

To Mr R. B. Heywood  
with compliments of  
MCH  
2 Dec 1882.



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AN  
**ORATION,**

DELIVERED IN  
**ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH,**  
BEFORE THE INHABITANTS OF  
**CHARLESTON, SOUTH-CAROLINA,**  
ON MONDAY, THE FIFTH OF JULY, 1802.

IN COMMEMORATION OF  
**AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.**

BY APPOINTMENT OF THE  
**AMERICAN REVOLUTION SOCIETY.**

AND PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THAT SOCIETY.

AND ALSO OF THE  
*South-Carolina State Society of Cincinnati.*

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Potest esse bellum sine tumultu; tumultus sine bello, esse non potest.  
CICERO.

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BY **THOMAS RHETT SMITH,**

A MEMBER OF THE REVOLUTION SOCIETY.



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O R A T I O N, &c.

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**I**F it be right, my fellow citizens, that we should celebrate our own exploits; we have, with great propriety, selected for that purpose, a day, which is signalized by the happiest, the boldest, and most meritorious measure, of any that is to be noticed in the course of our revolution.

Whilst in the actual enjoyment of the vast blessings which have flowed from our independence; it would, indeed, be ungrateful and unnatural, not to look frequently, and with proud affection, towards the statesmen and heroes, who wrought its achievement. It is but a just tribute to those who yet survive; to tell them, that their services, though in too "many instances neglected, are still remembered;" and, we owe it to the memories of those who have gone hence, to declare, that "the good which they have done, is not interred "with their bones, but is felt, acknowledged, and recorded in our breasts."

Considerations of policy and interest, further instruct us, to endeavour to keep alive, and transmit to our posterity, that patriotic ardour, which bore us through our difficulties, and which is the parent of virtuous deeds; by bestowing our thanks, and applause, upon those who have deserved well of

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their country. To some, the consciousness of having done well, is a sufficient reward for the services they have rendered; as the consciousness of meaning well, was a sufficient excitement to action; but the many require the additional excitement, founded on the reasonable expectation of the smiles and approbation of their fellow citizens.

Under the influence, then, of a sense of gratitude; and in pursuance of the dictates of sound policy; we will, at each return of this auspicious day, renew the topic (which, though trite, can never cease to interest) of our deliverance from oppression, and establishment as an independent nation. I think, however, that this ought not to be merely a day of triumph; that it ought likewise, to be devoted to serious reflection; to a critical examination of our actual situation; in order that, by a view of our transactions, since the declaration of independence, and a fair comparison of the present with the past, we may determine how far we have conformed to the principles with which we set out, and how long we are likely to retain the prize for which we struggled so hard, and spilled so much blood.

The nature of the dispute between this country and Great-Britain, is too well understood to require much time in the consideration of it. Suffice it to say, that vexatious restrictions upon our commerce; the quartering of troops amongst us, the violation of our charters, and the imposition of taxes, were sorely felt at the moment; and are now universally acknowledged to have been such intolerable grievances as justified that appeal to arms, which terminated so happily for these United States.

It may be proper here to observe, that nothing could have been more fortunate than the *period*, at which this rupture took place. Had it commenced a few years sooner than it did, the probability is, that the thinness of our population would not have enabled us to sustain the contest; we should have fallen an easy victim to our rashness, and have added to the oppression from which we had prematurely attempted to relieve ourselves. Had it happened a few years *later*; had the revolutionary torch been lit in this country, at the moment it was blazing in the other hemisphere; we should, cer-  
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tainly, have gained neither domestic freedom, nor national independence. The smaller body, attracted by the greater, must necessarily have obeyed its movements. A strong sympathy, resulting from an apparent, but delusive, similarity of views and principles, would infallibly have produced a similarity of conduct; and instead of stopping short, as we did at the "precise point of temperate liberty;" we should have been plunged in all the vices and extravagances that spring from anarchy, and have closed the scene, in poverty and dependence.\*

But, luckily for America, acting by herself, uninfluenced by any foreign power, she was allowed to promote her own purposes; to fight her own battles; to maintain her own rights, and to pursue her own exclusive interests, according to the dictates of her own judgment. And, although during the course of the war, the assistance of a European nation was sought and obtained; creating no divisions, it gained no dangerous ascendancy amongst us; and the contest was terminated without the smallest sacrifice of the great object, for which it had been eventually continued.

Perhaps, it is a circumstance which distinguishes the American revolution from all others, that, generally speaking, the same characters that took the lead at the commencement of it, preserved the confidence of their countrymen through the progress of it, and were crowned with glory at its conclusion. The Americans did not, like the French, split into various rival factions, crossing, supplanting, and destroying one another; but possessing a perfect unity of design; and understanding exactly their object, it was pursued with an intelligence, a consistency, and a resolution, which could not fail of success.

To give a minute detail of the many events that occurred, during the trying conflict, would be only to repeat a history,

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\* To those who believe that the American revolution produced the French; this supposed coincidence will, of course, appear impossible. But many of the well informed are of opinion, that a revolution in France would have taken place, without the aid of *exam 1*; that the combustibles were preparing half a century ago; and could not have been smothered much longer.

which can never be erased from our memory, and which has been amply related in this very place. And, when I stated that this day ought to be sacred to the commemoration of the deeds of those citizens, who distinguished themselves in the revolution; adverting, generally, to the subject which was proper for the occasion, I meant not, myself, to speak of military characters, or virtues of which our country has happily furnished too great a number, to be now distinctly enumerated; I meant not to descant upon exploits to which I could add no lustre; to which I was conscious I could not do justice; and which have already been proclaimed to the world, through the trumpet of fame. My only intention was to bring them to your thoughts. When you have called to mind that illustrious band of patriots, who arose at the noise of danger; who projected the revolution, and at length brought it to a glorious completion; when you have reflected upon the difficulties they surmounted, the sufferings they endured, the valour, talents and wisdom they displayed; whilst your bosoms swell with admiration, pride, and gratitude; you will value the prize from the dearness of the purchase, and your solicitude will be, proportionably, increased for its preservation and defence. No picture can, indeed, be conceived more splendid and captivating, than that which represents these infant states struggling against the gigantic force of Britain; and finally compelling her to renounce her extravagant pretensions, and to acknowledge their just rights. But, although the brilliancy of military achievements be most alluring to the imagination, and the gallantry of our countrymen can never be too highly estimated; yet it was after the sword was sheathed, and peace proclaimed, that our severest trials commenced. Examples of the triumph of desperate valour, over superior force and discipline, have occurred in all nations, even the most despotic: and the arm of the fanatic is often as well nerved, as the soldier's who fights under the banners of liberty. But it is after the victory is obtained; when the object contended for is possessed; when the means of retaining it are to be devised; when losses are to be repaired; when contributions are to be apportioned, and, individual pretensions adjusted—then it is that the turbulent passions are likely to have their sway; that pride, envy, and ambition, will commonly produce their worst effects;

sects; and what was most eagerly fought, and dearly purchased, will be sacrificed in the very moment of attainment.

A people, then, who, at the close of a long and doubtful conflict, abstain from civil discord; who preserve their freedom, and at the same time quietly submit to the empire of law and reason, afford the highest possible evidence of real patriotism; and, however distinguished they may have been for their bravery, will yet be more distinguished for their moderation and virtue.

This evidence was certainly furnished by the American people, to their everlasting honor, at the termination of the late war. We had no conquered countries, or splendid embassies to bestow on our generals: surrounded with glory, they obtained no dangerous pre-eminence: the soldier returned home crippled and penniless; and the affluent were, in numerous instances, reduced to extreme indigence. Under these circumstances it might naturally have been expected, that the clamours of disappointment would have burst forth into civil fury; but all was peace and tranquillity; and America proved worthy of the victories she had gained, by that which she obtained over herself.

We may then, with equal pride and truth, pronounce, with respect to the American revolution, that its *commencement* was at a *period* the most auspicious; that its progress was signalized by achievements, as difficult and extraordinary as the annals of any nation can exhibit; and that its conclusion was happy beyond example.

Such, however, is the uncertainty of human affairs; and so extremely rapid was our decline, immediately after the peace; that there was scarce an interval betwixt the moment of our highest exaltation, and that of our lowest depression. We may be said to have touched our political zenith and nadir, almost at the same instant. Such was the decay of our commerce; the accumulation of our debts; the failure of our credit; and the imbecility of our government; that we were become thoroughly contemptible abroad; we were low, even in our own estimation; and many began to fear, that the fruit of all our sufferings, and exertions, would be an empty name.

This was, undoubtedly, the period of our utmost humiliation ; and it required perhaps a greater effort, to rescue us from that degraded condition, than that which had placed us in the attitude of an independent nation. But America again showed herself worthy of her past deeds ; and, with a deliberation, a prudence, and wisdom, surpassing any thing which is to be traced in the history of nations, formed the Federal Constitution.

By the declaration of independence, we claimed the right to govern ourselves ; the treaty of peace acknowledged our title ; but the federal constitution alone secured our possession. I tremble, when I think what must have been our fate, but for the adoption of that constitution ! and when we reflect upon the great evils it has corrected ; and the still greater evils it has averted ; we cannot but pray “ that the blessings of heaven may light upon the heads of those by whom it was suggested, planned, and executed.”

The time that this happy measure was entered upon, was as fortunate as that, at which, as I observed, we took arms for our defence. Had it been attempted immediately after the peace, it would have been viewed with more jealousy and distrust than it eventually was ; and would unquestionably have proved abortive. It was necessary that we should *feel*, before we proceeded to act ; and that hard experience of the wretchedness of our situation, should have urged us to reformation ; and luckily for us, this experience was not delayed. Had our misfortunes come gradually upon us, so as to have admitted of palliatives, instead of the grand remedy, which was applied, we had inevitably been lost. If the great work had been postponed three years longer, it never could have been completed.

When we consider the effects which the late European war almost instantaneously produced in this country ; the interferences it occasioned ; the divisions it excited ; and even the animosities it created ; we must at once acknowledge, that we were no longer in that sound and temperate state of mind, which was absolutely essential to so great an undertaking. Order and harmony could not possibly have sprung from so many jarring elements : and, instead of establishing, at once, a  
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constitution, the most perfect production of human wisdom; bewildered amidst the wild and extravagant theories of the day, we should have been perpetually shifting from one extreme to another; and, after passing through "a variety of untried being; through scenes and changes," marked with desolation and blood; we should at last have been severed into little jealous, quarrelsome democracies; or have sheltered ourselves under the arm of monarchy. Reason, reflection, a common knowledge of human nature, assure us that such must have been our fate, had we not seized upon this rock of our safety, before the storm arose, and the angry billows of the eastern world began to beat upon us.

I look upon this era to be the brightest in our history, as the event which signalized it, was, by far, the most important. Those who declared the independency of these states, and fought to obtain that independency, may be said to have erected an empire: the authors and promoters of the federal constitution, saved and confirmed it.

The celebrated Roman orator, after having rescued the city of Rome from a dangerous conspiracy, triumphantly compares himself with Romulus, its founder. However disgusted we may be at his vanity, in founding his own praise; we cannot but admire the justness of the reasoning by which he makes out his pretensions. "The day," says he "that we are saved from destruction, is worthier of celebration than that on which we were born; because we are insensible of any pleasure at our birth; and our future condition is uncertain; but when we are saved, the pleasure is felt, and the benefit ascertained."

So may we say, with regard to those who gave birth to the American empire. They left us in a state of painful uncertainty as to our destinies: with a government so unequal to our protection, as the late confederation was, we could scarcely pronounce our acquired independence a blessing; and our condition was gloomy, unprosperous and declining. Whereas, they who framed the federal constitution, preserved us from a perilous existence; and pointed out the path we have so successfully trodden, to wealth, honour, and greatness. In these instances, however, we have no difficulty in the comparison, or adjust-

ment of merit ; for with a few exceptions, we shall find that the characters, who first roused the nation to repel British tyranny, and were afterwards most active in the cause of freedom ; were the same who finally capped their own fame, and confirmed the rights and liberties of their country in the federal convention. They are both the *conditores et conservatores Reipublicæ* : no men on earth ever acted in scenes more trying or interesting : and when we calculate the vast blessings which have accrued, and those which are likely to accrue, from their labours, we can scarce fix bounds to our gratitude and applause.

From this period. America is to date her real consequence amongst the nations of the earth. We see her, indeed, soon again, surrounded by extraordinary difficulties ; but owing to the energy of her new system, and the wisdom of those who conducted her affairs ; amidst the most embarrassing perplexities ; and, in spite of vexations and injuries, the most outrageous and unprovoked, she has progressed, with astonishing celerity, to a situation which her most sanguine hopes could not have anticipated. Her history, for the last ten years, notwithstanding domestic agitations and discontents, must appear creditable in the eyes of the impartial world. Scarce had she time to attend to her own concerns ; and provide for the payment of her heavy debts ; when circumstances arose in Europe, which could not fail, in some measure, to distract her from the steady pursuit of her interest ; and nearly embroiled her in a contest, to which she was urged by no motive of duty or policy. The events that have occurred, must be fresh in the minds of all present ; and when due consideration is given to the nature and magnitude of those events ; after all our rubs and losses, we have yet reason to be surprised, and to rejoice, that we have escaped so well. As it was presumed by foreign nations, it might reasonably have been feared by ourselves, that a government, but three years old, would be unable to withstand the repeated shocks it was destined to encounter. Unmoved, however, by frowns or flattery, or aggression from abroad ; or still more dangerous discontents at home ; but acting upon correct principles ; and keeping constantly and distinctly in view, the rights and interests of America ; it maintained those rights and interests with an inflexibility the most persevering ; and with as much success as the physical capacity of the country would permit.

The ordeal, through which the states have passed, seems fully to have evinced the strength of their federal constitution, and the purity of the government. So that, upon a candid review of our national conduct, since the declaration of independence to the present time, I think we have no reason to charge ourselves with any deterioration of character; that there has been no degeneracy; and that the firmness, wisdom, and spirit, displayed on that occasion, have been perfectly supported. We ought then, it should seem, to feel exalted in our own estimation, as we certainly are in the estimation of mankind in general, and to cherish that harmony and union to which we owe all the blessings we enjoy, and which can alone insure our happiness. But are we happy? Are we united? Do no new dangers threaten? It was in order to dwell somewhat upon these topics of enquiry, and to consider the existing temper of the times, that I have passed over transactions, which otherwise ought not to have been slighted.

The truth is not to be disguised, that a spirit of party has arisen amongst us, which, however we may console ourselves with the reflection of its being the necessary offspring of free government, is corrupting the whole community; and, if not checked or mitigated, must inevitably destroy our liberty, and blight the fairest fruits of the revolution. How far this spirit owes its origin to the events of the European war, or to the fickleness and depravity of mankind; it is immaterial to enquire. Certain it is, that instead of terminating with those events: it has continued to spread and progress; and has at length arrived at a most lamentable height of intolerance. Inasmuch that even in celebrating the darling history of the acquisition of our independence, anxious as we must feel to name the patriots who toiled for its achievement; we are condemned to mention those only, whom perhaps a kind fate has saved from witnessing scenes disgraceful to their country, or, by descanting on the merits of the living, to challenge the criticism, and provoke the censure of half the audience. Had I, for example, in dilating upon the act of this very day, brought the venerable Adams to your view, invoking the God of eloquence to his aid, and striving with all his might to effect the work of our deliverance; had I reminded you of the perseverance, zeal, and spirit, displayed by him, through the whole course  
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of the war—he is considered by some, as having apostatized from that cause to which his life had been previously devoted.

Had I introduced to your recollection, the revolutionary services of the *present chief magistrate*, and in order to excite your admiration, have read to you the glorious instrument, in which our rights are so ably expressed and asserted. Alas! in the opinion of many, he has been the means of defacing the finest feature in the constitution; and has, in one rash moment, done much more mischief, than is sufficient to counterbalance all the good that adulation itself can possibly ascribe to him.

Had I, in pursuing the theme of eulogium, called forth the names of Jay, Hamilton, Clinton, Pickens, Knox, Livingston, and many others, distinguished for their revolutionary services; their merits, however splendid, are recognized *merely by their party*. Even that great name, which in itself suggests more than the most laboured panegyric can pourtray; and can never fail to rouse in every pensive bosom, emotions too powerful for utterance; even the name of WASHINGTON has not escaped the vengeance of this malignant spirit. Scarcely was he deposited in his grave, when creatures, more groveling than those which prey upon his poor remains, have endeavoured to fritter away a reputation, which, when it ceases to be cherished by Americans, their degeneracy is stamped, and their virtue gone.

It was proper, therefore, to be silent, where the justness of praise would be but *partially* acknowledged.

America exhibits, truly, a strange spectacle at this moment! When we consider the amazing contrast her present flourishing condition affords, to that which followed the peace, and preceded the establishment of the federal constitution; that in the short space of ten years, the ravages of war have been repaired; that her credit has been completely restored; her agriculture, commerce, and population, extended and increased to a degree so extraordinary, that she appears to have been raised, as it were, by magic, to nearly a level with the great empires of the world; when we look more minutely into her domestic situation, and observe the wisdom and purity of her civil institutions, never surpassed, if equalled;

led; that every man feels himself secure in the enjoyment of every right that is dear to him; and that peace, plenty, and liberty shine over the whole continent.—From this review, we should pronounce that she is, what she ought to be, the happiest of nations; that her happiness ought not to be tampered with by *hazardous experiments*; and that nothing less than a combination of surprising talent, energy, patriotism, and good fortune, could have produced such precious fruits. Were we, on the other hand, to judge of her condition, either from those vehicles by which an account of it is supposed to be communicated to the people, and the world at large; or from those verbal representations which have prevailed for some years past, and at length together effected an important change in the administration of her affairs; we should not hesitate to declare, that her citizens were all dishonest; that her liberty had taken wings; and that she was the most corrupt, oppressed, and miserable country on the face of the globe. Such are the mutilations and distortions of *party spirit*.

To expect a total exemption from an evil, which experience proves to be necessarily incidental to free government, would be as unreasonable, as to expect to enjoy life unattended by pain or sickness. The utmost which can be attempted with any prospect of success, is to lessen, or mitigate; and when the danger arising from the progress of the evil, is such as affects our very *existence*, and threatens, not merely to *injure*, but to *destroy*, we are then urged to make this attempt, by the most imperious of all motives, that of self-preservation. To show that the danger in question is of this magnitude, and ought to excite alarm, it is not requisite that we should turn to the history of nations that have passed away. The least reflection informs us, what experience hath confirmed; that, as republican governments, when closely united, have uniformly displayed an energy, which has rendered them impregnable to the assaults of despotism; so that to conquer them, it is only to divide them; that their greatest enemy is *civil discord*, and that which generally precedes, or follows—*foreign interposition*. Intestine warfare never leaves a country where it found it; and though instances may have occurred of nations recovering their rights, by rising in opposition to tyranny; there are more instances  
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of liberty being totally lost in the convulsions which spring from the excess of it. Let us not flatter ourselves that we can go to the utmost extremity of party intemperance and abuse, and stop short of personal violence. The transition from words to blows is rapid; and when the angry passions are once roused; and the tongue, and the pen are no longer sufficient to express the rancour of the heart, recourse will naturally be had to arms. Twice already, has the sword of insurrection been brandished amongst us.

Supposing, however, that party rage does not proceed to such dreadful extremities; it nevertheless works serious injury, and tends to cloy, and “sickly o’er,” all the comforts and advantages which might fairly be looked for, as the result of our freedom and independence. It poisons social intercourse; it levels all just and honorable distinctions of character; and puts the knave and the hypocrite upon a footing, with a man of tried and ascertained worth. The first are sure to have the full interest and support of their party; and the latter has no more. It occasions, besides, that perpetual struggle for party pre-eminence in which the general welfare is in danger of being lost sight of, neglected, or betrayed.

Upon this subject it may be well to listen to the voice of our beloved Washington. “Party spirit,” says he, “is unfortunately inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. It exists under different shapes, in all governments, more or less, stifled, controled, or repressed; but in those of the popular form, it is seen in its greatest rankness, and is truly their *worst* enemy. The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissention, which in different ages and countries, has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. The disorders and miseries which result, gradually incline the minds of men, to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner, or later, the chief of some prevailing faction, more able, or more fortunate than his competitor, turns this disposition, to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty.”

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This is the warning voice of patriotism, wisdom, and experience: it is the voice of a citizen who never forfeited the confidence of his country; who could have no interest but in her welfare, and in perpetuating that liberty, towards the establishment of which, his known great services had so eminently contributed.

His ideas, have been so completely realized, in the history of a foreign nation, that were it not for some material circumstances which have happened, since the time at which he wrote his *fare-well address*; we should be led to suppose that he had transcribed that history, rather than communicated the result of abstract reflection. To use his own language, we have actually seen the *alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpening the spirit of revenge, and producing a frightful despotism*: we have seen this state of things, gradually inclining the minds of men to seek security and repose, in the absolute power of an individual; and at length, a chief more fortunate than his competitors, turn this disposition to the purpose of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty.

This has, certainly, been the upshot of all their toils, and sufferings, unless we be greatly deceived, as to the extent and distribution of power, in the existing government of France.

To refer to the transactions of that nation, I am aware is irksome to many of our citizens, who discover no analogy of circumstances, and think that no advantage can be gained by such reference. I conceive, however, that a large volume has been opened for our perusal and instruction; that it contains many wholesome lessons; and that, whatever happy differences there may be, between the character, temper, and situation of the American and French people, human nature is pretty much the same in all countries; that the same causes will every where produce the same effects; and that if party rage has been the grave of liberty in one country, it may likewise be so in another.

The seeds of life and death are sown with nearly an equal hand in all republican governments. Free and frequent elections are their *life*; the party spirit attending frequent elections, when it proceeds to extremity, is their *death*. But,

in these states, the election of a chief magistrate of the union every four years, must naturally excite peculiar anxiety: and if ever it should be considered, as the established system or practice, that the event of such election, is to affect the particular interest of individuals, and to occasion a general diminution from public employments; it will not only debase that spirit of independence, which is the distinguishing characteristic of republicanism; but, between the *fears* of some, and the *hopes* of more, the keenest animosities will be engendered; and what is now a subject of extreme solicitude, may become one of real danger. I should regard this practice as likely to increase party violence in a tenfold degree; and, as adding fuel to a flame, which will always burn with too much fury. Admitting, however, that the system of remuneration and revenge does not take root; still the period of the presidential election will be that of the greatest irritation and turbulence; unless these be counteracted by the moderation, the phlegm, and good sense of the people. The occurrences of the last two years, will sufficiently establish this fact; and since the moment of general Washington's retirement from office, when he judged fit with the affection of a friend, to warn us against the consequences of party spirit; so far from that spirit's having at all subsided; it has on the contrary, acquired a strength, a form, and consistency, truly alarming. It is no longer now an attachment to Great Britain or France, that is suspected or charged; but one half of the community is considered by the other, as possessing views and principles at variance with the nature of our government, and hostile to that constitution, upon the preservation of which the security of the whole must depend. They are thus put at issue; and when, or how, the struggle will end, or how long the constitution will endure, no man can tell.

If this be our situation, in the midst of profound peace, of acknowledged prosperity, and in the fullest enjoyment of freedom; what could we expect in the hour of danger and misfortune? Calamity might unite us, if that could be called calamity which would produce so desirable an effect; but many are the instances on record, where parties in a state have hated and dreaded one another, more than a common enemy; and have been so far from making a joint defence, that they have avail-

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ed themselves of the treacherous assistance of foreign powers, for the purpose of mutual subjugation.

The propriety, perhaps, may be questioned, of descending upon an evil, which seems to be the inseparable alloy of liberty; and for which no adequate corrective can be suggested, however strong may be our conviction of its existing magnitude, and progressive malignity.

Are we then to see the vessel driving upon rocks and shoals, without an effort to change her course? After having, as skillful mariners, safely conducted her amidst narrow straits and furious tempests, are we now to let her drift with the winds and waves? To quit metaphor; are we, whilst retaining and exercising the right of governing ourselves, to acknowledge that we possess not, what are essential to self government—reason, and judgment?

It is from the sound and virtuous portion of the community, that all expectation is to be derived, of rectifying the public mind. It is on the “union of all honest men,” that our hopes must rest. There are in this, as in every republican government, a class of men who live upon civil dissension; whose constant occupation it is to traffick in the prejudices, passions and vices of their fellow citizens; who look to party spirit as certain profit to themselves, and as the surest instrument, by which to attain their selfish purposes. It would be vain to imagine that this description of persons could be induced, by patriotic considerations, to abandon those courses, by which their interest is to be promoted, or their ambition gratified. It is against them, and their wicked falsehoods and contrivances, that the vigilance of every independent citizen should be exerted to its uttermost.

To men of an opposite cast, of whatever party, many reflections might occur, which would tend to smooth the asperities of political differences. In the first place, daily experience of the fallacy of our judgments, of the ignorance of the wisest, and of the blindness of human nature, ought to create self-distrust, and prevent that stiffness of opinion which degenerates into bigotry and intolerance, and perpetuates error.

In the second place, reason will tell us, that men frequently appear to differ more than in fact they do; that they differ as to measures when they agree in principle. For instance,

we all adore liberty, and of course republican government; and are equally solicitous to preserve that inestimable blessing. But liberty is exposed to assaults from various quarters; and one man may think he sees danger on one side, and be disposed to guard that, particularly; whilst another views its approaches in a different direction. As in despotic governments, a single chief commonly presides, the first magistrate of a country, however limited his power, is generally supposed to be the most dangerous enemy to liberty, and is the person most watched, and dreaded; but the sly, underhand, unremitting machinations of demagogues, are in the judgment of many, sifter causes of alarm to a free people. Now it follows not that persons, thus at variance, as to their apprehension of the sources of danger, and their means of averting it, are to unite in their political measures; but it does follow that they ought not to charge each other, with aiming at the establishment of monarchy, or with a disregard of that liberty which they equally love. If this candour had been applied amongst us, we should never have heard the bitter calumny of a considerable portion of our citizens, being the enemies of republicanism. The truth is, that in this country, as long as the constitution lasts, or there is any virtue or intelligence in the people, the executive magistrate cannot possibly trample upon our liberties. He may, by consulting his popularity, rather than the good of the nation, and by putting himself at the head of an intemperate, predominant party, acquire such an accession of strength as might enable, and embolden him to do us much mischief; but his misconduct once perceived, he would soon lose the confidence which had been improperly reposed in him, and the power of repeating his errors.

Next to this conciliatory disposition, which it behoves us to cultivate, as the means of assuaging party violence; nothing can more conduce to the desired end, than to correct an opinion which has grown out of this party spirit, which is not founded in sense, and is calculated to work a general corruption. Ashamed of the men who have too often been employed to promote particular schemes and purposes, and who have been countenanced and rewarded; we have been forced, by way of justification, to draw a distinction between public and private worth; and we hear the monstrous solecism of *political*

*cal honesty*, as contradistinguished from *moral honesty*. The idea is no less preposterous than mischievous. Honesty does not consist in an *act*, or an *opinion*: it is a *principle in the mind* which can never vary; and if a man be not honest in every thing, he is so in nothing. He may sincerely believe that the object he is labouring to advance, will really be for the common good; but if he be morally dishonest, his interest will be his only guide; and the same principle, or want of principle, which would lead him to cheat his friend, or his neighbour, would prompt him, for the sake of his interest, to betray the public. I consider this opinion, as giving a passport to every knave in the country, who has talents or effrontery, to those honours and emoluments which are due, not to *political honesty*, but to useful services, and unimpeachable integrity. Accordingly, we have seen that many, to whose characters the word *honest*, could never have been attached, but for the ingenious qualification that has been contrived, have not been backward in putting forth their pretensions, to the most zealous and disinterested patriotism. They seek a respectability in public life, which they cannot maintain in private; and claim a credit and confidence from the whole community, which they could not obtain from a single individual of it, in relation to his own concerns.

If such persons were generally distrusted, and frowned upon, the source of popular imposition would be much diminished; party differences would still exist, but *upright views*, being mutually recognized, its violence would be considerably mitigated.

I am aware, however, that I greatly exceed my abilities, in endeavouring to prescribe a remedy for a disease of so much magnitude. Perhaps, too, I have erred, in the indulgence of gloomy reflections, on a day of general triumph and exultation. It is because I adore the work of this day; it is because I dearly estimate the services of those who acquired our independence, that I was prompted to examine how far we had rendered ourselves worthy of those services, by the means we have since pursued, to secure the prize so nobly conquered. To preserve it, much has certainly been done; we may still consider ourselves as in full possession of it, and have solid ground, for self-congratulation. Yet

reflecting, how the Grecian and Roman republics had torn to pieces; and, upon the causes which have proved the destruction of all republics; seeing that they have uniformly owed their fate, to civil discord, arising from the violence of party spirit, and recognizing the increase of that spirit among us: it was natural to feel some apprehension of its eventual effects. Let us endeavor to flatter ourselves, that this apprehension is greater, than is justified by our actual situation, that an enlightened people will profit by the experience of those who have gone before them, and, avoid their ruinous excesses; that "united we stand, divided we fall," will be the motto which will constantly present itself to our view, and regulate our actions, so as to maintain the strength, freedom and unity of our empire, to the remotest ages. Last forever it cannot; for "all things around us are mortal and perishable; cities, states and empires have their periods set; the proudest monuments of human art moulder into dust; even the works of nature wax old and decay." Amidst this universal tendency to dissolution, vain and presumptuous would it be, to expect that immortality should be attached to our frail institutions. By cherishing, however, that liberty which is the vital principle of our government; and, by earnestly watching the symptoms of decay; we may indulge the hope that the period of our political dissolution, will be hidden in the farthest recesses of time; that the hand which has hitherto conducted us through perils and difficulties; will lift us to the proudest heights of glory; and that millions for ages to come, will celebrate the independence of these States.