

*To Mr Chauncy [unclear]
from his
Affectionate Uncle - the
Author.*

ORATION,

DELIVERED ON THE FOURTH OF JULY,

A. D. 1827,

AT NEWPORT, R. I.

BY HON. ASHER ROBBINS.

**PROVIDENCE:
MILLER & HAMMOND.
1827.**

Fourth of July, 1827.

HON. ASHER ROBBINS,

SIR.—The Committee of Arrangements for celebrating, in the town of Newport, the birthday of American Independence, hasten, in behalf of their fellow citizens, to present to you their thanks for the Oration you have this day, at their request, delivered before them.

The uncommon degree of interest and pleasure with which you have been listened to, is conclusive evidence, that whoever possesses taste and talents to comprehend and appreciate the great models of Grecian Eloquence which you so much admire and have so successfully cultivated, cannot fail to attain a powerful influence over the minds as well as the hearts of his audience.

The Committee request you to favor them with a copy of your Oration, that they may gratify the expectations and wishes of your fellow citizens by the publication of it.

JOHN P. MANN,
DUTEE J. PEARCE,
BENJ. WAITE CASE,
HENRY Y. CRANSTON,
R. B. CRANSTON, } Committee.

DEAR SIRS,

In according to your request, a copy of my Oration for the press, I beg leave to make my acknowledgments for the very flattering manner in which that request is conveyed. If I could hope that my humble effort to do justice to our Revolution, was, in any measure entitled to the compliment implied in your note; and that the Oration bore any resemblance, even the most distant, to those perfect models to which you allude; I should entertain fewer fears than I now do, of a less indulgent opinion of the public. I will not dissemble, however, that I have endeavored at some resemblance of those models; but I am sensible (no one can be more so than I am) how faint that is, and how far beneath them I have fallen.

ASHER ROBBINS.
Newport, 5th July, 1827.

Messrs,

JOHN P. MANN,
DUTEE J. PEARCE,
BENJ. W. CASE,
HENRY Y. CRANSTON,
R. B. CRANSTON, } Committee.

ORATION.

WE have now met, my friends, to commemorate and to celebrate our Revolution. There has been no revolution known in the history of mankind, so interesting in itself, for the national character it attested; so memorable in its circumstances, for the national virtues it evinced; so favorable in its consequences, directly to the people who accomplished it, and indirectly to the rest of mankind. It stands, and will for ever stand, as a monument of peculiar glory to the American people; and as the guiding star of every other in their struggles for freedom. Whenever, and wherever any people, indignant at their wrongs, shall rise resolved to vindicate their rights, they will turn their eyes to this guiding star; to cheer and to animate, as well as to guide them. Our example will be their study, their model; here they will take their lessons; here they will learn how to fight the battles of freedom, and to triumph in the contest; here they will learn the more difficult lesson, how to secure and to perpetuate all the blessings of that triumph; here they will see demonstrated that the people are capable of self-government, and of a government, too, far excelling all others in security, and the blessings it bestows; here they will find a practical refutation of the doctrine so industriously taught them by their rulers in every age, that a power independent of their own, and

superior to their own, is essential to their happiness, as being essential to their security; here they will see that the most powerful, the most prosperous, and the most happy of all governments, is the government of the people, by the people.

Such a guiding star it has already been to the liberated nations of the South on this continent. In the great resolve to achieve their freedom and independence; in the severe conflicts of their long and sanguinary struggles; in their institutions, and forms of government; they have studied, have imitated, have emulated our great example; and success has crowned their efforts. They too have had and have their sages, and their heroes; if they have not had a WASHINGTON, that seems a favor reserved by Providence for our peculiar felicity; recollect that WASHINGTON stands alone; without compeer in the ages that preceded, and probably to be without compeer in the ages that are to follow him. It is fabled that there could be but one Phœnix; it would seem a fact that there can be but one WASHINGTON; he stands, and probably will for ever stand, at the head of human kind; too elevated to have a rival, almost too elevated to have a second. But though they have not had the compeer of Washington, they have had, as I said, and have, their heroes and their sages who have enabled them to achieve their freedom and independence. They have now taken their equal stations with the independent nations of the earth; with whom they have formed, and are forming their relations; they have adopted and are adopting institutions on the model of our own; institutions that will give full scope to all the

energies of regulated freedom, operating throughout their immense regions, fertile in boundless resources. No longer the hand of a foreign domination lies there as a curse upon the land; withering and blasting even nature herself; that made the most fertile portions of the earth, in a manner, a barren waste; that lay like an incubus upon the faculties of man, and benumbed like a torpedo. No; that blasting hand, is now itself blasted, and is shaken off: Freedom now reigns there; from the summits of their Andes, to the shores of either ocean, her banners, unfurled to the breeze, float in triumphant pride; blessing those nations, by those happy nations blessed. The Genius of our Revolution towering to the heavens, and pointing to those happy nations, may say, in pride of heart may say, "Ecce meos filios."

It also has been, and now is, the guiding star of bleeding hapless Greece; now wading through seas of blood to gain, if possible to gain, the shore of a tranquil liberty. O! God grant that she may gain it. O! the cruel destinies of ill-fated Greece; crushed beneath the foot of a foreign domination now for more than twenty centuries; first of the Macedonian, then of the Roman, and lastly and worst of the Turk, the barbarian, the merciless Turk. Her children trodden under foot by the slave of slaves. Her children (O! heart rending thought) contending for her independence of the Turk; and contending too with hereditary virtue; a virtue not inferior to that by which it was defended by their glorious ancestors, against the Persian; and no friendly hand is found to help them in the dubious

strife! Yes; the immortal fires of Grecian genius, and of Grecian virtue; though smothered for so many ages, are unextinguished and still burn in Greece. Where, O civilized man, where is thy gratitude? Where thy remembrance of thine obligations to Greece? Thy civilization thou owest to her; she was the original of it all. There the arts first sprang into existence; and thence diffused themselves over the earth. She was their inventress; and what she invented she perfected. She gave you the patterns of every excellence; and so perfect that to this day they remain matchless and unrivalled. The glory of the arts in every other country is a borrowed glory, borrowed from her; in her alone it is original and underived; in her it shines with unequalled splendor; like the sun it shines, and every other is lost in its blaze. There too the sciences first dawned; Greece opened their paths to mankind; and if mankind in after ages have proceeded further in them, it is because those paths run to an interminable length; because what is gained by one is gained to all; and because no advance in them can be lost; not like the arts, which are definite in their boundaries; nor the productions of the arts, which are limited by the limitation of the faculties, which produce them. She too gave to the world examples of every thing noble, of every thing ennobling in the human character; examples that exalt to every mind the dignity of the human species; examples that cannot be contemplated, without a feeling of conscious pride, in our common nature, from such sublime flights of human virtue. And shall the descendants of such a people, the heirs of such glories, and

of such obligations upon mankind, find from mankind no returns of favor in this their hour of need? Will they still look with cold indifference on their agonizing struggles, to redeem their country from the hands of barbarians? See them perish in that struggle, or again submit to their bitter bondage? See the foot of the barbarian, and now irritated and vengeful Turk, again put and with aggravated indignities, upon the neck of prostrate Greece? Has a cold and calculating policy, looking only to self, and to the present moment, extinguished every generous sentiment in the human breast? or forbid every act in obedience to its impulse? Is every national movement in their favor to be stigmatized as a crusade; and worthy only of the Quixotes of the age? Shall even the impulses of private sympathy be frowned upon, or ridiculed; and endeavors made to lock out from their relief the resources which those impulses might give them? If mankind are to remain dead to every sentiment of sympathy with suffering humanity; to every sentiment of gratitude to the children of the benefactors of their species; every sentiment of every ennobling virtue; if interest and interest only is to influence and to govern; let it be, in God's name, let it be an enlarged, an enlightened interest. And will emancipated Greece, not promote that interest? will it be nothing to civilized nations, to have such an associate as a partner in the cause and career of human improvement? Soon would modern Greece, if emancipated, vindicate her descent from the ancient. For her genius, "is not dead but sleepeth;" soon would it rouse itself from the long slumber of ages,

and array that country in all its former glory ; would call up from their graves their buried arts ; would summon home their Muses to their native seats, again to infuse their divine inspirations ; would reopen their Porticos and their Lyceums, and again read there the lessons of an immortal wisdom ; again too would be heard, the strains of that impassioned eloquence “ which shook the Arsenal of Athens and fulminated over Greece ;” there too Science would again plume her wing for stronger and bolder flights than ever. This may be deemed the picture of a visionary hope, which emancipated Greece would never realize. She might not to the letter ; but who can doubt but she would make some approaches to it ? At any rate who can doubt but independent Greece, left to all the energies of a regulated freedom, acting upon all her own resources—would be an important acquisition in every point of view to the civilized world ? But if every other people were to remain insensible to the claims of suffering Greece upon their affections ; it is strange that we should, we the American people. To us their affections flew, from the first moment of their unfurling the banner of independence ; to us they looked as their great example. It inspired their bold design—it animated to their deathless acts of self devotion in their country’s cause ; it has kept alive their hopes, in all the gloomy hours of adverse fortune, and under the most appalling disasters. Yes ; not even the memory of their own glorious ancestors has had so sustaining, so animating an influence. No ; not even of those, who stood self-devoted at the pass of Thermopolæ ; nor of those who fought the fields of

Marathon and Platea; nor of those who fought the final and triumphant battle in the Straits of Salamis; though deified to them by the eloquence of her own Demosthenes. No; and our WASHINGTON has been to them a more enkindling name than that of their own LEONIDAS.

But I forget myself; this is not the occasion to plead their cause; and if it were, I could not plead it, as I feel it ought to be pleaded; and if I could I should plead it in vain; for, "O judgment, thou hast fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason."

Thus it is the American people have led and are leading in the van of freedom for mankind. The march of that freedom may be slow; but there is reason to believe, it will be sure and irresistible, and that all absolute thrones will sooner or later fall before it. Already those thrones have to rely on the brute force only of the military arm; for they have lost or are fast losing their two other great props, the ignorance and the superstition of their people, by the diffusion of knowledge and of the spirit of inquiry among them. Nor is this military arm, singly for each, deemed by them a sufficient security to each; for, abjuring their mutual wars of ambition and conquest, they have leagued together for their mutual defence against their own people; and have deemed the united force of all necessary to each, against the single people of each. Now this spirit of the people, so dreaded by these thrones, takes its great force from the example of our revolution; there it feeds itself, thence it grows and becomes the ruling passion. The love of liberty is a sentiment

natural to the human heart ; but the want of it, though that is always felt as a severe privation, it is not felt as a reproach, so long as it is the common lot of all ; and if the privation is not aggravated by outrages, it is not apt to impel to action : But if liberty has been acquired and is enjoyed by others, and the example is ever present to the view, and the results are enviable, then it is coveted ; then the contrast makes the privation felt as a reproach. It is the sting of this reproach, this wounded pride, impatient of degradation, and eager to avenge itself, grafted on this innate love of freedom, that impels to action ; that prompts the noble purpose, that urges the daring hand to vindicate the rights of insulted nature. Yes : insulted nature ; for every arbitrary throne is an insult to nature. What greater indignity to man than to be made the property of his fellow-man ; to have no share in the power that rules him ; to be subject to the abuses of that power, and that power always tending to abuse ; corrupted itself, and corrupting its possessor ; by its own nature and necessary operation corrupting him. It is thus that the influence of our Revolution is silently undermining arbitrary thrones, and preparing their fall ; it is by nourishing the spirit of liberty, by begetting and inflaming an impatience of its privation ; and they must fall. Their leagues, their holy alliances, may delay, but they cannot prevent their final fall. That is ; the arbitrary power must be surrendered ; the people must have freedom,

“ That freedom which God hath given
 Unto all beneath his Heaven ;
 With their breath and from their birth,
 Though guilt would sweep it from the earth ;”

and that freedom must be secured to the people by their forms of government.

It is the great mind and the great heart that makes a people great, and capable of great things; and not their numbers, though these may be as the stars of heaven innumerable. What signified the millions of Asia, but slaves with the minds and hearts of slaves, pouring like the inundation of the universal deluge upon Greece, against the Greeks of that day; though their numbers were comparatively as nothing: against Spartans that could coolly say to the leader of that countless host; who to induce their submission by addressing their fears, told them, that the flight of the arrows of his host in battle, would make a cloud, and intercept the sun; Spartans that could coolly reply—"Then we shall fight in the shade;" who were prepared to prove as they did at Thermopolæ and on all occasions, that this reply was no rhodomontade; was not the assumed language of an affected magnanimity; but of their real indifference to and contempt of the danger: Against Athenians, who when reduced to the alternative, either of submitting or of abandoning their homes, and embarking with their families on board their ships; did not hesitate a moment in making the choice; who instantly abandoned their homes, and embarked with their families on board their ships; but first stoned to death the only Athenian who had been pusillanimous enough to counsel them to submit: Against men who only lived in the life of their country: and who considered her freedom as that life; who defended it as their own; and to whom their own in comparison with hers, was as

nothing. Such men make a country great because they make it free ; they cannot be made slaves ; for if freedom perishes they perish with it ; their virtue will not let them survive it.

The national character, displayed in our revolution, and it was truly great, and in many traits peculiar and unparalleled, was the people's—their natural inherent character. It was not imparted to them by their leaders ; for their leaders were but samples of themselves ; and were leaders only because they were so, and were animated by the same spirit which animated them. Neither were they formed by their leaders, but were self formed for the occasion. It is idle to talk of “the first impulse given to the ball of the Revolution ;” that impulse was the soul of America ; and that soul was not local, it was universal. It was as idle to imagine, as was imagined that the Revolution was moved, and might be controlled, by individuals. No individual, not even the greatest, had the least power independent of the conformity of his sentiment with the popular sentiment ; nor of the popular belief of that conformity ; even Washington's had no other basis. That national character consisted pre-eminently in a high enlightened sense of their own rights ; and in a spirit to brook no compromise of them ; to refuse no dangers in their defence. They were not a people of slaves, debased by the vices of servitude ; and goaded by its severity to break from their bondage. No : they were a people of freemen, nurtured in freedom, possessing all its virtue ; and but threatened with servitude. It was not the grievance itself, for that was not severely felt ;

but it was the principle thereby asserted, the right claimed to impose it, that was so intolerable to the jealous spirit of freedom; that kindled that high spirit to a flame; and led on to the Revolution. Their right to perfect freedom was thereby challenged; and they would not endure to have it questioned. As became them, they first tried and exhausted reason; but finding interested power deaf to her voice; and immovable from its purpose; their universal cry was—to arms! to arms!—and though fully aware of the mighty odds of the conflict; the disparity did not weigh a feather against the cry. Great Britain, then wielding the greatest power on earth; flushed with a recent conquest over the mighty power of France; and menacing them with the whole force of her power; yet their unconquerable virtue could say to Great Britain—“you may destroy our towns, may cut us off from the superfluities, and even the conveniences of life; but we are prepared to despise your power; and will not lament their loss, while we have our woods and our liberty. For liberty we will forego our profits and our pleasures, and the peaceable enjoyment of our dearest connexions.” Yes: such sacrifices were these lofty spirits prepared to make; and would have made, had the extremity of the conflict required them. The Declaration of Independence which followed; and which you have now heard, and annually hear read, was but the national record of the national sentiment; and will remain its eternal monument. The hand that drew it is now cold in death; but it will for ever remain a living picture of his own immortal mind, in that which it gave of the mind of

his country. The same high spirit was also attested in the instant union of so many distinct and unconnected communities ; so divided and so distant from each other ; a union which nothing could prevent, which nothing could break ; no art, no intrigue, no corruption ; no force without, no treachery within ; no hopes, no fears ; no promises, no dangers ; no description, no length of calamity, no extremity of suffering. The "*divide et impera*," that insidious and almost never failing policy of domineering power in similar cases, had no effect here. When Persia invaded Greece, she was able to seduce some of the Grecian States, from the common cause, eminent as their common peril was ; and to engage them on her side ; but here and herein, if not here only, was displayed more than Grecian virtue.

I have said that their sense of their own rights was an enlightened sense. Perhaps no people, as a people, ever possessed a more masculine understanding ; more robust minds, in robust bodies. Their situation and mode of life had no doubt the greatest influence in producing this peculiar strength of understanding ; though other causes contributed to the same effect. That situation was full of necessities ; calling for expedients to meet them, and throwing the individual every where upon his own resources ; inducing habits of thought and reflection, and strengthening these faculties by constant exercise. This was assisted too, by the rudiments of learning which they universally possessed ; (universally I say, for so rarely was any adult person found among them not possessed of these rudiments, that

the acquisition is to be considered as universal;) opening to their minds channels of information; and the means of profiting by the thoughts of others, as well as by their own. By the joint operation of these causes, and of other; and among the other perhaps a more vigorous nature; go where he would among them, the traveller would find the people intelligent; and mingled among them every where minds of a superior cast. No populated district of the country, no town, no village, no hamlet even, was to be excepted; none in which minds were not to be found fitted by nature to cope with the difficulties of the most arduous undertakings. Accustomed to reflect, reason had over them a remarkable ascendancy; accustomed to discriminate, they could not easily be deceived, by its merely specious appearances; and if their understandings might ever be made the dupe of their passions, they could not be impelled, by impelling their passions, to acts of lawless violence. I doubt if all the provinces together, though ransacked for the purpose, could have mustered one such rabble as might be wrought up to a riot of blood and violence, by the harangue of an Anthony over the dead body of a Cæsar. Bred up in every species of hardy industry, and of adventurous enterprize, their bodies were fitted to every toil, and superiour to every toil of every undertaking to which their minds impelled them. A beautiful picture, but not more beautiful than just, of this vigour of body and mind, is given by Burke: He is speaking of them, before the Revolution, but just on its eve: He says—"Pass by other parts, and look at the manner in which the

people of New-England have of late carried on the whale fishery. While we find them among the tumbling mountains of ice ; and behold them penetrating into the deepest frozen recesses of Hudson's Bay and Davis's Straits, whilst we are looking for them beneath the Arctic circle, we hear that they have passed into the opposite regions of polar cold, that they are at the antipodes, and engaged under the frozen serpent of the south. Falkland Island, which seemed too remote and romantic an object for the grasp of national ambition, is but a stage, a resting place, in the progress of their victorious industry. Nor is the equinoctial heat more discouraging to them than the accumulated winter of both the poles ; we know that while some of them draw the line, and strike harpoon on the coast of Africa, others run the longitude, and pursue their gigantic game along the coast of Brazil. No sea but what is vexed by their fisheries ; no climate that is not witness to their toils. Neither the perseverance of Holland, nor the activity of France, nor the dexterous and firm sagacity of English enterprise, ever carried this mode of hardy industry to the extent to which it has been pushed by this people ; a people, who are still as it were in the gristle, and not yet hardened into the bone of manhood."

And Chatham, contemplating the same people about the same time, sees in them the genuine (not the fabled) sons of earth ; and foresees that they must prove invincible.

That prudence, (to use the word in its original sense,) that prudence which discriminates the nature of things, and assigns to each its just conside-

ration ; to the good, to the evil, and to the indifferent ; which foresees the future, and provides for it, or against it, according to its nature : That justice, which, recognizing the rights of all, exacts and pays respect to all the rights of all : That fortitude, which, proposing noble ends, by noble means, has the perseverance and the patience to accomplish them : and that temperance, the virtue of the virtues, which controls them all, and prevents each from running to that excess at which it ceases to be virtue and becomes vice ; that by its forbearance, its clemency, its charity, and its modesty, diffuses graces over them all, gives to all their finishing perfection, and to the union of all its transporting effect : These virtues were so common to our ancestors, who effected the revolution, that they were in truth national virtues ; and they were so eminent, that even WASHINGTON is but the Corinthian capital of that column, which the virtues of the land displayed ; all was in proportion, all was in keeping with that crowning beauty of the whole ; and he was this Corinthian capital, because all the virtues were found united in him, and united in their greatest perfection. His fame is but the reflection of his virtue ; and what a fame it is ! whose is like it ? so pure, so bright, so boundless, so likely to be eternal ? What part of the habitable globe, civilized or savage—what human being of any part, hath not heard of the name of WASHINGTON ? whose lips have not repeated, whose feelings have not kindled at, his name ? He has wanted no Homer to be the herald of his fame ; his name is its own herald, because it is but another name for virtue herself, and

is identified with all that is conceived of virtue. His gallant armies too, worthy of such a chief, beloved and admired by him, as the means of his success, and as the partners of his glory; by whom he was enabled to win the battles of freedom, and give to his country her independence; what virtues they displayed! not merely the more vulgar virtue of courage, but that higher virtue which combats for glory, in a glorious cause; superior to all dangers, to all sacrifices, to all privations: glorious armies, abounding in chiefs who were great and glorious men, and some of them all but WASHINGTONS: patriot armies, with every title to the gratitude, and I will add, to the munificence of their country. O! may it never be said that any of them have or shall lay their bones in one that is ungrateful. The time would fail me to particularize persons, and speak with due praise to individual merit; and it would be unjust and invidious to notice some, and to pass by others equally entitled to notice. To the historic muse I commit and commend their praises.

Will it be said that this ascription to the nation of such national virtue, is but the vain boast of national egotism? I ask where is, where ever was a people before, whose private virtues were a substitute for government itself, and a sufficient substitute? and such were the private virtues of this people. In some of the provinces government itself was suspended, with all its authority and functions; by the policy of the mother country suspended, with a view to let loose anarchy upon the people, and by its reign and its horrors to coerce them into submission to her authority; but it was found that anarchy had no materials

among them; that their habits of self-control operated like government, and preserved the same order. I ask again, where is, where ever was a people before, whose self-command was such, that during a protracted civil war of eight years continuance, they never once abused their power; never permitted themselves to be hurried into any one scene of sanguinary violence? Such was the self-command of the American people. Yet what provocations, what trials, their virtue endured. But these I purposely omit to describe or to mention. Let that national dignity which could forbear the retaliation, now forbear the reproach. Let the mantle of silence, and, if possible, of oblivion, be thrown over those disgraceful, those inhuman cruelties, now, and for ever hereafter.

We owe the revolution to the virtue of the people, and our empire to the revolution; we owe our government to the wisdom of our sages; and to that our national felicity; the unexampled rapidity of our growth, in numbers, in strength, in resources, in prosperity of every kind; and the well founded hope, the moral certainty, of equal, if not greater rapidity of advance in all future time, to our latest generations; opening prospects of happiness and glory, brighter than ever before have beamed upon any people; prospects deeply interesting to mankind, while they are so auspicious to ourselves. These high destinies of our empire, embracing now the foundations of an empire, grander by far than ever yet has existed on earth; not excepting the last, and the greatest of the series, the Roman; no; the flights of her eagle had a less limited range

than ours, and hers never soared to the height that ours may ; these destinies are liable to fail but, as I fondly believe, by one event, and that depending entirely on ourselves ; I mean the dissolution of our Union. From every other danger they stand guarded, and, as I think, safe. But the loss of our Union would be the loss of every thing ; every thing in possession, every thing in prospect ; that moment our sun sets, to rise no more ; and the hopes of mankind perish for ever. For the dissolution of our Union would lead ultimately to the loss of our liberties. Mutual disputes would produce mutual wars, mutual wars standing armies, and standing armies arbitrary governments ; and these, not only all the general evils of despotism, but further, all the peculiar evils of petty contiguous despotisms. I forbear to point out, and to pourtray, these evils on this occasion ; it would lead me too far ; besides, they will present themselves on reflection to every mind, and speak forcibly to every heart. This peril, and this not probable, hardly possible, (for the same wise forecast which induced the Union, I trust can never be wanting to this people ; and therefore can never fail to preserve it,) is the only peril, as I said and believe, that attends our march to our great and glorious destination. That march may be more or less rapid ; but will be sure and certain. Its acceleration depends on government devising the means, and steadily pursuing the means best calculated to unfold all the faculties of all the country ; and giving to all their full growth ; and these means are so obvious that they cannot escape the sagacity of the government ; indeed they have not escaped.

They have been visible to the government from the beginning ; and never to any administration more clearly and comprehensively than to the present. These means involve no sacrifice of a part to the whole, nor of the interest of a part to the interest of the whole ; they require in any part only the exertion of that common prudence, which foregoes a small immediate, but very temporary interest, for the sake of a great and permanent, and not distant future interest. The opposition to the pursuit of these means is diminishing ; and will, we may safely predict, speedily vanish before the great and increasing lights, by which every where it is recommended and supported. The great capital of the country is its land ; and the great desideratum is that policy, which, by giving full activity to that capital, will give its full value to that land ; and that policy is found in these means. This done, and our national wealth, and national power of all sorts, is in the end, beyond all assignable limits. Yes ; they become too large an object for the grasp of the imagination itself ; she stretches herself in vain, and sinks overpowered by the infinitude of the object.

That problem in the science of government the most difficult in its nature, but the most interesting to mankind ; at which the greatest minds of all ages in all ages have labored, and labored in vain ; has been solved here, and our destinies depended on the solution ; solved by that illustrious body of sages, who framed our Constitution of Government. That problem was, how to make a government, purely popular, and yet perfectly practicable and perfectly efficient for a great country. Those sages

saw that—simply national it could not be, for that would involve the annihilation of the States ; and besides it was equally forbid by the great extent of the country ; the representation to be adequate would be too unwieldy to be practicable ; and the power of the executive to be adequate would be too great to be safe : That simply federal it could not be ; for that simple principle never had been found sufficient any where at any time ; and our own experience had demonstrated that it was not, and could not be sufficient here ; indeed its insufficiency is inherent in the nature of man and of things, and remedy for it there is none. It was conceived by those great men, and the conception was original with them, that the national principle might be grafted on the federal, in such a manner, as thereby to obtain all the advantages of both, and to avoid all the evils of both ; and, what is glory indeed, they realized the happy conception. They produced a constitution that has all this perfection ;—purely popular, yet perfectly practicable and perfectly efficient for the government of this great and growing country ; that is indeed the great means of its growth ; that is formed to adapt itself to any enlargement of territory, any increase of numbers ; and to gain in efficiency without impairing its perfect freedom, by every such accession. A government of beneficence itself ; good for all, and equally good for all ; its power and its effect the same every where ; on the extremities as at the centre ; on the shores of the Pacific, as on the shores of the Atlantic ; along the margin of the Mexican Gulf in the South, and along the borders of the Lakes in

the North, as at its seat in the city of Washington. By its own excellence insuring the general prosperity ; precluding thereby, if not the possibility of faction, the possibility of danger from faction. By preventing the existence of different orders, in the society, possessing different privileges ; that eternal source of contention in all the ancient republics, and finally fatal to them all ; it opens to all the citizens and equally to all the path to distinction and honors, by merit, and by merit alone. This Constitution is a monument that does honor to the human understanding ; and is the peculiar glory of the sages who framed it ; but that glory is shared by the people ; for by adopting the wisdom of their sages they made it their own ; and it is a proof of high understanding that they were able to see, and appreciate in the theory all the practical benefits of the system. When Lord Chatham saw the deliberations of our first Provincial Congress at Philadelphia, they filled him with admiration of the wisdom of that assembly. In his place in Parliament he said :

“*My Lords*—For my part I must declare and avow that in all my reading, and it has been my favorite study, I have read Thucydides, and studied and admired the master states of the world ; that for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusion under such a complication of difficult circumstances, no nation or body of men can stand in preference to the General Congress at Philadelphia.” Had that great man lived to witness another General Congress, assembled to deliberate under still more difficult circumstances, on the best form

of government for their great and growing country; and to witness the result both as to theory and practice, and had occasion to speak of their merits, would his admiration, would his panegyrick of them have been less? would he not have placed these states, among those master states of the world which he had studied and admired? I verily believe he would have placed them at their head.

It is by its nature formed for duration; and is not endangered but is guaranteed by situation. It has been supposed that all governments have, in their original composition, some principle of mortality; and must thereby perish sooner or later. This may be so, as to all governments founded in force, and which subsist by force; for they are liable to be destroyed by the re-action which that force tends to produce; it may be so, as to states founded in consent; but composed of different orders, possessing different privileges; if those orders are not properly balanced; and even then they are liable to be destroyed, by whatever accident may destroy that balance. But our government has in it no such principle; is liable to no such danger. Pericles said to the Athenians, that virtue was the only thing which never grew old; the principle of our government is of the nature of virtue; it is the principle of equal right. This government is founded, and it is the first of a great country that has been founded, in the pure principle of equality; political equality; it is the government of all, by all, for the equal good of all; and the people must tire of their own equal rights, and of their own happiness, before this principle can lose its force. The power is in the

people, and must remain so ; because the property is in the people, and must remain so ; if the government is destroyed then, it must be a voluntary destruction, by the people themselves, self-moved to the work. We have a government then that in its nature is formed for immortality. Safe within itself, how is it without ? It is placed, securely placed, beyond the reach of accident. We may have wars made upon us, but our subjugation is morally impossible. With a world of our own, and separated from Europe by the wide Atlantic ; all Europe combined, could not subdue our country. But there can be no such combination. Then the probability of wars is daily diminishing, in proportion as our ability to meet them is daily increasing ; and I need not say how rapid that is. That policy, too, which is improving the security of the country, and the means of its defence against war, is the best of all policy to prevent war ; it is the policy of true wisdom, of true economy. It is placing us, and at no distant day, in a situation which will guarantee to the country a perpetual peace ; a situation in which no nation will dare to do us wrong ; or if done, to refuse reparation. Neither will there be any fear of war from our own injustice ; justice to all nations will be, as it ever has been, our standing policy. Thus secure of perpetual peace, and launched on our course, we shall proceed to our destination, with every sail unfurled to the breeze, and every breeze propitious.

Among the glories of that destination ; I fondly anticipate, as the greatest and the brightest, those of science, of literature, and the arts. These glories

are the true elixir of national immortality; they alone give immortality to the countries which they adorn; they survive the revolution and destruction of empires, the extinction of peoples, of tongues, of every thing but time itself; they only cease to flourish when time itself shall cease to be. What remains of Greece and Rome but these glories? what else has remained for ages and ages? and these will for ever remain; and for ever make their people the objects of the admiration of mankind. These glories would indeed be stars in our national banner; to shine like stars in the heavens, and no less eternal. But let us not deceive ourselves; we have not yet attained to these glories; for wide is the difference between mediocrity, and that excellence which gives immortality to works; nothing is more easy than the one, and which we have attained; and nothing more difficult than the other, and which we have not attained. Neither let us despair; for there is that in the American mind, to overcome every difficulty; a force, an ardor of pursuit, that never has been surpassed in any people; and that mind has but to take this direction, guided by proper lights, and aided by proper means, to reach that excellence. We want a Bacon to point out our deficiencies and their sources; to open to us the paths to improvement, and to give directions therein; to advise, in a word, all the means to this end. We want, too, that policy, which looking to, and coveting this species of glory, will not grudge the means, nor stint the means necessary to procure it; and will make it a national concern. Soon would that

policy usher in the day, of which we have now only the promise in the glimmer of its dawn.

Thus have I endeavoured to present to you, my fellow-citizens, some of the views suggested by our Revolution, to exalt, if I could, and as the occasion required, one common country in our common affection. Reflecting on these things, let us in common with our nation, be grateful to that Almighty Being, in whose hands are the issues of empires; who hath given to us our goodly heritage; who from the beginning hath seemed to gather us under the wings of his special Providence, to be our shield in the hour of special danger; and still humbly hope, as in the past, so in the future, his hand may lead us, and his right hand sustain us.