancy and courage of our

statesmen and soldiers, and union of our councils, finally prevailed; and obtained for us the object of our exertions. Britain acknowledged our right to self-government;—and retired, in disgrace, from our shores.

What shall we render to the memories of those brave men who died in this trying contest? Snatched away, when all was uncertainty in prospect—not permitted to see and to enjoy its glorious termination—; they breathed out their souls in pious wishes for the success and prosperity of their country:—a prosperity which we enjoy in ample extent.—Hallowed be the fields of battle where they fell!—Nerveless, now, is many an arm, which once struck terror to its foes.—Mouldering and cold are the hearts, in which “the pulse of glory” once beat high, responsive to their country’s call.—The trumpet’s clangor, and the drum’s tumultuous notes no more can quicken their emo-

tions.—Alike unmindful of their country's wrongs and happiness, for other ears the clarion note of war shall sound;—from other mouths the voice of annual exultation *now* arises.—Forever silent are those tongues, which often, by their animating influence, incited their companions, to bear the present ill, or brave the threatened danger.—But still eloquent are their noble deeds, their glorious deaths, and their inspiring example:—still are these able to rouse, within the breasts of their countrymen, the finest feelings of the human heart.—

O had I but the power, to express, in simply-suited language, the mingled sentiments of gratitude and veneration, which I feel for you, ye fallen heroes!—Whilst the name of liberty is joyous in our ears; whilst the sentiment of national happiness is precious to our hearts; as long as faithful history shall preserve the remembrance of our revolution: so long shall *ye*

live in the affections of your grateful countrymen!—who will esteem it a delightful, as it is a sacred duty, to cherish your fame!!

Here, too daring Laurens! would I attempt a mournful tribute of respect, to the mild virtues, the intelligence, and public spirit, which adorn thy character; and engaged the affectionate regard of all who knew thee—whether in the walks of private life, in the cabinet, or in the field!—But, how can I select, one alone, from the bright constellation of characters (both of natives and noble-minded foreigners) which shines through the pages of our history?—the bright example to distant ages of our country—when the present generation shall long have passed away—of heroism and public virtue!——“**I**t is sweet and becoming to die for one’s country;”*—and those, who, from pure motives, have so devoted their lives, must,

* Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.

surely, be now in the fruition of lasting beatitude!

O God, thou lover of peace and concord, forbid that our country should ever engage in war, but upon principles as pure and correct, as those of our revolutionary contest! but suffer, that the wise and just policy of *our* nation, may contribute to hasten the time, “when nations shall learn war no more”—and when it shall no longer be necessary to purchase independence and freedom at so dear a price, as the loss of the virtuous, and the brave!!

To the surviving statesmen and warriors of the revolution, how rich a reward for their toils and dangers, was the enjoyment of national independence!—A few of them yet remain, scattered through the country; to recount, to those of us who were too young to partake of their honors, the incidents, the feelings, and the distresses, of those days. I venerate them

highly : and when I reflect, that we are now enjoying the plentiful harvest of their labors, in ease and in peace ; I can scarcely allow myself to think, that these benefactors of their county can do any thing—short of a dereliction of their early principles—which ought to forfeit our high consideration.—May the evening of their day be unclouded by care ; and may their sun set in peace !—And, when it shall please the Almighty Father of all, to deprive us of them ; may they cheerfully follow to the blest abodes, where WASHINGTON—their old commander—hath led the way !

At the name of Washington I pause : —whilst we remember, at once—our glory, and our loss.—Washington, whose actions cast around him, a splendor which shall shine forever : who, by devoting the best days of his active life, to the service of his country, hath laid upon us a debt of gratitude, as delightful to feel, as it is impossible to repay.—O Washington !

remembering thy disinterested zeal, thy ceaseless exertions; and feeling, too, that each one of us partakes, by reflection, of the glory of thy virtues; can we ever feel this debt of gratitude, and of honor, burdensome?—Some of us, indeed, pursuing a freedom of thought and of public discussion—the happy birth-right of Americans, which thy zealous exertions did so greatly assist to secure to us—have, no doubt, dissented from thee, in matters of opinion, respecting *some* of our public concerns; but who, that hoped to be regarded, hath charged aught against thy patriotism, thy integrity!!

To the historian it belongs, to render complete justice to the public character of our great countryman: but, fellow citizens, he was personally known to many of us, in private life. I knew him well—both in the recesses of retirement, and when at the helm of government: the same discreet, wise, unassuming, great

man!—I experienced his friendship and kindness, from my boyish days ; and, by his death, not only became a sharer in the public calamity, but lost also a benefactor. I never could assume the unpleasant and invidious task, of investigating his faults or his foibles : but had I detected any, I should have considered them “like the spots on the sun”—only visible by contrast with the general splendor that surrounded them.

It is no less honorable, than beneficial to a country, to be prompt to reward, and slow to forget the merit and public services, of her distinguished citizens : and these traits of national gratitude, constitute one of the most appropriate themes of the present occasion. But I have only attempted, to lead your reflections herein, by a brief sketch.

Equally appropriate is it, to contemplate the peculiar advantages, which we have derived from the revolution ; and the

most obvious means of preserving and of improving them.

The preceding rapid narrative, hath been occupied, chiefly, with a brief development, of the causes, leading principles, and prominent features of the revolution in this country: But what was its distinguishing character?—It was not, like other great national changes which history hath recorded, the hideous production of chance, cunning, or violence; wrought by means the most wicked, or instruments the most contemptible; employing the detestable maxim, “do evil that good may come”; and, for want of a legitimate and fixed object, vibrating between anarchy, and the alternate usurpation of rival leaders; till despotism itself, became a welcome relief, from the miseries of confusion and disorder. No.—Our revolution was the fair offspring of human wisdom, sanctioned by conscience, and approved by heaven. It was founded,

not upon the sinister design or artful intrigue, of the ambitious individual; nor in the turbulence and avarice of the factious few: but upon the broad and open assertion, by the nation itself, of its natural and political rights. Its noble object, was the happiness of the people—not the aggrandizement of those who promoted it: and the means of its support, and establishment, were worthy of its foundation, and of its object. Hence that love of order, which, waiting for the authority of law, even amidst the commotions of civil war, excluded the baneful plea of “urgent necessity”; which had so often, in other countries, committed violence on the rights which it pretended to defend. Hence that spirit of forbearance, which tempered the firmest resistance of wrong; that enthusiasm of mind, which, without the prospect of personal benefit, could animate men to the patient endurance of hardship; that steady perseverance, even

under misfortune, and that reliance on heaven, which only can attend a just cause—a war of defence, not of aggression.

And have not the effects of the revolution been suitable to its origin, its means, and its end? They have. From this beneficent source, numerous streams of felicity flow, throughout our land: refreshing, invigorating, and fructifying our industrious labors, in all the pursuits of life.

Once, we were controlled by a distant government, which regarded, neither our wishes, our interests, nor our happiness: and which we considered to be, unjust in its fundamental principles; uncertain in the extent of its powers; and corrupt, unequal, and tyrannical, in its operation. What sort of government have we substituted in its stead? The only one in the world, which rests upon a preordained form; organized and constituted, by the nation itself, in peaceful, free deliberation; prior to the appointment of its first ad-

ministrators. A government, which considers man, not as a solitary, but as a social being; whose rights are qualified by his social duties: and which secures to him, the enjoyment of all those privileges, which are consistent with the exercise of the same privileges, by the other members of the community. A government, whose whole power is a trust, executed for the common good; whose several departments are so divided as not to interfere, yet so connected as to harmonize, with each other: and which contains in itself the seeds of durability; by providing for its perpetual improvement, without the necessity of commotion, or disorder. A government, whose fundamental principles are applicable, alike, to that form which prescribes, to the numerous delegates of the people of each state, the limits of their authority, in the regulation of its municipal concerns; and to that paramount constitution, which, by a more

sparing representation, and a more strict definition of powers, provides for the common concerns, and general welfare of “the United States,” as one nation.—Here are some remarkable features. Each state is sovereign in itself, federal in relation to each other state, and united with each other, in relation to foreign powers: and yet the several governmental authorities are so organized, as to proceed in harmony! But the representative feature runs through the whole; for even the state sovereignties are represented in the federal government! What, then, are the political principles, which are capable of this extensive, complicated, and yet accordant application? They are these:

That the sovereign power resides with the majority of the citizens; who retain all powers, not expressly granted by the respective constitutions: and who may, in an orderly manner, by their representatives fairly and equally chosen for the ex-

press purpose, charge or alter the existing constitution; according to a principle, either expressed or implied, which they all contain. But, let it be remembered, as a silencing answer to the revilers of this principle, that this sovereign power, being held only by the majority, for the good of the community; is incapable of being exercised by any smaller number: and that, consequently, any partial attempt to over-rule or control the operations of the government, under whatever plea or pretence, is a treasonable and factious offence against the sovereign.

That the responsibility of the agents employed in executing the constitution, is secured, by the power of the people to change, at short intervals, by themselves or their immediate representatives, the legislative and executive functionaries; and by the power of impeachment possessed by the legislative over the judicial authority: which, for the purpose of preserving

the constitution from encroachment, and of expounding impartially, the laws made pursuant thereto; are rendered more independent than either of the other departments of government.

That a dangerous accumulation of powers, in the same hands, is avoided; by rendering the legislative, judiciary, and executive departments, as distinct from each other, as is consistent with that wholesome check, which each requires, to insure the regular operation of the whole.

That whilst the several constitutions, forbid, all hereditary or exclusive political privileges; the most of them require the experience of age, and the possession of property; as a qualification, for certain important functions of government. And, lastly,

That all citizens enjoy equal liberty. But as this equality hath constituted, for the admirers of kingly government, a

subject of sarcasm, as illiberal, as it is ill-founded; let us see in what it consists. Not in a principle, which should attempt to level the several stations and occupations of life; and to confound the everlasting distinctions, between merit, and demerit; aged wisdom, and youthful folly; abilities, taste, and refinement of manners, and stupidity, ignorance, and vulgarity. No.—The natural distinctions in society, originate in that infinite variety in the works of creation; which occasions as great a diversity in the geniuses, as in the features of mankind: and may most of them be made highly conducive to true order and happiness.—Our equality consists in this, that each one may enjoy every political right and privilege, which any other one is allowed: upon qualifying himself, by means which, under the law, are free alike to all. And our liberty is an exemption from unnecessary restraint; which allows us, in our pursuit of hap-

piness, to do those things, which are not injurious to other members of society. It is not a license to do wrong, even within the law. It is not that prevailing vice of the day, which being equally injurious to public morals, as it is disgraceful, in the eyes of foreigners; calls loudly for the condemnation of public opinion: that unprincipled disregard of truth, whose employment is misrepresentation; and which, taking a cowardly advantage of the mildness of the laws, or of the concealment of a name, covers with the “sable mantle of falsehood,” the best actions, and the fairest characters, of men.

Such being our theory of government, which, during and since the revolution, hath been reduced to practice, in and over all the states, of what consequence to us, are the ancient definitions of *republican government*?—in words which originally meant, simply, the management of the

public interest. As well may we seek for parallels, between the characters and manners of antiquity, and those of modern times; as well may we compare the gloomy morality of heathen mythology, with the pure system of christian ethics; as to search history, for governments resembling our own. One of our best writers, hath defined *our* institution of the social compact, to be, “A REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY.” I will add, that it possesses all the requisites of good government; which may be comprised in two words—efficiency, responsibility. It may be compared to a well constructed machine; wherein power and velocity are so happily combined, as that neither principle predominates, to the destruction of the other: and where a departure from simplicity is avoided, as much as consists with a due combination of those essential principles.

It is not the fault of the revolution,

that, in the United States, the asperity of party, for a long time, hath taken place of brotherly love; which should unite the true sons of liberty, in a steady pursuit of the public good; and allow to others, that freedom of inquiry, in matters of opinion, which we claim to ourselves. Whilst we consider it a duty, to cherish in ourselves, to instil into the tender minds of our children, and to inculcate on others, the principles of the revolution; as the foundation and support of all that is most dear to us: let us not quarrel with our neighbor, should he differ from us; so long as he allows us the like freedom, and, in his conduct, confines himself to the like legitimate means.

It is not the fault of the revolution, if some of our zealous citizens seem to forget, that, to cherish an ardent love of our country, is distinct from the indulgence of that national pride, which inclines us to view with contempt, the people of

other countries, not possessing our political blessings: that *that* providence, which “tempers the winds to the shorn lamb,” hath not left the *most* of them destitute of peculiar advantages; more especially, those which belong to a state of maturity—in the diffusion of science, literature, and the arts of life: that it is one thing to hold up, as warning beacons to our countrymen, the vices and corruptions of other governments; and quite another thing, to recommend or excite, amongst *their* subjects, political revolutions;—which not being practicable, except through the direful medium of human misery, ought never to be attempted, but upon principles of self-defence, in cases of the last necessity: and that it is particularly the interest of these states, established, as they are, in their governments, to inculcate peace, and political order, throughout the world; adhering to *their own old maxim*, relative to foreign nations

—“enemies in war, in peace friends.”

It is not the fault of the revolution, that the inestimable right of suffrage, is, by the people in some of our states, so much neglected; so much abused in others: that, in our own, particularly, exists the shameful practice of candidates, not only “offering themselves,” as the phrase is, without consulting the wishes of the people; but canvassing, personally, for votes!—From whence, numerous evils flow; till matters have come to that pass, that strength of body, not of mind, is to decide, in most cases of competition. He who can best encounter the fatigue of this undertaking; has the best prospect of success, in an electioneering campaign. The consequence is obvious: the best men will choose rather—“the post of honor in a private station.”

Nor is it the fault of the revolution, that one of the virtues of representative government—frugality of the public purse

—should in our state be strained to the niggardly vice, of withholding money from objects of the greatest public utility : insomuch, that, within these few years, without the operation of any unforeseen contingency, the public treasury has been known, to be without the means of paying the current expenses of government ; although there is not an office in the whole state establishment, that has a salary adequate to the support of its occupant.

It is not the fault of the revolution, that the wholesome republican maxim, which prescribes an efficient well trained militia, as the safest defence of the nation ; is, in practice, in more than one of the states, so totally reversed ; that, after years of temporising expedients, they have scarcely a disposable force, equal to the most trifling emergency, from within or without, which might require its exercise.

As little is it to be charged to the re-

volution or its principles, that, instead of assuming to ourselves, a national character suited to the real dignity of our station; with corresponding habits of industry and economy, and manners of plainness and sincerity; our citizens are aping the privileged orders of Europe, both in the modes of living, and in the education of children, with a servility of imitation, which may well excite the contempt of sensible foreigners, who smile at the awkward exhibition of our borrowed pageantry: and that, in the article of dress—in which, as in most others of our luxuries, vanity lays us under heavy contributions to the industrious people of other countries—we so totally disregard every consideration of health, convenience, and of “the truly ridiculous”; as to be strutting in the Paris and London *winter* fashions, in summer, and in their *summer* fashions, in winter!

It is not the fault of the revolution,

that a standing reproach upon its principles exists amongst us; relative to a subject, which I would rather allude to than name: but in which *our* state is deeply concerned, along with her southern neighbors. This is the result of an unhappy state of things, previously existing; which it would be equally difficult and dangerous suddenly to change: but it is an evil which grows so fast, and is pregnant with such mighty mischief; as to demand our earnest endeavors, as a nation, to provide for its removal. This must, no doubt, be attended with serious difficulties: but can these baffle the united wisdom, and resolute exertions, of a people who have atchieved the revolution? We tread upon a volcano. Let us not repose in fancied security.

These existing evils are none of them chargeable to our happy revolution. They are such as time, and an increase of political experience, will undoubtedly cor-

rect.—Let us return to an enumeration of the *beneficent* effects of our institutions.

Formerly, we were implicated in the expensive and ruinous wars of the mother country: now, our government is free to obey, and to cherish, the prevailing disposition of its constituents; and peace smiles benignant on our labors.

Formerly, the exertions of our citizens were repressed, by various restrictions: now, the wide field of industrious employment is open to all; and presents, to every one who endeavors after an honest competence, a fair prospect of success. Agriculture fills our granaries with abundance; and furnishes a liberal supply, for the wants of other countries. Our commerce, unshackled at home, spreads her white wings, to the propitious gales of fortune, on every sea: and the extent of our navigation, is second only, to the greatest in the world. The most essential of the arts have long been established

in the land: others are making a hopeful progress. The useful professions abound: and science, general literature, and the fine arts, are, perhaps, as far advanced, as in our youthful state, might be expected. How genial is the soil of freedom, for the reception and growth, of every useful truth! But are there not too many smatterers sent out from our colleges? Is the course of education therein, well-suited to the genius of our government, and to the pursuits of our citizens? These are questions which I leave for others, more competent, to answer. This I know, that, to render the rudiments of learning, sufficiently accessible to the people, generally, much remains to be done. In our own state, the public spirit of a few persons, here and there, hath set on foot several seminaries of learning: but what avail the exertions of individuals, without public patronage?—They languish for want of permanent funds. But the spirit of inqui-

ry is abroad; the attention of the people is awake: and, so important a subject, as the instruction of our future legislators—the future supporters of all that distinguishes us from other nations—cannot, much longer, be neglected. In the happy constitution of our society, the female sex receives and maintains its proper dignity. This keeps pure the sources of domestic felicity: and, by the early infusion of the principles of religion and morality, lays the best foundation, for the successful education and future greatness, of the rising generations.

Formerly, the native inhabitants of our forests, were, by the alternate impulses of rival powers, stimulated to molest *us*, or to destroy *each other*: and the people of our frontiers were in continual dread of their murderous depredations. Now, “these children of our country,” receive with grateful acknowledgments, our protection: and to the immortal honor of the

government, its fostering hand is extended, to dispense to them, a liberal share of our enjoyments.—Who, that considers the former and present condition of these people; views the soil which was wrested from their rightful possession, by the violence of European avarice; and remembers, that, by the open attacks or secret machinations of civilized man, whole nations of these poor people have been extinguished, or reduced to a few scattered families;—but must exult in this exemplification of national justice and humanity! Upon this subject of felicitation, I may add, that, as states, we have been enabled to effect what we could not have done, as colonies: We have, by a wise and pacific policy, removed a fruitful source of contention with foreign nations; in greatly extending our western frontier, so as to command the outlet to its commerce. For a few millions of dollars, payable in the most accommodating man-

ner, we have acquired an immense extent of territory: abounding in the richest productions of nature; increasing our population by the accession of a people, happy to share in the advantages of our free government; and greatly adding to the independent resources of our national wealth. How few nations—by the most expensive, the most bloody, or the most successful war—have made so great an acquisition!—And yet, our national debt diminishes rapidly; whilst our numbers increase! and, ere long, without increasing our taxes (at present lighter than those of almost any other civilized people) our government will hold a large surplus revenue. This may, by the national legislature, be re-distributed, in just proportions, to the several states: for the purpose of establishing seminaries of learning; extending internal navigation; facilitating intercourse by good roads; and promoting other important objects.

Fellow citizens! this is not an exaggerated picture of our national felicities. It is not an empty, pompous declamation, on the magnitude of the general advantages derived from our revolution. It is a faint, but true exemplification of what we know, see, and feel.

When I consider, that the fair fabric of human happiness, erected in this western world, is the production of only two centuries; when I behold the ample and firm foundation on which it rests—the strong pillars that support it—the harmony, beauty, and elegance of its parts—and the sublimity of its elevation, to the view of surrounding nations; when I consider, that it is now the blest abode of liberty, and peace—that its ample apartments afford accommodation for millions, in addition to its present joyous guests—and that it is destined to be the asylum of the virtuous distressed, from every other quarter of the globe; who may all enjoy the de-

lights of the place, subject to the first and most equitable condition of humanity—useful occupation: I anticipate, with transport, the future greatness and glory of a people, who have been able, thus early, to rear such a magnificent national structure! May their posterity preserve it unimpaired, as a monument to future ages, of their virtue, wisdom, and public spirit!—Withered be the impious hand, which shall be stretched out, to do it injury!!

But, my friends, whilst truly sensible of our benefits, can we refuse to our supreme benefactor, the just tribute of gratitude? And can we express our gratitude, without acknowledging, with the wisest and best men that have ever lived, his controlling providence?—

Washington himself, who, being at the centre of intelligence, best knew, what reliance was to be placed on our resources, and on the means employed to give them

activity; was always forward to express his intimate conviction, that naught but divine aid, could have brought us safely through the revolutionary war.—Of those who doubt this, I would inquire, were there not, during that period, many critical points in our affairs? What determined those crises all, directly or indirectly, in our favor? And why have not other national changes terminated with equal success? Is it consistent with any idea of supreme wisdom, after creating this fair world, to abandon it to chance, or to the direction of short-sighted frail mortals? —No.—It was the divine wisdom, which predisposed our forefathers, from their peculiar situation, habits, and pursuits, for the reception of just principles; and permitted the ambition, injustice, and intemperance of their oppressors, to bring them into activity, upon this new and vast theatre. It was the divine wisdom which educed, from the wayward coun-

cils of a corrupt and aspiring government, a practical inquiry into the imprescriptible rights of the people, and the legitimate power of their rulers. The Lord himself was in our councils, and with our armies. He saw the purity of their motives: and he inspired that spirit, which dictated, the firm resolve of the one; the faithful, patient, steady execution, of the other. It was he, who, from the vindictive rage and cruelty of our enemies, gave us union, fortitude, and perseverance; and drew from our defeats, the means of VICTORY!

THE END.