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Mar. 1. 1814

ORATION,

PRONOUNCED BEFORE THE

KNOX AND WARREN BRANCHES

OF THE

Washington Benevolent Society,

AT AMHERST,

ON THE

CELEBRATION OF THE ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE,

JULY 4. 1814.

.....
BY NOAH WEBSTER, Esq.
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NORTHAMPTON:

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1814.

ANNEX, JULY 4, 1814.

SIR,

THE undersigned, the Committee of Arrangements of the WASHINGTON BENEVOLENT SOCIETY, for celebrating, in this town, the present Anniversary of American Independence, in connection with the great events taking place in Europe; in behalf of the Society, return you their thanks for the elegant, interesting and patriotic Oration, by you this day delivered, before them, and request a copy for the press.

We remain, Dear Sir,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servants,

ISAAC ABERCROMBIE,
GEORGE MACOMBER, Jr.
NOAH D. MATTOON,
H. WRIGHT STRONG,
SAMUEL F. DICKINSON,

} Committee:

NOAH WEBSTER, Esq.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is usual, on the anniversary of the declaration of Independence, to declaim on the deliverance of this country from tyranny, and the felicity of the people. But the situation of the United States seems to demand observations of a different character. The flatterers of the people are their worst enemies. It is idle and mischievous to cry peace, peace, when there is no peace.

The following observations are not limited to the Government of the United States and of this Commonwealth. They embrace a wider range; and the writer is persuaded that the representation of the defects of our constitutions, of the vices and corruptions of our governments, and of the dangers to which we are exposed is warranted by facts within his own knowledge, and falls far short of the truth.

AN ORATION.

IT is a maxim among political writers, that public virtue, and a general diffusion of knowledge among the people, are essential to the support of a free republican government. As the citizens, under such a constitution, are the fountain of power, the purity of their views and principles, and an acquaintance with the men whom they select for rulers, seem indispensable to a wise choice, without which they have no security for the exercise of justice and wisdom, in the several departments of government.

The truth of these fundamental maxims being admitted, the friends of this form of government have a very discouraging prospect of giving to it perpetuity or very long duration; for where has existed the nation whose citizens have long retained sufficient virtue, information and patriotism to preserve the purity of their elections and an uncorrupt administration? In what country have a majority of the electors had the knowledge and vigilance to detect, or the firmness to oppose with success, the arts and selfish views of ambition? Reasoning from first principles, we should conclude that electors would always chuse for their rulers men of known talents and tried integrity; and that the dependence of rulers upon the people for their offices, would secure their fidelity, and the most upright discharge of their public duties. But in what republic have such expectations been realized? In what elective government has the choice of rulers been uniformly directed by wisdom and conducted with impartiality? In what country, have rulers been uniformly men "who fear God and hate covetousness?" If such an example has ever existed, the history of it has not fallen under my notice.

When by the solemn declaration of the constituted authority of the United Colonies, which we have this day assembled to commemorate, our political connection with the parent state was dissolved; our best and wisest statesmen indulged the hope and probably the belief, that a republican form of government might be devised, which should be exempt from the errors and defects, which have been fatal to other republics. The people of this country were flattered with the opinion that their superior education, virtue and patriotism would preserve them from the corruptions which have undermined, and the factions which have convulsed and overthrown, the republican constitutions of other countries. But in the science of politics, theories prove to be fallacious; schemes of government which appear to be perfect on paper, are found to be weak and defective in practice; and we are not to be surprised if the United States should furnish another instance of the fallibility of human wisdom.

The Constitution of the United States is the work of the ablest statesmen our country has produced. It was intended to contain the best practicable principles of republican government; combining energy with freedom; and embracing provisions for securing the rights of individuals and of the several states. The powers distributed to the several departments, the rights, exceptions and limitations, are all defined with wonderful precision; and the whole instrument has been generally admired as a masterly production. The ratification of this Constitution by the requisite number of states, was celebrated with enthusiastic joy, and hailed as the commencement of a new era of public prosperity and private happiness. This joy could be augmented only by the election of the illustrious Washington, to be the first Chief Magistrate. That virtuous man did not seek the suffrages of his fellow-citizens; he employed no arts to *obtain* the office of President; he had no selfish views in *accepting* it. Such a man, and such only can be safely trusted with the public welfare. When he

entered upon the duties of his office, he solemnly swore to execute it faithfully, and to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution. He was faithful to his oath: he administered the government in its purity; and under the salutary influence of his counsels, the United States advanced in arts, in agriculture, in commerce, in wealth and power, with a rapidity unexampled; and our citizens were as happy at home, as our national character was respected abroad. What a reverse has the revolution of a few years exhibited! From the proud elevation to which the wise and dignified measures of Washington had exalted the United States, how speedy has been the decline to meanness and degradation! Who that loves his country's prosperity, is not wounded—who that values its honor, does not feel debased, at the humiliating contrast!

To what cause must be ascribed this astonishing change in the condition and prospects of the United States? To the wrong views, to the weakness or to the wickedness of the administration, is the usual reply. But the reply, is not satisfactory. How came the government to be placed in such hands? Are not the citizens of the country the source of power? Have *they* not selected the men who make, and the man who executes, the laws? Can the people be wrong? Are they ignorant or are they corrupt? Can the majority of our citizens mistake the characters of the men they elect? Can they mistake the interest of the country? Or is it to be supposed they would knowingly betray their trust? The fact that we have a bad administration, is undeniable; for what proof of a bad administration can be less doubtful, than a continued series of political evils? And whether we assign as the cause the wickedness or the imbecility of the men in power, the fact is a melancholy proof of the practical imperfections of our Constitution. It may well abate our confidence in elective governments, and repress the ridiculous vanity of considering ourselves as the most virtuous and enlightened people on earth.

In truth, the people of this country, even the wisest of them, have deceived themselves on the subject of government, and in the estimate they have formed of their own character. In supposing themselves better informed or less corrupt than the people of other countries, and therefore better qualified to maintain an elective government, they have manifested an entire ignorance of the depravity of the human heart, and of the universality of that unprincipled ambition to which almost every free government on earth has, sooner or later, fallen a victim. (NOTE 1.)

My fellow-citizens, "Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" If my whole life will not bear me ample testimony that I love my native country, and am ardently attached to a free republican government, my most solemn protestations will be of no avail. But it is worse than in vain, it is criminal to attempt to disguise the truth. Our Constitution is framed for the government of men, not as they *are*, but as they *should be*—for a nation of virtuous, enlightened, disinterested men—a nation of imaginary beings. There are doubtless as many men of public virtue and private integrity, in America, in proportion to its population, as in other countries. But in no country, have the virtuous citizens, been able, for a long period, to maintain the purity of a free government, formed upon the basis of a common suffrage, against the incessant attacks of ambitious demagogues, or unprincipled seekers of power. Nor will the education of the citizens of a free country insure unbiassed elections, or an upright administration. Knowledge, learning, talents are not necessarily connected with sound moral and political principles: And eminent abilities, accompanied with depravity of heart, render the possessor tenfold more dangerous in a community.

The love of liberty is inherent in the human heart; and every man has a sacred right to the secure use and enjoyment of his property, to his personal safety, and to as much freedom as is compatible with the rights of others,

and the peace of society. All the political constitutions in this country profess to guarantee these rights. How far they have accomplished this object, let the history of the late restrictions of commerce decide.

To an inequality in the representation of the several states, in the Congress of the United States, we may ascribe, in a great measure, the calamities which now afflict our country. In the Supreme Legislature, the property of the country is not justly represented, the minor portion of the wealth having a major vote in both houses. This inequality arises in part from the equal suffrage enjoyed by men of all conditions in the several states, and in part from the representation of three fifths of the Slaves. (NOTE 2.)

Another fundamental error in our constitutions, especially in that of the United States, is the admission of young men to a seat in the legislature. This admission is a deviation from the maxims and practice of the wisest nations, who have taught us that "days should speak and a multitude of years should teach wisdom." No business in life requires so much experience, and such an intimate knowledge of men, with their various interests, passions and prejudices, as that of legislation; and in this period of the world, no man can be well qualified to make laws for a commercial state, without an extensive acquaintance with the history and general policy of most civilized nations. How few are the men who, at twenty-five years of age, have acquired this multifarious knowledge? Nor will reading alone form a good legislator; erudition must be chastised by experience; ardent minds must be disciplined by reflection and observation. This eligibility of young men to the most important and responsible stations in government, opens a door to the exertions of premature ambition; and exposes a country to the danger of rash, precipitate, ill-digested measures, and to a consequent instability of counsels. The beardless graduate no sooner receives his collegiate diploma, than he aspires to direct the affairs of a nation, starts in the race of public honors

and outstrips the hoary sage. This facility of passing at once from the school-boy to the statesman tends to fill our councils with bold, presumptuous spirits, substituting confidence for wisdom, the decisions of ardent, intemperate passions for those of cautious deliberation, and untried theory for the well-supported maxims of experience.

But perhaps no part of the Constitution of the United States contains the sources of so many evils, as the clauses which respect the election and the powers of the President. The office of chief magistrate has been found, in other countries, a prize of too much magnitude to be left as the subject of contention. All the arts which the ingenuity of man can devise—all the means of corruption which depravity can employ—all the violence which power can exercise, have sprung from contentions for this office; and how can *we* expect to be exempt from the like evils?

On this subject, the history of Poland furnishes melancholy instruction. The crown in that kingdom depending on election, the princes, to secure the possession of it, successively surrendered its most essential rights and prerogatives, till the possessor of it was little more than nominal king, without the power to defend himself or his kingdom against a licentious nobility. The nobles held the elections, surrounded by armed vassals; bribery was employed without secrecy or shame; the intrigues of the French Court once placed a Frenchman on the throne of Poland; every thing was decided by factions which divided, weakened, and ultimately dismembered the kingdom.

So common have been the evils incident to elective monarchies, and so inevitable have they been considered, that most nations have abandoned the privilege of choosing their king, and resigned the throne to hereditary succession, as a less evil than the disorders which spring from a contest for sovereign power.

The United States are less exposed to these disorders, as a temporary Chief Magistracy is an office of less splendor and elevation than that of a king. But the very cir-

cumstance of its being temporary is a source of evil, as it renews the struggle for power at short periods, and by keeping alive party spirit, it may generate by frequency of return, the evils which might not spring from its importance. We are indeed making an experiment—and what has been its success? No blood has been shed—no armed men have appeared to support the pretensions of the candidates.—But have all the elections of the Chief Magistrate been pure and unbiassed? Have no undue means been used? Have no slanders and falsehoods been propagated to exalt a favorite and depress a rival? Have no offices been promised as the price of influence? Have no rewards been bestowed upon those who have decided an election? Let those who understand the human heart, and the arithmetic of ambition calculate the moral force of the distinction conferred by the office of Chief Magistrate, and of the millions it can bestow in offices and emoluments—then let them decide how long the election of that Magistrate in this country will wear even the garb of purity. In any form of government, the disposal of offices furnishes an immense political power—it is both the lever and fulcrum of Archimedes, enabling an individual to lift the world.

The frequency of elections, in a free government, is deemed a valuable feature of the constitution; as the limitation of power in *time*, as well as in *degree*, has the effect to restrain its abuses. But this is a good accompanied with an evil. A frequent change of rulers exposes a country to a perpetual fluctuation of counsels and of measures; and the wisest system of policy, adopted by one administration, is liable to be discarded or defeated by that which succeeds. One President may cherish peace and neutrality; the next may involve the country in war—One administration may create a national bank, to facilitate the operations of the custom-house and the treasury; the next may suffer the institution to become extinct—One begins a regular system of naval defence; the next may suffer the ships to perish, and squander the public money

upon gun-boats—One erects fortifications ; the next suffers them to decay. In such a government, we have no confidence in the permanence of any course of measures. The great interests of the country are committed to capricious counsels and temporary expedients, as expensive to the treasury, as they are fatal to the dignity and security of the nation. Were one branch of the legislature, in a good degree, independent of the fluctuations of popular opinion, it would give more stability and consistency to public measures, and gradually impress upon them something like a system of policy, which might rescue our national character from the imputation of imbecility and folly. (NOTE 3.)

In the power of frequently changing rulers, we have indeed the advantage of displacing a bad administration and substituting a good one ; but this power would operate more effectually as a privilege and afford more consolation in times of trouble, if bad men were not more adroit in gaining and keeping offices, than the good and the wise. It is an evil in elective governments, for which perhaps there is no remedy, that a majority of the electors may be entirely mistaken in regard to important points of national policy, and deceived in the real character and views of the men to whom they give their suffrages. When the mass of people are misled by designing men or their false opinions, they are to be pitied, rather than censured. We may select for an example of such deception, the opinion that Great Britain has no right to take her native subjects out of American ships. This popular error has been propagated by the men who have particular views to answer, and the indignation excited by the British practice of impressments has, in a good degree, answered those views. Yet in fact, the British government claims no right that it does not concede to our government ; it claims no right but such as all nations claim, and such as belongs to every sovereignty ; the right to redress a wrong by force, when redress can in no other way be obtained. In the exercise of this right, many injuries have occurred in the impress-

ment of native Americans ; but these mistakes do not vary the right. The truth is, our government has been in fault, from the first organization of the Constitution.—It has not only admitted British seamen into our service, with little restraint ; but has naturalized foreigners, permitting them to abjure their allegiance to their native country, in opposition to the known laws and principles of their respective governments. This practice is a violation of the first duty which one government owes to another—that of respecting its laws and its sovereignty. The allegiance which the subjects of a foreign government owe to their sovereign, is a thing over which our government has no control. No act of our government, no law, no judicial process can, in the least, impair the obligation that exists between an alien and his native country ; and the oaths which aliens take under our naturalization-laws, renouncing and abjuring their allegiance to other governments, are mere nullities.* The popular mistakes on this subject are a main pillar to support the administration in a most perverse and ruinous course of measures.—Yet all the calamities of war and the destruction of commerce have not yet been able to dispel the public illusion. The authors and supporters of the error still hold their places.

In addition to all the evils necessarily incident to elective governments, we have to contend with a host of difficulties, which spring from the extent of our territory, the state sovereignties, and the discordant views and interests of the people in different parts of the Union.

It has been a prevailing opinion among the most influential men in this country, that a Union of all the States under one General Council, invested with powers to regu-

* The reasons assigned by Blackstone for the perpetual obligation of natural allegiance seem to be drawn in part from feudal doctrines, and to be rather plausible than so id. The true ground on which this question rests is, that every government has all the rights of sovereignty over its subjects, and when the laws of a state forbid a subject to alienate his allegiance, they are binding and cannot be controlled by an act of another government.

late the common concerns, especially in regard to commerce and foreign relations, is essential to the internal peace, the welfare and the defense of the whole. General Washington, in his farewell address, has urged the continuance of the Union, with all the arguments, which his reason and his paternal wishes could suggest. He seems indeed to have doubted whether a "common government can embrace so large a sphere;" but he wished the experiment to be made. Benevolent man! Could he now rise from the dead, and at a glance, survey the effects of the experiment, and the ruins of his own theory, what mortification, what anguish would the view inflict upon his benignant soul!

It is sometimes the amiable fault of good men to reason from their own wishes, rather than from facts; and to be misled, by the purity of their own motives, into the belief that other men will be guided by motives equally pure. Experience seldom fails to overthrow such reasoning.

General Washington observes that "with slight shades of difference, the people of this country have the same religion, manners, habits and political principles."

With regard to religion, it may be observed that when men discard religious principles and morals, as qualifications for public trust, it is to be presumed they have no regard for any religion; and when the avowed infidel, is exalted to a high station in public life, it is to be inferred that a wide difference exists on the subject of religion, among the people of this country.

In regard to *manners* and *habits*, unconnected with political or civil interests, however various they may and must be among men who labor or pursue some occupation in person, and those who assign all manual employments to slaves, no difference perhaps exists that is incompatible with mutual harmony under the same government. But what are the *shades* of difference in the *principles* of men who carry on an active trade, and believe it to be a valuable source of national prosperity; and of men who carry

on no active commerce themselves, but who express their contempt of it, and their wish that every American ship were annihilated?

But, says General Washington, the commerce between the North and the South may be mutually beneficial. This is doubtless true; but a profitable commerce does not depend on a political connection. Our commerce with many *foreign* countries is profitable; and the trade between Great Britain and the American States is probably more beneficial to both countries, than it was before their political connection was dissolved.

Another argument in favor of a Union of the States, which probably lay with great weight upon General Washington's mind, was drawn from the defenseless condition of the Southern and Western States against a maritime enemy. He observes that the *Southern* and *Western* States look forward to a maritime strength in the navigation of the *Northern* States. This maritime strength the Southern States cannot supply, although it will be necessary for their protection and for the secure enjoyment of the indispensable outlets for the productions of the Western States.

These observations are the key that unlocks the secret. The *Southern* and *Western* States, not being able to furnish a naval force for their defense, must look to the *northern navigation* for maritime protection. Spirit of Washington, return once more to your beloved country! Revisit the sea-ports of the North! See them thick-planted with groves of masts, stripped of their cordage and their canvas! See the ships which formerly bore the productions of the country to the remotest climes, and in return, wafted to our shores the wealth of the world, now perishing in the mud! See the wharves deserted or overgrown with grass; the seamen scattered or transported to the lakes. Then inquire, who has done this? What enemy of your country has blasted the prospect which your fond hope had indulged of maritime protection from the navigation of the north?

Is this the work of a foreign foe? or is it some foul demon who has robbed your country of its glory and its strength? No, illustrious Spirit; your former neighbors and fellow-citizens have wrought this melancholy change. They frowned on commerce, and it perished; and with it, the means of maritime defense!

How little, my friends, did General Washington understand the principles, or foresee the conduct, of his fellow-citizens of the South!

On the subject of the probable duration of the federal government, it is lawful and not inexpedient to speculate.

The territory belonging to the United States is more than equal in extent to that of Spain, France, Germany and Great Britain, united, and nearly equal to that of the Chinese empire. The main post road through the Atlantic States, as appears by a late survey, is no less than 1680 miles in length; and the line which bounds the whole territory must exceed in length four thousand miles. At the present rate of population, this territory, at the end of 160 years, must contain about 450 millions of inhabitants. With a due allowance for a decreasing ratio of population, the number may be estimated at 300 millions. Who can imagine that such a mass of people can be combined under one representative form of government? Who will be bold enough to contend that sound policy requires it? The Autocrat of Russia may hold a nominal sway over the scattered tribes of a much larger territory; and the Emperor of China may wield the scepter over a population as numerous as that which this estimate assigns to the United States. But it must be observed that a despotic government admits neither election nor deliberative counsels. A few simple edicts, supported by an army, comprise the operations of an absolute government. But history does not furnish an example of a representation of 300 millions of people in one deliberative assembly. Such an assembly must be too small to do justice to such numbers, or too large to be capable of joint deliberation. In speculation,

the idea of combining such a population and such an extent of territory under one representative government, appears to be extremely visionary.

Besides, the value of representation in government consists in collecting a just view of the circumstances, interests, and wants of the people who are to be governed. To render laws just, they must be adapted to the circumstances of the subjects; to render a uniformity of laws useful, there must be a community of interests; without which community, there can be neither sympathy of feeling nor harmony of counsels. Can such a community of interests exist between the inhabitants of Georgia and Tennessee and those of Vermont and Maine? or between the inhabitants of Massachusetts and Connecticut and those on the borders of Lake Superior? How can the inhabitants of the remote parts of this vast territory be acquainted sufficiently with each others course of life and business, to enable them to legislate understandingly on their respective interests? What strong principle of attachment can subsist between the cane and cotton planter of the south, and the ship-owner and fisherman of the north? And when the views and interests of different sections of the country come in collision, as they sometimes will, the contending claims of the parties will disturb the harmony of the public counsels, and the stronger party, will make a sacrifice of the weaker.

The habits of business in the *Commercial States* form a community of interests which cannot fail to unite them in measures respecting trade and foreign relations. Were they even now to dissolve the Union, necessity or interest would sooner or later impel them to unite. The *Non-Commercial States* have a similarity of interests, occupations and habits which would as naturally incline *them* to unite; and both sections, under separate governments, might be more prosperous and better satisfied, than in a state of common union. Each division of territory would be more than eight hundred miles in length, and if extended north-

ward and westward to the line of the British possessions, and the Alleghanian ridge, each would contain nearly as many square miles as France, and be sufficiently large for every purpose of government or defense. Indeed such a limited territory would be more easily guarded; for what single government can extend its protecting arm to all the assailable points, on a sea coast and frontier of four or five thousand miles in length?

If however the separation of the Atlantic States may be a point of questionable policy, the severance of the Western States from the Atlantic would seem to be dictated by every consideration of interest, convenience and geographical situation. The territory west of the Alleghany and south of the Ohio is of itself large enough for an empire. It is separated from the Atlantic States by natural barriers; while, by the Mississippi and its subsidiary streams, most of its commerce must center in one place, which creates a common interest among the Western States, but quite distinct from the interest of the Atlantic States. Ultimately that country must be the seat of a distinct government—the best time of separation may be the subject of doubt—but it deserves consideration whether the obstacles to a separation will not multiply with time.

That rivalries and contentions would spring from the establishment of different sovereignties in this country is apprehended by the most respectable men who discuss this subject; and the objection claims serious consideration. The example of European States is alledged in proof of the probability of such contentions. It may however serve to abate, in a degree, our apprehensions of this danger, to compare the circumstances of the different countries. Europe has gradually emerged from a state of barbarity, in which war was the pride, and in a great measure, the business of man. The martial spirit of the feudal ages is not yet extinct; and the wars and conquests of former times left numerous claims to territory and to thrones, which have often been the embers to enkindle the flames

of war. In America no such claims exist, nor have we any distant possessions that might become the subjects of contention.

That different governments within the limits of the United States might occasionally engage in war, is not impossible nor improbable. Men will be proud, selfish, unjust and revengeful ; and war is the calamity which a just God inflicts upon nations to punish them for their vices and crimes. That this evil would frequently occur in America, is against all probability ; as we are exempt from many of the usual causes of hostility, and as a spirit of industry and commerce seems to be extinguishing the love of war. This spirit is powerfully aided by the principles of the Christian religion, and a disposition to apply the talents and resources of the country to the propagation of the GOSPEL OF PEACE.

But if the evils of war were to be sometimes encountered, these evils would, in a degree, be balanced, by the destruction of that party-spirit which now keeps alive perpetual animosity among our citizens, embarrassing the public counsels, and enfeebling the strength of government. While we are united under one head, this party-spirit will be fostered by some of the larger states which aim at a paramount influence in national affairs, and by candidates for office, whose success will often depend on divisions in the smaller states. The most effectual remedy for these disorders, will be to establish different governments contiguous to each other ; the effect of which would be to form a more national spirit in each. The citizens of each republic would naturally entertain some jealousy, perhaps apprehension, of the neighboring state, which would form a community of interest and feeling, and unite them among themselves. If antipathies should exist between the governments, even these would operate as a bond of internal union and political strength ; though it is certain that antipathies between the north and the south now produce mutual contempt, without any counterbalancing good.

Commercial interest would unite the two governments in alliance, and the apprehension of incurring the displeasure or losing the trade of a neighbor, would produce mutual respect and forbearance. In our present condition, party-spirit almost paralyzes the arm of government; and probably if two governments were formed, the citizens of each, acting in harmony, would exert, against a foreign foe, a more efficient force, than can now be brought into action by the whole Union.

The union of all the States, it was once supposed, would repress the ambition, or restrain the power, of the large states, and preserve the just rights of each. A few years experience has shown the fallacy of this opinion. Already men speak of the *claims* of the great states to the chief offices of the government, without surprise or indignation; as if merit were attached to extent of territory, and the talents and virtues of men were in proportion to the geographical limits of the state to which they belong. Were such claims unconnected with political rights, they would be mere subjects of derision; but as affecting the relative interests of the several states, they assume a more serious aspect; and as the source of intrigue and corruption, they become a pernicious evil. Let the history of Greece, the successive triumphs of Sparta, Athens and Thebes, teach us the danger to which our country is exposed from the ambition of *States* to gain a controlling power over their coequals in confederacy. Man and his passions are essentially the same in all countries, and in every period of the world. (NOTE 4.)

Let it not be inferred from the tenor of these observations, that I would recommend a spirit of insubordination among my fellow citizens. While we are subject to the Constitution of the United States, it is our sacred duty to submit to all the laws which are consistent with its principles; and it may be expedient sometimes to submit even to oppressive measures, rather than endanger the peace of the country. Nor in holding up to view the evils of gov-

ernment, let it be understood that I would prefer any other than an elective or republican form. No other form than the republican would suit the condition or the genius of the people of this country. But my design is to call the public attention to the defects of our Constitution, and to the abuses of power, with a view to point out our danger, and the means of guarding our rights. It is a common opinion, that a republican government must, of course, secure public freedom; when in fact, it often degenerates into a most oppressive government, and from the very circumstance that the people who elect their rulers place undue confidence in them. Men are very jealous of power which they do not create—they look with an evil eye upon a monarch who is not within their control; but when they have a Chief Magistrate of their own choice, they are apt to think he can do no wrong. Hence a president of the United States may, without exciting murmurs among his adherents, exercise a despotism that would shake the throne of a British Monarch. An embargo upon commerce, of an indefinite duration, could not be imposed by a British Parliament, without exciting open and effectual opposition. Such a bold invasion of private rights would in Great Britain be resisted. In this country it has been submitted to, with inexcusable tameness. The people of this country are lovers of order and peaceable subjects of government; but do they not understand their *rights* as well as their *duties*? How can the States, the parties to the federal compact, understanding its conditions, and bound in duty to guard their rights, answer to the people and to posterity for suffering such a palpable act of arbitrary power, to pass into precedent? The States should have met this act of despotism *in limine*; they should have resisted effectually this bold transgression of the line of the Constitution. Our ancestors encountered the whole force of the British Empire, to oppose the collection of a small duty on tea; yet we, their degenerations, are quiet as lambs under acts of our own govern-

ment, of less equivocal despotism, and tenfold more oppressive!

And where is our hope? In a change of administration, it will be answered. Can a change of administration be effected? What avail reasoning and argument, and even the calamities of war, in opposition to the immense influence of executive patronage? And if a change of *men* can be effected, will it be accompanied with a change of *principles*?

In the gloom which overwhelms this country; in the apathy of the people, and the timid counsels of the States, we should find reason to despair of our liberties, if we had no hope from extraneous circumstances. But a gleam of light breaks from the East—Europe has burst her chains—and the chains of America!—We may yet be free;—at least our liberties may have a respite.

The late changes in the political affairs of Europe are so novel, so surprising, so utterly beyond the extent of human calculation, as to baffle all attempts to describe them; and the mind is at first disposed to pause and contemplate them with silent amazement. As we recover from the first impressions of astonishment, we begin to inquire what are to be the effects of those stupendous events.

The state of Europe which preceded the revolution in France seemed to invite and even to require, not only a renovation of government and morals, but a change of principles and habits. The feudal system had established a civil and political despotism in almost every part of Europe. The rigors of that despotism had indeed yielded, in some countries, to the liberalizing spirit of commerce; in England the military tenures had been long abolished; but in most of the countries in Europe, that system had entailed vassalage upon the inhabitants. The policy and the intrigues of an overbearing hierarchy had, in some kingdoms, amassed a large portion of the lands in the hands of the regular and secular clergy, who had enslaved the minds of the lower orders of the people. The prin-

ces and nobility, with the men of letters, had indeed thrown off the yoke of superstition and ecclesiastical tyranny, but they had fallen into the other extreme of infidelity and licentiousness. The courts of Europe were rendered infamous by the indulgence of criminal pleasures, and the most profligate dissipation; while venal and rapacious ministers were permitted to oppress the people with taxes, to supply the means of supporting the vices of courts and their retainers. In this state of things, the interest and happiness of the people were disregarded, morals were contemned, while religion became the jest of the rich and the noble.

The Sovereign of the Universe, who governs with perfect rectitude himself, and who has declared that "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God," saw fit to punish and restrain these abuses of power. The chief instruments of his wrath were the disciples of Voltaire and his coadjutors in infidelity, who began the work of destruction, and then fell victims to the rage which their own principles had enkindled. In the confusion of the times, arose a Corsican as an instrument of divine vengeance; a man who seems to have united in his character the ambition of a Cesar, the ferociousness of a Vandal, and the insensibility of a brute. Endowed with these qualities, and armed with a stupendous military force, he carried victory and dismay through Europe. He vanquished armies, he humbled and dethroned princes, he new-modelled kingdoms, and disposed of thrones; till he began to imagine himself the vice-gerent of God on earth, and possessed of divine authority to subdue and govern the world. Blind, infatuated mortal! Little did he think that when he had been employed as the instrument to punish the vices of others, to break down the walls that had been erected around superstition and despotism, and rend asunder the shackles of nations, *he* was to become the victim of divine vengeance, and expiate his crimes in obscurity, infamy and contempt.

Who can look back to the situation of Europe in the autumn of 1812, when the Corsican Usurper, with the most formidable and best disciplined army ever arrayed on earth, marched to overthrow the last continental power able to oppose him with even a chance of success; when the friends of freedom and humanity were waiting, with trembling solicitude, to know the fate of the Russian empire; and then contemplate the astonishing reverse of circumstances lately exhibited in France, without acknowledging the providence, and admiring the marked interposition of a Supreme Being? The scheme of operations was too vast for human wisdom to devise—too mighty for a human arm to accomplish. The event confirms the faith and animates the piety of the christian—it confounds the sceptic—it must silence the atheist.

In the character and conduct of Alexander of Russia, we witness one of the most interesting spectacles ever exhibited on the stage of human life.—Such firmness in peril; such wisdom in council; such bravery in the field; such perseverance in difficulties; above all such clemency, moderation and magnanimity in victory—have rarely, perhaps never, been combined in the same character. Rather than submit to the insolent demands of an unrelenting tyrant, he could see his dominions laid waste and the magnificent Moscow in flames; and with an army of four hundred thousand veteran foes in the heart of his country, he could make preparations to abandon his capital, if necessary, and with unshaken confidence, appeal to God for protection. That God in whom he trusted, vindicated his cause—his enemies perished! New legions were collected by the tyrant; but only to add fresh laurels to the victorious Alexander, and his allies. In the short period of a few months, the allied armies enter France in triumph; and the Emperor of Russia, in Paris, wrests the scepter from the Usurper, and commits it to the rightful owner. And what satisfaction does he demand for all the injuries his dominions have sustained? What sacrifice to appease

his vengeance? This is the noblest trait in his character. No atonement, no retribution, not a drop of blood is required.

Nor can we forbear to admire the conduct of the Emperor of Austria, who, preferring the security of Europe to all private considerations, lent his aid to dethrone his own son in law. Rare magnanimity, and worthy of everlasting remembrance! In the firmness of the King of Prussia; in the bravery of his Generals and in the sacrifices of his people—in the just principles, and heroic conduct of the Crown Prince of Sweden; in the wise counsels, and in the immoveable fidelity of the allied powers, to their engagements, we see singular and unparalleled traits of dignity and of virtue.

Let us rejoice at the events which close an age of misery! The temple of Janus is shut—peace is restored to suffering Europe. And while we rejoice for our brethren on the other side of the Atlantic, let us offer our devout aspirations to heaven, that *our* country may speedily partake of the precious blessing.

That the effects of the various changes in Europe will be great and extensive, is certain; that they will be salutary, is probable. The vices in most of the European governments, which prepared the way for the late convulsions, were numerous, deep and radical. No ordinary remedy could reach the causes.—When good men neglect to reform abuses from duty and principle, the disorders usually increase, till bad men take the rod of correction and apply it without discrimination or pity. But the agitations and miseries of more than twenty years seem to have roused Europe from its sickly lethargy, and to have infused new life and vigor into those who have survived the general calamity. By eradicating many corruptions in political and ecclesiastical institutions; by the suppression of monasteries, the seats of indolence and vice; by the abolition of many feudal rights, which were oppressive; by breaking up the enormous possessions of religious houses; by

the abolition of the inquisition in Spain; by the establishment of constitutions to limit and define royal prerogatives, and the introduction of representative assemblies to guard the people from oppression; by the recognition of the freedom of the press and of religious toleration—and especially by the expansion and energy given to the human mind, by the liberty of free discussion, and the circulation of the scriptures; the revolutions in Europe have terminated in laying the foundation of most essential changes in its governments and laws, and in the condition and character of its inhabitants. Who can contemplate without emotions of delight, the establishment of an English Constitution in France? a permanent Senate to support the throne against the assaults of popular jealousy, and the Commons, against the encroachments of royal usurpation; a representative assembly to maintain the rights of the people, to restrain the expenditure of public money, and check the mad schemes of princely ambition—an independent Judiciary to distribute justice and defend private rights, without fear or affection—personal liberty secured—a free press and an unlimited toleration of religion!

And are these the fruits of the revolutions in France? Have all the miseries of more than twenty years of disorder, anarchy, civil war, murders, massacres and despotism, following each other in rapid succession, terminated in giving to that country a free Constitution? How is our astonishment excited that after more than five centuries of almost perpetual enmity and war between Great Britain and France; the latter should bow to the wisdom of a rival, and borrow from her enemy the fundamental principles of her government? A more honorable testimony to the wise policy of Great Britain—a more flattering eulogy upon her frame of government—is not to be found in the annals of history.

In reviewing the train of causes which have led to these events, we cannot, without doing violence to our consciences, overlook the dispensations of Providence, in

educing good out of evil ; and making the calamities of a nation, the means of advancing its interest, its glory and its happiness.

But the beneficial consequences of these vast changes are not to be limited to France. In Spain, we already observe the germ of a meliorated state of society.

And who can foresee to what an extent the lessons which the princes of Europe have learnt in this long school of adversity, may prove beneficial to their subjects? Will not the horrors of the first revolution in France teach kings to respect the rights and correct the morals of their subjects? Will they not learn that the timely reformation of abuses in government is the surest means of preventing their subjects from resisting oppression by force? Will they not learn something of the errors and vices of their own administration? Will not the example of France teach them a lesson of piety, and convince them that a God who rules with *justice* himself, will punish earthly princes who rule with *injustice* ; who devote that time to vicious pleasures which they ought to devote to the welfare of their subjects ; and squander, upon the gratification of their lusts or their ambition, the money which they wring from the people by oppression? Will not this example teach them that immoralities and a contempt of religion make not only bad men, but bad citizens and faithless subjects ; and that unprincipled subjects are the ready instruments to inflict divine vengeance on profligate kings and tyrants? Will they not learn that to render a nation powerful, its citizens must be united and attached to the government ; that to secure this attachment, they must be rendered prosperous, contented and happy ; and that the strength and stability of a government rest upon the wisdom and rectitude of the administration?

Nor must we pass without observation the prospect of improvements in science, which may spring from the great events in Europe. The vast efforts which have been made both to conquer and to defend, have called into

vigorous action all the powers of the human mind. The intercourse of princes, the union of men of learning, and the march of armies, cannot fail to communicate knowledge, and diffuse improvement over extensive portions of Europe. Even the friendship of princes, formed by necessity and strengthened by interest, must be productive, at least for a time, of the most valuable effects. The greatest monarchs of Europe have been compelled to unite in a kind of family or partnership; their rivalries and enmities have been extinguished in a sense of common danger; mutual sufferings and joint exertions have generated a sympathy of attachment and respect, which the joy of united triumphs, ending in peace, will serve to enliven and invigorate. The lawful monarch of France will not forget that he owes his safety in exile, and in some measure, his crown, to Great Britain; and the allied princes will recollect, with grateful admiration, the time when Great Britain stood alone, combating for their independence, against a world in arms.

In the lively joy which the friends of humanity in America experience, at the downfall of the wide-wasting despotism of Europe, we almost forget our own perilous condition. A dark cloud still lowers over *our* country. A transient gleam of light, diffused by the occasional triumphs of our brave seamen, serves only to awaken our remembrance of the splendor of federal policy, and then leaves us immersed in deeper gloom. A rash misguided policy has plunged us into war, without necessity, in defiance of all remonstrance, and all the maxims of wisdom. Sequestered at an immense distance from Europe, as if by a divine decree, to forbid our interference with her broils and a participation of her miseries, neutrality appeared to be assigned to us, by the counsels of heaven, as our portion, and the blessings of peace, as the reward of our impartiality. Unfortunate country! Linked to the policy of the most ferocious tyrant that ever scourged the human race, we may read in *his* miserable doom the displeasure of the

Almighty towards him and towards our *own counsels*. What new disasters, what further sufferings and disgraces await us, can be known only to that God whom we have offended. To his will let us bow in silent submission. Certain we are that our beloved country is not to enjoy the blessings of peace, till our government becomes just. No nation can be expected to admit the claims of a foreign government to dissolve the allegiance of its subjects, or under color of a neutral character, to aid its enemies in war. These claims, which are repugnant to the established laws and principles of Europe, and to the inherent rights of sovereignty in every nation, *must* be relinquished, or our calamities are not yet to cease. Let us hope that *necessity* will yield what *principle* has refused, and that we may soon hail as friends those whom we are compelled to treat as enemies.

The day we celebrate has ever been considered as auspicious to the freedom, the commerce, and the welfare of the United States. Under a wise administration, our Independence has proved an invaluable blessing. Let us not despair; but commit our country to that Being who is able to bring order out of confusion, and light out of darkness. Let us remain quiet citizens, and faithful subjects of the government, using our influence to correct its abuses; at the same time, reforming our own vices; and praying for the peace and prosperity of our country.



NOTES.

NOTE I.—page 6. Notwithstanding the evils incident to every elective government, I believe that a Constitution making the Legislature, and even the Chief Magistrate elective, *might be so framed* as to exist for a long period, and at the same time, secure as much wisdom and integrity in counsel and as much justice and purity in the administration, as any other form, and as much as is compatible with the nature of man. But a discussion of this subject is not within the limits of my present design.

NOTE 2.—page 7. An alteration in the ratio of representation in the several States seems to be indispensable to the harmony that ought to subsist between the Northern and Southern sections of this country—Indeed the violations of the Constitution would well authorize the Commercial States to insist on such alteration, as a condition of a continuance of the Union,

NOTE 3.—page 10. Perhaps the history of legislation does not furnish another instance of an inversion of all the maxims of wisdom, similar to that witnessed by the United States in the declaration of war and the measures preceding it. Restrictions of commerce to dry up the sources of revenue; and an almost total neglect of all the means of naval and land defense, as preliminary steps to war, exhibit a novelty in legislative proceedings. The recent imposition of taxes which but a few years before had been repealed; and the eagerness to create a naval force which had, a few years before, been neglected and contemned, exhibit the government in a most ludicrous view. Had the government remained in the hands of men of the Washington school, a regular system of measures for defense would have been pursued; the commerce of the country would not have been restrained or interrupted—the treasury of the United States would have been kept replenished—a just and honorable peace would have been preserved—or if war had been undertaken, it would have been with ample preparation. The loss of commerce by restrictions for five years past must have prevented a gain of at least ten millions of dollars annually or fifty millions of dollars—To this sum we may add a hundred millions of debt contracted by the war—as the price paid already for a change of administration. The amount of the disgraces suffered in our military operation, every citizen may calculate for himself.

But when we consider the everlasting scrambling for power and the emoluments of office, not only in the federal but in the state governments, and the total disregard of moral and political justice which springs from ambition, what hope have we left, that our rights and privileges can be long preserved, under such governments? See the parties, annually striving for ascendancy, by means lawful and unlawful, writing, riding, clamoring, expending vast sums of money, promising offices and favors, pledging influence to support this man or that scheme—and when a majority is obtained, in a legislature, see all the annual officers of the government removed, to make way for favorites—meritorious officers displaced for worthless men—old courts abolished and new ones erected, to evade constitutional barriers, and make offices for partizans—new districts formed for securing the election of party-men, and to effect the object, the states garbled and patched in the most ridiculous manner, and in contempt of all justice and propri-

ety.—See legislatures assailed by the instruments of corruption—large sums of money offered and received for the grant of banking privileges, and influence purchased by direct offers of a share of the boon to individuals, to corporations or religious sects.—See legislatures, multiplying banking corporations, without regard to public necessity or to the state of the current medium, thus depreciating money, and reducing the value of salaries, which had been accepted for services, in confidence that the public would not impair their value, and deprive worthy and dependent families of their means of subsistence.—Who that observes these evils and many others, too numerous to be mentioned, does not perceive that his confidence in such governments is shaken? It requires time to break down established institutions and habits—but the scramble for offices and for privileged institutions is effecting the work with deplorable rapidity. The party-spirit introduced and fostered by men of the South, to obtain a controlling influence over the North, is an evil which an age cannot cure and which time may render worse. If the people of the North are not already as corrupt and factious as any people on earth, party-spirit, if not extinguished, will certainly make them so. It is a gangrene in the political body not easily healed.

Formerly, the elections in most of the Eastern States were, to a great degree, unbiassed—the electors designated to office men of known worth, talents and integrity, and extensively, regard was paid to religious and moral character. But since the establishment of the Constitution of the United States, a regular systematic effort has been made by certain men of the South to divide, or to draw over to their party the people of the North. One object was to divert the trade of the United States, in some measure, from Great Britain, to France—to lessen our intercourse with the former, and increase it with the latter—while indefatigable efforts have been incessantly made to excite a popular hatred of Great Britain and of her government. These efforts have been attended with no small success. To effect this object and to secure to the South a controlling influence in our national councils, a party has been formed in the Northern and Eastern States, which tramples on all the old habits of election. Respectability of character is no longer a necessary qualification for office. In many instances, men without talents, and in some instances, the vilest and most unprincipled have been supported and elected, merely to favor the party—and it is not uncommon to see electors, who ordinarily sustain a good moral character themselves, giving their votes to the most profligate men. The destruction of the sober, discreet, moral habits of New England, in the exercise of the elective franchise, is a greater calamity than the embargo, and the war with all their hideous train of evils—as it is an evil far more difficult to repair. Indeed it may be irrepar-

able. And if a revolution should succeed and a different form of government be established, in this country, it will be traced back to the disorders which spring from this corruption of our elections. The men, who have abandoned the old habits of unbiassed elections, and who have given their influence to support a policy directly opposed to the commercial interest of these states, are the instruments with which the work is to be accomplished. There is reason to believe the great body of them are honest in their views; but not suspecting the designs of their leaders, they are made active agents in promoting all those perverse measures which impoverish and disgrace our country. Could they know all the secret springs by which they are moved, the most of them would certainly abandon their leaders and return to the standard of New England principles and habits.

NOTE 4.—page 18. No man has a higher respect for General Washington's character than myself. He was the best of men, and while he maintained a controlling influence over the parties in this country, the government was well conducted. Could he have lived and preserved that influence, his own ideas of the policy of the Union, and its practical benefits, might perhaps have been carried into effect. But it is a fact that seems to have been little noticed, that before his death, he had nearly lost that influence. The party opposing his policy and his personal influence, had rapidly increased for several years preceding his declining the office of President; and had he lived and consented to be re-elected, he could not probably have been elected more than for another term of four years. In the loss of popularity, had it taken place, he would not have fared worse than other good men in like governments. Of all the men of illustrious merit in Athens, which of them passed through life without banishment or disgrace?

But General Washington was neither omnipotent nor omniscient. In reasoning on the subject of the National Union, he assumed facts and principles, which the experience of a few years has proved not to be well founded; and as applied to the whole territory of the United States, his reasoning is doubtless incorrect, even in theory. If the representation of the states, and of the people of the states, could be adjusted, to the white population, and to the property, and some other alterations made in the Constitution, without which, in my apprehension, it cannot be durable, the Atlantic States might perhaps remain under one federal head with advantage. But the principles of corruption are wrought into the very frame of our government; and unless some provisions can be devised and introduced to secure the just influence of the different sections of the country, and a predominant portion of wisdom, talents, public virtue, and sound practical knowledge, in the several departments

and offices of the government, the Constitution will certainly fail—whether by a violent death, or by a lingering consumption, time only can determine.

But were the Constitution of the United States perfect, it would not answer the expectations of the Commercial States, under a southern administration, and a predominance of southern counsels. The interests of a commercial country can be regulated best by commercial men—men of *practical knowledge*. This practical knowledge can be obtained only by *experience* or by *personal attention to business*.

To show to my fellow citizens, the origin of the party spirit which prevails in this country, the following letter is subjoined. The genuineness of the letter cannot be questioned—it was published in America in 1797, and has never been denied. I copied the letter myself from the *Moniteur*, the official Gazette of France, dated January 25, 1797. It was addressed to Mr. Mazzei, an Italian gentleman, who had been in America, and seems to have been first published in Florence.

FLORENCE, JANUARY 1.

A letter from Mr. Jefferson, formerly minister of the United States in France, and Secretary for the department of foreign affairs, to a citizen of Virginia.

This letter, (literally translated) is addressed to Mr. Mazzei, author of *Researches historical and political upon the United States of America*, residing in Tuscany.

“Our political state is wonderfully altered, since you left us. Instead of that noble love of liberty and of republican government, which made us pass triumphantly through the dangers of the war, there has arisen an *English-monarchical-aristocratic* party; whose avowed object is to impose upon us the substance, as they have already given us the forms of the British government. Nevertheless the principal body of our citizens remain faithful to republican principles. All the planters (*proprietaires foncieres*) are in favor of these principles; also the great mass of the men of talents. We have opposed to us, (republicans,) the Executive power, the Judiciary power, (two of the three branches of the legislature,*) all the officers of government, all who aspire to obtain them, all the timid men, who prefer the calm of despotism, to the tempestuous sea of liberty, the British merchants and the Americans who trade with British capitals, the speculators, and those who are interested in the bank and in the public funds—establishments invented with views of corruption, and to assimilate us to the British model in its most corrupt parts.

“I should give you a fever, if I should name to you the apostates who have embraced these heresies—men who were Solomons,

* This mistake may be an explanatory remark of the translator.

in council and Samsons in the field, but whose locks have been shorn by the Delilah, England. [par la catife Angleterre.]

"They would wrest from us that liberty which we gained by so many toils and dangers. But we shall preserve it. Our mass of weight and riches is so great that we need not fear they will employ force against us. It is sufficient that we bestir ourselves, and break the lilliputian ties with which they bound us during the first Number which succeeded our labors. It suffices that we arrest the progress of that system of ingratitude and injustice towards France, from which they would alienate us, in order to place us under British influence!"

On this letter we may make the following remarks:

1. It is here alledged that the Executive, that is Gen. Washington, who was then President, the Judges of the Supreme Court, Jay, Cushing, Iredell, &c. the officers of the government, the merchants, men interested in the National Bank and in the funds, &c. are an *English-monarchical, aristocratic party*—attempting to impose on us the *substance*, as they had before given us the *forms* of the British government. The *forms* must refer to the Constitution of the United States, or to the state constitutions or to both.

2. It is alledged that the bank and the funds were establishments devised with *views of corruption*.

3. The men who favored these institutions, and of course Gen. Washington, are declared to be *apostates*—shorn of their locks; that is, corrupted by British influence, and intending to wrest from us our liberties.

4. The writer says, we are upon the watch—we shall rend asunder the ties with which these apostates have bound us—we shall put a stop to the progress of the *system of ingratitude towards France*.

Here the whole mystery is unfolded. Mr. Jefferson and his party would *break down* the Washington party—the old federal party—detach them from this pretended friendship for Great Britain, and attach the people to France. Every engine has been employed for this purpose—A persevering effort has been made and the democrats, the friends of Mr. Jefferson, and the present administration—are the instruments with which the government has wrought the woful changes in our public affairs, which every good man must deprecate.

It may be observed further that this letter is the text from which the friends of Mr. Jefferson have preached, from that day to this. No person can mistake the source of the abusive epithets *tories, aristocrats, monarchists, &c.* which are lavished, by the partizans of France, upon the disciples of Washington. "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household."