

**AN**  
**ORATION,**

**DELIVERED**

**AT ST. ALBANS,**

**JULY 4, 1809,**

**IN COMMEMORATION OF**

**AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.**

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**BY IRA HILL.**

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**BURLINGTON, Vt.**

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**1809.**

*St. Albans, July 6, 1809.*

DEAR SIR,

*THE Republican Committee for the Arrangements of the Fourth of July, observing the satisfaction given by your Address on that day, beg leave in behalf of the Audience, generally, to return their sincere thanks for the justice you have done to the cause of our country, and at the same time request a copy for the Press.*

For Committee,

L. SIMMONS.

MR. IRA HILL.

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*St. Albans, July 10, 1809.*

SIR,

*IF my Address have answered the expectations of the honorable Committee of Arrangements, and met the approbation of those assembled to celebrate the day on which our country was freed from the grasp of Despots, I am amply rewarded. At your request, however, in behalf of the Committee, I present you a copy for the Press, greatly regretting that my abilities have not allowed me to make it more worthy your attention, or publication.*

IRA HILL.

Dr. LEVI SIMMONS.

# ORATION, &c.

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*Friends and Fellow Citizens,*

WHILE principalities, nations and empires are convened in other parts of the globe to concert measures of defence and personal preservation, and while millions are making preparations for plunder and human butchery, you are permitted, without fear or danger, to assemble and employ the rational faculties, in reflecting on the innumerable blessings attending you, when compared with other nations.

The various vicissitudes, to which the human species appear incident, must afford an ample subject for the contemplation of every imagination. Prosperity and calamity, existence and nihility, liberty and slavery, seem alternately in every age and nation to follow each other in succession.

Nations like individuals arise and flourish but a few days or years, and then sink into oblivion, and rising generations walk over their mouldering relics regardless of their former activity and grandeur. Revolving years bear away millions of human beings and weak and feeble mortals seem unwilling to profit by the untimely destruction of the opulent and mighty. Blind and deluded man is unwilling to partake of the blessings of wisdom, and rejects her offers, even when experience holds forth her hand for his instruction.

It appears inconsistent to imagine, that it was for such neglect and stupidity, that the God of nature condescended to endow the minds of men with the faculty of reflecting, a faculty which raises man to form an important link in the lengthy concatenation, from finite to infinite

beings. The human race blessed with this faculty, become exalted above the wandering herds of the forests and should they exercise it with that care and attention, for which it was given, many would ride in safety, who now are involved in danger, and thousands would evade those shoals and quicksands on which millions have been wrecked.

By this pleasing, this all important faculty of reflecting, man is enabled to revert his mind to the remotest ages of antiquity, trace the rise and fall of nations, survey the stupendous monuments of genius and industry and distinguish the causes of the rapid growth and sudden dissolutions of states and empires. Should deliberation occupy the minds of men, this faculty would lead them triumphant over many calamities existing in the present period and which have prevailed in every age. By this, means of civilization, with all her brilliant attendants, being introduced, are not only made manifest, but may be rendered present to every imagination. It brings to view the exploits of heroes and wisdom of sages. By it we behold the truly virtuous, in every age and nation, arising to glory, fame and immortality, and the vicious sinking into their merited obscurity, disgrace and infamy.

By this faculty is presented to view the feats of a Cyrus, who, by bravery and discipline not only subdued empires renowned for strength and valor, exulted over pride and luxury, but gently gliding over temptation, at that rude unpolished era, presented to the world examples of

charity, prudence and greatness. It brings to mind the policy of Philip, with the bravery of Alexander, taking advantage of nations when lulled in careless security, involved in effeminacy, or harrassed by internal divisions to conquer and enslave the world.

In the most lively and glaring colors, by this can we paint in our imaginations the firmness and unanimity once attending the Grecian republics. We behold them most firmly attached to freedom and with diligence cultivating every manly virtue. We perceive them sacrificing every private enjoyment, and even life itself for the salvation of their country and the preservation of freedom. We can imagine, that we almost feel their enthusiastic zeal, when at Marathon. The existence of their rights and liberties, depended on the exertions & valor of a chosen few; and a day or an hour was to exalt or destroy them. And can we not in reality partake of their felicities, when by the virtues of Miltiades the numerous and haughty army of Asia was exterminated from their regions, and the superb trophies, which had been erected, where liberty they hoped to annihilate, fell in the possession of the brave and valiant conquerors?

Our minds are completely involved in admiration, when we behold those ancient republics held in obedience by the justice of one, at the appearance of an invasion their indignation roused to burst forth in a flame, and by the command of their leader sink into cool deliberation. Can any mind be so void of sensibility as not to glow with sympathetic ardor, when it paints in view all the forces of Asia sallying forth to

invade the rights and enslave the persons of those natural sons of freedom? To reflect on the valor displayed at Thermopylæ, the immortal achievements at Plataea, by which were humbled the pride and luxury of Asia, must be a subject too copious, though delightful, for our present meditation.

Let the mind for a moment employ the inestimable faculty by which it is distinguished, in dwelling on those mighty empires, in which such revolutions have been effected, as ought to serve as a lasting criterion to all nations, to avoid those customs and dissensions to which millions have fallen a sacrifice.

When we refer our minds to ancient nations, we behold many by turns arising in glory to the heavens, directing and giving laws to the then known world, while virtues by their inmates were cultivated; but when vicious habits became prevalent, disgrace and infamy arose, and every calamity, deriving its origin from superstition, slavery and barbarity, diffused its baneful influence over those realms, which had been illuminated by the benign rays of science and virtue. Similar has been the fate of every nation to which the mind can be referred; reputable and prosperous, when under the salutary influence of virtue, and disgraceful and wretched when under the prevalence of vice.

Nor are our minds astonished, that those nations could flourish, but so short a period and then sink into oblivion, should we consider how contracted was then the human mind, how uncultivated were all its faculties, and how ignorant was each of the immortal treasure he pos-

essed. Then the pride, the hope and safety of the human race were centered in the density of bones and strength of muscles and ligaments, which could continue but a few days and then yield to the impulse of nature. Can man be astonished that the existence of empires should be so transient when they were supported by such frail and fickle machinery? More astonishing would it now appear should not institutions remain more permanent, when man is sensible that he has a treasure, which is immortal to protect, and a guide to direct him which time itself will never impair and by reverting the mind see the errors in which others have fallen.

Though to descant on the virtues and vices of other nations would afford a subject of vast utility and magnitude to every contemplative mind, yet let not such reflections alone at this time occupy your imagination.

Worthy audience, you have convened not to employ the rational faculties wholly in reflecting on the conduct of far distant nations and profit by their errors, but on this day the faculties of every American ought to be exercised in reflecting on the cause, which gave birth to our nation and independence, to millions of freeborn sons. This memorable day, which will ever be celebrated by friends to the rights of mankind, should be devoted not to dissipation and clamor, but to meditating on the virtues, the valor and wisdom of those, who gave freedom to our country; and in transmitting to posterity the glorious exploits of predecessors, of those magnanimous heroes who offered themselves victims to the shrine of liberty,

Though many years have rolled away since the American states have been declared free and independent, yet must that day, on which our country was extricated from the shackles of slavery, be as present to the minds of every American, capable of enjoying, reflecting or understanding.

It has been customary and if useful to nations, to celebrate those days on which remarkable achievements were effected, to offer human sacrifices, and join in solemn invocations to the gods on the birth day of an idiot or lunatic, to which they could prostrate themselves, resign their treasures and devote their labors, of what utility to us must be the celebration of the day on which myriads arose from the most abject slavery, triumphed over oppression and left for the enjoyment of posterity a country abounding with liberty and equality ?

To render the memory of the day we celebrate, more deeply impressed on the imagination, let your minds be referred to that period, when first our predecessors, to avoid the hand of persecution and insupportable oppression, quit their fair, their native enlightened country and sought a refuge on the then desolate coasts of America. Great must be the contrast in their circumstances and situation. They fled from a country of civilization, from a land of plenty, from friends and relatives. But oppression dwelt there. They sought a soil uncultivated, inhabited by cannibals and cruel barbarians ; they undisciplined, exposed themselves to intriguing, hostile enemies, almost unprotected by raiment, to the rigors of the elements, and to all the fatigues



of establishing settlements, in dreary wilds, without nourishment, without implements of husbandry and a knowledge of their occupation. Yet there were no inquisitions, no bulls of excommunication, nor martyrs to be offered to the shrines of superstition. Here dwelt liberty, the natural right of man.

Though when he returned from his arduous labor, would the heart of the husbandman be wounded by the sight of a butchered partner, or an offspring fallen a victim to savage barbarity; though the slumbers of the night would be broken by the horrid yells of cannibals; and his humble habitation be enwrapped in flames, tho' at midnight, he were doomed to seek security by flight through forests, where every path was ambushed, yet of no magnitude were these calamities, compared with those of Popish cruelty, and tyrannical oppression from which he lately escaped.

Such calamities as those, by diligence and perseverance, were soon annihilated. Those barbarians, who would not become friendly by their lenity, nor conquered by their humanity, soon by their valor were exterminated from their territories. Oppressive cares each day diminished. Their peaceful retirement and other privileges invited the oppressed of every clime and nation, to partake of the bounteous enjoyments derived from liberty, religion and equity. Extensive gloomy wildernesses were soon converted into fruitful fields. Those dreary deserts, through which no civilized voice had rang, soon echoed with the shouts of mirth and jolity. Where the howling inhabitants of

the forests had fixed their residence, appeared blooming meadows and fruitful groves. Where existed cannibal fury and savage barbarity were instituted courts of justice and seminaries of learning.

Thus guided by their own reason, defended by their own prudence and valor, under their own vine and fig tree, they enjoyed the fruits of their labor and there appeared none to molest or make them afraid.

It was then that Briton, contrary to the laws of God and nature, prompted by the love of domineering, blind to justice, and urged on by avaricious motives, attempted to monopolize this country on whose rising prosperity she had cast an eye of envy.

Unwilling to enter into the service of cruel Mars or fierce Bellona, and shuddering at the idea of imbruing their hands in the blood of those, who once had the appellation of brethren, those sages and patriots disdaining arms had recourse to reason. In vain was the voice of reason and justice applied to the ears of those who disregarded equity, and strove only to enrich themselves and enslave the world. In peaceful, rural retirements, unnecessary must have been the instruments of death and plunder; and unskilled in the arts of human butchery were our venerable, pious forefathers. Insults were unable to inflame their peaceful minds. They remained calm and earnest advocates of peace, till the sight of mangled citizens and butchered brethren reminded them of former cruelty and oppression. They had recourse to arms. As the last resource of safety and for the preservation

of liberty they used them. Bunker's mount is a witness of the firmness of their bodies, and should that speak with eloquence compared with the thunder of that day, it could not express the firmness of their minds. Should Warren, with his unrivalled eloquence, speak from his blessed immortal abode, animated by the spirit which summoned him to his country's dangers, he could not represent the zeal and courage of those sons of Liberty and defenders of the rights of mankind, who that day fought and bled, not for conquest or glory, but for justice and freedom!

It is in vain for man to exercise his feeble faculties, in endeavoring to paint a descriptive view of the scene of that memorable conflict. It must be left to the imagination of those, who there rendered themselves immortal, and to the meditation of such as would with equal force and violence, oppose the haughty invaders of inherent rights and privileges.

A recital of particular contests can be productive of but little utility to those, in whose bosoms the idea of each is perpetuated. The ideas of a Nash, a Mercer and Montgomery offered victims to the altars of liberty, though time in a measure may obliterate, yet never can be totally eradicated from an American mind. Can those blessings be of low estimation which were not purchased by the blood of martyred generals alone, but by the lives of thousands equally valiant, though their characters appeared less conspicuous in the sight of the admiring world.

In passing over the various conflicts in which American patriotism was displayed, and by

which our fields were crimsoned with precious blood, we cannot avoid directing your attention to the scene, which was exhibited in our own state, the actors of which were your neighbors, your brethren and yourself.

It was not sufficient to satiate the cravings of cruelty, that this land was invaded by a haughty, veteran army, by which our rights were on the very eve of destruction and about to fall into nihility; but to heighten our anguish and magnify every calamity, the cruel savage was excited to perpetrate what British vengeance could not inflict.

While the villages were plundered and committed to conflagration by the more regular disciplined assassins, the secluded habitations were assaulted and inmates massacred by the ferocious cannibals, assisted by the accursed tories, those infernal demons, whose merited reward in every age and nation has been the halter or gillotin. On the southern frontiers, these spirits of darkness were assembled, thirsting for rapine, plunder and murder.

Then each cottager, like the immortal Cincinnatus, relinquished his occupation, girded on his arms, and was prepared to protect and defend not freedom only, but his bosom friend and helpless offspring. But the All Righteous Being disregarded not the righteous cause. They fought and conquered. They saved their State, avenged their wrongs, humbled their foes and acquired laurels which will ever bloom.

Though our patriotic predecessors were triumphant over oppression, and had convinced their haughty foe, that freedom is the natural

right of man; though the war-whoop was no more to be heard in our fields; the midnight slumber was not to be broken by the shrieks of expiring victims, and no more was our land to be ravaged by cruel soldiery; though peace was established and reputation acquired, yet innumerable were the difficulties to which our land was exposed.

Our ports were open to the oppressed of all nations, and were not shut against the speculators of every clime. Luxuries and customs were introduced, most detrimental to a nation, whose character was not established on a basis, which was permanent. Without a constitution or laws was our nation, composed of members of different sentiments and principles, and subject to the greatest anarchy and confusion.

To compensate for these inconveniencies it had pleased the Almighty Being to bless us with a Washington, an Adams, a Hancock, a Jefferson, a Franklin and others, who would suffice for any evil, which could attend a state or empire. With deliberation they weighed our calamities, with candor they undertook to ameliorate them. With calm wisdom and patriotic policy they engaged in an employment, which was to render reputable or disgraceful, happy or miserable an enlightened people, in the possession of privileges, which seas of blood had purchased.

With the greatest deliberation did they reflect on the advantages and conveniencies attending each kind of government. They had too lately experienced the effects arising from monarchy, to establish so sure a basis for tyranny. They

felt for the people, whose cause they had espoused. They wished not to behold that liberty purchased by the dearest blood, that America could boast, bartered for royal robes and diadems. They chose not to behold the sceptre, assumed from hereditary distinction, swayed by an ignoramus or lunatic, over an enlightened people. Nor was it their desire to behold courtiers, lordlings and haughty landlords triumphing over wisdom and virtue. They chose rather to avoid such evils, which are prevalent in every monarchy, than to possess the quickness, dispatch and order, which are tyrants' great and mighty boast.

Could they look with approbation on aristocracy? What would the wisdom and policy, expected from lordly associations, weigh in the minds of those defenders of the rights of mankind, against the inconveniencies and dangers, which are unavoidably connected with a government of nobles? Could they endure the idea of beholding a people, so lately emerged from slavery, exposed to all the intrigues, wiles and bloodshed which might arise from a combination of envious, ambitious and unprincipled potentates unanimous in their league of iniquity no longer, than an opportunity might occur of any aggrandizing himself even at the destruction of his associates, and the total extinction of a people, in destroying whom, they were only united.

No, they chose rather to behold the people subject to a government in which virtue should be deemed worth possessing, justice not entirely disregarded, wisdom preferable to ignorance and wealth should not entirely predominate. They

were anxious that the country, they had assisted to liberate should remain free, independent and happy. And what could have a tendency to augment every felicity more, than the government they introduced, a government by which the people are permitted to make the laws, by which they themselves and posterity are bound?

Though different governments may be adopted for the mutual enjoyments of nations, yet they must in some measure coincide with the disposition of the subjects, the dimensions and situation of the territory or vain are all attempts to govern.

A people involved in ignorance, never stimulated by an enterprising genius, may with contentment dose away their time in stupidity under an absolute tyranny, remaining regardless of the number of those, to whom they are in servitude. If a nation thirst for nothing but to plunder, depopulate the world and enslave mankind, that nation could never exist, but by first being bound in servitude, and by abject fear held in the strictest subjection.

But to a nation virtuous and enlightened, animated by the glorious spirit of equality and having once experienced the benign blessings of liberty, to such a nation, what government could be so precious, so inestimable as a blessed republic. After considering the situation of this country, the disposition of the people and reflecting on the miseries attending other nations, this was the government recommended and adopted by sages, warriors and statesmen, for the preservation and safety, honor and happiness of a numerous, enlightened nation.

Under the salutary influence of this government, our country has not only soared above the difficulties, in which it was involved, at the close of the memorable revolution, but has acquired a reputable rank, and a glorious appellation among the nations of the earth.

Each day's experience of the blessings of such a government, will more firmly attach the virtuous part of community, and every moment will render them more eager to support and defend it with their fortunes and with their lives.

Already has the world become acquainted with the enlightened state of society in America, from the candor, the wisdom and magnanimity of those, who have been elected to govern. The virtues of Washington are not only engraved in the minds of every American, but his name, to every nation on the globe, will convey the idea of the greatest of warriors and wisest of statesmen. While his valor and achievements receive their merited, unlimited applause, his fame unsullied will be transmitted to latest posterity.

The labors and dangers sustained and the wisdom displayed by Adams in conducting the revolution, can never be forgotten by any who are friends to the rights of mankind. While his zeal for his country is admired by every patriotic American, through all ages and climes, as a statesman, his praises will be resounded.

The administration of Jefferson has rapidly advanced towards perfection all useful improvements in our country. By it has science and literature been encouraged and promoted. The public debt has diminished. Notwithstanding the hostile attitude and disposition of European



nations, by him have our affairs been conducted with wisdom, prudence and economy, and more prosperous and lucrative appears our situation in the view of the political world, than when Jefferson first assumed his station. Though the darts of slander have been hurled from a thousand tongues, though the zeal and scrutiny of his enemies have been unexampled in any age or nation, yet on the pure historical page will the deeds and name of Jefferson appear, as the brightest constellation in the firmament or stars of the first magnitude.

When we reflect on the character of him, who by the request of the American people, has received the helm of government, when we consider that his virtues fill even his enemies with admiration, we conclude we have much to hope and but little to apprehend from the wisdom and candor of him, whom we now call by the honorable appellation of President. Though he is summoned to the most dignified station, placed at the head of the most enlightened people inhabiting the globe, jealous of their rights, and ready to observe the most minute variations from order or justice, yet we have no doubt but his exalted virtues will render him equally respected with his illustrious predecessors.

What other privileges can any nation wish to possess to render it respected and happy which we do not enjoy? Are we not blessed with a climate most salubrious? Is not our soil luxuriant and productive of all the necessaries and even the luxuries of life? Was there ever a nation more favorably situated for commerce? Did ever man inhabit a country, subject to a

government, contributing more to happiness, than does this by which we are protected? Was there ever a nation existed better acquainted with the blessings resulting from liberty?

Why then when we behold all nations around us involved in slavery, falling victims to each others barbarity, and buried in ignorance; when we perceive ourselves the only nation on the globe enjoying the blessings of liberty and secluded from the horrid din of war, why then can we not become contented with the blessings attending us, and be a happy and magnanimous nation?

There is a pest most contaminating, which too frequently appears in nations, creating the most direful distresses and bearing whole nations and empires into the horrid vortex of infamy and misery. This dreaded contagion, whenever nations have reposed in ease and opulence, has been seen to burst forth among the people, involving the whole state or principality in calamities most to be dreaded. Already has this bane, this consuming pestilence made its appearance in this our happy land, now preys upon the vitals of the republic and unless some effectual remedy is immediately prescribed its horrid ravages can never be obstructed.

It is discord, fell discord, which casts down and destroys what ages of industry have accumulated.

Do we search for the causes, which have in every age and nation, dissolved the public enjoyments, we readily perceive, that it is this fell monster, discord, which has so often depopulated kingdoms and filled empires with massacres and

**earnage.** Must all our blissful scenes, fruitful fields and blessings of liberty purchased by the blood of worthy ancestors, be changed to desolation and servitude, by the prevalence of discord? No, the people of the United States are too wise, too well acquainted with liberty and equality, to suffer this raging monster to devour every felicity and introduce all the calamities arising from envy, malice and revenge.

But how, say some, “are evils to be avoided to which such multitudes have fallen a prey, and which appear natural when nations are lulled in careless security.”

Would not all dissensions soon become totally abolished, should those, disseminating the seeds of contention, be treated with the contempt they justly merit?

Is there a species of being inhabiting the globe, which ought more in every particular to be rejected from all society and considered less worthy of a human appellation, than those contemptibles, whose greatest exertions are, to foment divisions, create animosities and overwhelm their country in civil wars and massacres. Does not every upright man deem it his duty to hold in utter abhorrence, the thief and murderer; and are they so dangerous to society as those vile, unprincipled partisans who are diligently labouring to render every individual wretched by the common catastrophe of their country. The character of the assassin and robber are combined in that of those, who strive, for their own emolument, by sowing the seeds of contention, to introduce into their country all the horrors of civil war.

And who are they, who are desirous of bartering all our advantages for plunder, rapine and human butchery ?

Are they the industrious farmers, earning their property by the sweat of the brow and receiving as sustenance the fruits of their labor ? Most certainly not ; they are the pillars supporting our nation and the only basis on which a republican government can exist.

Is it from the diligent, ingenious mechanic, that such terror and confusion arise ? No they constitute the wheel-work, without which, too cumbrous would be the republican system. Can it be from the assiduity of the honest, upright merchants, that our land is threatened with all the calamities of civil war ? No, this class of people form the main springs from which, any system of government receives its motion. Is it from the policy, wisdom and perseverance of virtuous characters blessed with learned professions, that our land is about to receive the garb of mourning ? No. From these a regulator is to be constructed by which alone the machinery of government can be preserved in order and rectitude.

From whence then arises the filth, which consumes the pillars, encumbers the wheel-work, corrodes the mainsprings and renders useless the regulators ?

It is from those licentious, dissipated reprobates, who have been trained up in sloth and indolence, and having in riots and debauchery, squandered away their patrimonies, that all confusion originates.

They wish to recover their former imaginary

dignity ; they, in their intriguing fits of dissipation, influence the ignorant and intemperate, entice them to adhere to whatever they propose and in their frantic moments these modern Catholics, plot rebellions, conflagrations and carnage.

Do we not perceive all such as wish to obtain property without earning it faithfully attached to those, who are the most active in fomenting divisions and most forward in endeavoring to overthrow the liberties of our country ?

Do you behold men of real principles or any who are employed in laudable occupations braying through streets to find opponents, or basking in lobbies ready at the sight of one of different sentiments to satiate his craving appetites for contention by fastening on the innocent unguarded traveller.

What are the intentions or wishes of those who strive for nothing so much as contentions and discord ? Do they imagine that in the common wreck of their nation, they will survive the virtuous part of community and inherit their privileges ? No, they are sensible they must fall, and it is the only consolation of the cowards to pull the virtuous down with them.

Do these caballing combinations consider it a burthen to them to make their own laws, or do they deem it an unlord-like deed to be employed in business of any kind. If it be their wish to have laws provided for them, they will find it much more easy and expedient to cross the Atlantic, where without ceremonies laws are adopted, than to convince or compel the American people to resign totally their privileges of legislating, into the hands of such as they should

direct, and who they imagine are capable of filling the legislative, judiciary and executive departments.

Worthy audience, if the American people wish to support the dignity of their nation, and render themselves worthy to be called the descendants of those who fought and bled for liberty, let them annihilate all divisions and hold in abhorrence the accursed promoters of discord. No man is to be despised for his principles, if he thinks they are just, but such, as labor to increase party spirit, are destitute of every principle of humanity, and would the people but once observe their conduct, their policy would be perceptible and all their plans of dividing and revolutionizing this country would immediately be crushed.

There can be but few men of virtue, honor or of business, but who would wish to partake of the blessings of a republican government. Then let such men unite and render themselves worthy the appellation of freemen. And then will they behold this country producing all the enjoyments which mortals can wish to possess. And may that day be not far distant, when concord and harmony shall once more be prevalent through the American States, and unanimity diffuse her lucid rays over realms too long obscured by the umbrage of discord. Then will the arts and sciences flourish and bloom with immortal verdure. Then will the blessings of liberty be made manifest to all nations, and the inhabitants of every clime will hasten to partake of the fruits of equality, and become united on America's happy shore.

The oppressed of all nations will fly for refuge to this blissful clime, where blended with the true sons of freedom will be constituted a terrestrial paradise, unpolluted by the presence of haughty lordlings, and the felicities of this perfect community will never be diminished by hereditary distinctions, but every enjoyment be rendered more perfect by the cultivation of science and virtue.