

CONFIDENTIAL

PUBLISHED JULY 6, 1819,

AT NEW

REQUEST OF THE REPUBLICANS OF THE TOWN OF BOSTON,

IN COMMEMORATION OF

THE ANNIVERSARY

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

.....
BY SAMUEL ADAMS WELLS, ESQ
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BOSTON:

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1819.

Boston, July 5th, 1819.

SAMUEL ADAMS WELLS, ESQUIRE.

SIR,

At a meeting of your Republican Fellow Citizens, at Faneuil-Hall this day, it was unanimously Voted, that the thanks of the meeting be presented to you for the Oration which you this morning delivered at their request, and that a copy be requested for the press.

We, having been appointed a committee to communicate to you the above proceedings, beg leave to add our wishes, that you will be pleased to comply with that of your Republican Fellow Citizens as above expressed.

We are, most respectfully,
Your obedient servants,

FITCH TUFTS,
JACOB HALL,
WILLIAM INGALLS, } Committee.

Boston July 6th. 1819.

GENTLEMEN,

In compliance with the vote of our Republican Fellow Citizens, communicated in your Letter of yesterday's date, I submit to you, for publication, a copy of the Oration delivered by me at their request.

I am, Respectfully, Gentlemen,
Your most obedient Servant,
S. A. WELLS.

MESSRS. FITCH TUFTS,
JACOB HALL,
WILLIAM INGALLS.

ORATION.

THE return of this anniversary brings with it accumulated evidence of the blessings which flow from our country's independence. Assembled, fellow citizens, in commemoration of that glorious achievement, we are naturally led to a consideration of its causes, by which a wide and luxuriant field opens upon the view; but it has been so often explored, that its beauties have become familiar, and the charm of novelty is broken. If, in moving over this wide expanse, we meet with little to gratify the transient pleasures of the imagination, we may find much to elevate the deeper qualities of the mind: the rise, progress and termination of the American Revolution, will ever be an interesting theme, while patriotism has a votary; or liberty, a friend. As our early history is remotely connected with our present subject, let us glance at some of its principal events, that we may see the nature of our political connexion with the parent country, the tenure by which our civil and religious privileges were held, and the relative political situation of the people of the two countries.

We, fellow citizens, have the singular advantage of being able to trace our national origin to its source. We can follow the gradations by which our country

ascended from feebleness, to strength ; from power, to glory ; from her condition as a mere satellite in the political system, to her departure from that limited orbit, to move in the more extended sphere of nations. We are not, therefore, necessitated to adopt the course pursued by other nations in regard to their primitive history : with them fiction has taken the place of fact, and where the sober pen of the historian has failed, it has been supplied by the imagination of the poet. If we do not boast of being descended from gods and heroes, we may exult with rational pride, that our Republic was founded by men, whose memories are worthy the veneration of posterity.

Our ancestors, the first settlers of New-England, abandoned their native country to seek an asylum from religious persecution. Their departure was an act of their own free will ; and not to escape from the punishment due to violated laws, nor to establish a society that should be free from moral and political restraints. They were not an ignorant, nor a licentious body of men ; but were distinguished for the regularity of their lives, and the purity of their morals. At the place of their nativity, they were men of acknowledged piety and virtue. Their public offences were refusing to conform to the ceremonies of the established church, and to comply with a royal ordinance, which they conceived to be repugnant to the principles of religion : for these, they were persecuted, and to escape from the tyranny of their persecutors, they left their native country, and encountered perils and hardships for the possession and enjoyment of that high prerogative of man :

religious liberty. They first proceeded to the European continent; and after having resided some years within the territories of the republic of Holland, they resolved on removing to America. At that period, nearly the whole extent of North America was claimed by the British crown by right of first discovery. Agreeably to this right, patents had been granted by James the first to certain individuals in England, who were incorporated and known as the Virginia company, and the council of Plymouth, and to whom all that part of the continent claimed by Great Britain was ceded by the crown upon certain conditions. Our ancestors having obtained from the Virginia company a right to settle within the limits prescribed by their patent, embarked for this land which was then the habitation of the beasts of the forest, and a fierce and warlike race of savages. After a long, boisterous and unpropitious voyage, they arrived at an inclement season of the year,* and landed upon the most barren and inhospitable part of our coast.† But not being within the Virginian limits, they had no right to settle at the place of their arrival; but fatigued and exhausted with the length of their voyage, unacquainted with the coast, together with the late and tempestuous season of the year, they resolved to remain in their present situation. The patent of the council of Plymouth extended from the coast of New Jersey to the gulf of the St. Lawrence;‡ within which was comprehended that part of the con-

* November, 1620.

† Cape Cod.

‡ From the latitude of 40° to 48° N.° and from sea to sea, as the charter expressed it.

thout, which, from that time to the present, is known as New-England. Upon an application to that body, our ancestors obtained a grant to a part of their territory, within the present limits of Massachusetts. It was within these limits, that the fathers of New-England had landed. Their first act after their arrival, was an act of devotion to God, in gratitude for his many blessings; their next was the organization of their little society into a body politic. Being British subjects, they acknowledged their allegiance to the British crown. They then began their settlement under many discouraging circumstances. The first year after their arrival, one half of their number fell victims to the hardships and fatigues through which they had passed. The survivors being men of firmness, perseverance and fortitude, were not discouraged; but they continued in the work which they had begun, and God prospered their exertions.

The continuance of that tyrannical spirit which had driven the first settlers from England, caused further emigrations, and additional settlements to be founded in Massachusetts.

In 1627, a patent was purchased by a number of individuals of the council of Plymouth, who ceded to them that part of their territory "which may be called Massachusetts proper,"* together with all the rights and privileges that had been granted to them by the crown.

* Minot.

In the year 1628, a charter was obtained from Charles the first, incorporating them by the name of the "Governor and Company of Massachusetts-Bay in New-England." This charter formed, in part, the constitution of government for this colony. It was therein expressly declared, that the "subjects who should go and inhabit within the said lands, and their children which shall happen to be born there, or on the seas going thither, shall have and enjoy all liberties and immunities of free and natural subjects, within any of the dominions of us, our heirs or successors, to all intents, constructions and purposes whatsoever, as if they, and every of them were born within the realm of England."

Similar privileges were secured to the Virginia company, and they were subsequently confirmed by an act of parliament.* Thus the subjects in every part of the British empire were equally entitled by law, as well as by nature, to the same degree of political liberty. The spirit of emigration continuing, their numbers fast augmented, and new colonies were founded and charters obtained.

Thus organized, they soon flourished and rapidly increased in wealth and strength. The successive generations in New-England were distinguished by as strong an attachment to their political liberty, as their fathers had evinced for their religious privileges. Many controversies arose between the different branches of the government, respecting the nature and

* Of 13th of George 2d.

extent of their civil rights, during their progress from infancy to manhood.

The people of Massachusetts were governed agreeably to their first charter, till the year 1683, when, in consequence of their having evinced an attachment to their political freedom, too strong for the times, their charter was vacated by Charles the second. The tyranny which was suffered in England under the reign of this prince, and his successor, James the second, extended its baneful influence to this land of freedom; and New-England, for a season, was polluted with as absolute a despotism under Sir Edmund Andross, as ever was suffered by degraded Rome under a Nero, or a Caligula. But his sway was of short duration. The people of Boston rose in arms, seized and confined the tyrant, and afterwards sent him to England to answer for his crimes, under a new order of things.

After the revolution in England, and the establishment of William and Mary upon the throne, a new charter was obtained, which was not generally approved by the people of the province. Some changes of importance were made from the old charter. Among others, the governor was to be appointed by the king, instead of being elected by the people, as formerly. Their limits were enlarged, and the colony of Plymouth, and the province of Maine and Nova-Scotia were united with Massachusetts-Bay. It seemed to be intended, that the government, by this charter, should be as analogous to the British constitution, as

circumstances would admit. The advantage that was gained, and which reconciled the people to it was, that it granted “religious toleration to all, except papists.” This privilege was not secured to them in their former charter, and its enjoyment rested upon the faith of a royal promise, that they should not be disturbed for their mode of religious worship. Their rights as British subjects were also fully confirmed. Under the present charter the people were contented and happy: and it was continued to them till the year 1774.

To the support of the wars which had been declared by the king, who, in this, was the supreme authority, the people of this part of the empire had largely contributed: their treasure they had liberally expended; and their blood had freely flowed. The military operations in Canada and the West Indies; the reduction of Louisburg, in 1745, and the Havana, in 1762, furnish memorable evidence of the exertions of New-England for the general benefit, and of the distinguished valour of her troops.

At the general peace of 1763, tranquility prevailed over the whole British empire. The ties of affection between the colonies and the mother country, were strengthened with their growth; and more perfect harmony had never existed between them, than at this period of their history.

In consequence of the signal services which had been rendered by the colonies in the last war, their strength and resources became objects of attention,

and the government of England determined to make the connexion more exclusively beneficial to the parent country. To effect this purpose, the ministry resolved to attempt an entire change of the system which had existed from the first settlement of the country; the most valuable rights secured by their charters were to be destroyed; distinctions were to be made between the subjects who were born within the realm, and those who were born in the colonies.

The Englishman boasted that the constitution secured him in the possession of his liberty; that no member of his government could move out of the limits which that prescribed; and that no part of his property could be taken from him without his own consent in person, or by his representative.

But the colonists, who were equally entitled to all the benefits of that constitution, were to be subjected to the authority of a parliament, which claimed the right of making laws binding upon them in all cases whatsoever; and this, too, without their having a single representative in that legislature; one branch of which was chosen by the people of England themselves.

The constitution was to be applied one way for the people of England, and another for the people of the colonies. They were to be freemen; we were to be slaves. Badges of slavery were to be worn by the one, while the cap of liberty was to grace the other.

We approach, fellow citizens, to a period which is interesting in the history of our country and to man-

kind. We border upon the commencement of that system founded upon those principles ; a system, the effecting of which may have enchained the whole Christian world to the footstool of tyranny and despotism.

The first measure adopted for this purpose, was at the close of the war in 1763, in the aspect of a taxation. Openly to advance their pretensions to the claims which they contemplated to establish, they rightly conceived would create an immediate and a general alarm ; they therefore deemed it expedient to execute it in a manner that would not excite the suspicions of the people. The right of laying duties upon articles of merchandize for the regulation of commerce had long been practised by parliament, and had never been denied by the colonists themselves, although the acts of trade had occasioned some degree of public irritation and complaint. This was the mode by which the ministerial plan was to be introduced. In 1764 an act was passed imposing duties on articles imported into the colonies ; not for the purpose of regulating trade, but with the express design of raising a revenue. The intention of such a procedure had been made known in England some time previous to its being carried into effect ; and the information was communicated to the General Court of Massachusetts by their Agent in London. The fact soon transpired, but it received less attention than its importance demanded. The people were not aware of the dangerous tendency of this infraction of their rights by charter. But the vigilant patriots of this metropolis saw the object in a proper light. Before the passing of the act

they sounded the alarm. . In the instructions given by the people of Boston in May 1764, to their representatives in the General Assembly, they declared the principle of the act to be a violation of their charter right to govern and to tax themselves ; that it struck at their British privileges ; and they add, if taxes are laid upon us in any shape without our having a legal representation where they are laid, are we not reduced from the character of free subjects to the miserable state of tributary slaves ?

This, fellow citizens, is the foundation stone upon which our Republic is built.

This was soon followed by the Stamp act, the principle of which was similar ; but, being more extensive in its operation and important in its effects, was more generally and violently opposed. Petitions for its repeal and remonstrances against its principle, were sent to the king and parliament by many of the colonial assemblies. The murmurs of the people were loud and deep. A storm so furious was raised, that the whole continent was convulsed. The lightning of Virginia flashed in the south, and the thunder of Massachusetts rolled in the north. The effects reached to the throne : the petitions were heard, and the act was repealed. But, while they desisted from the practice of their principles, in the declaratory act annexed to the repeal, they formally asserted, with as little dignity as justice, their right of making laws binding upon the colonies in all cases whatsoever. What power could be more absolute than this ? and what people could be more abject slaves than those, who

were subjected to rulers armed with so unlimited an authority? If the British parliament possessed such an uncontrolled power, what right, civil or religious could the colonists be said to possess? The parliament was invested with no such power; but it was the design of the ministry to establish it: its exercise was a rebellion against the most sacred rights of the people, and legalized and sanctified their resistance against every attempt to enforce so absolute a principle of tyranny.

The pretensions to this right were not suffered long to sleep. In the year 1767 they were again revived, and trade once more became the object. Duties for the raising of a revenue were levied on several articles of importation. The effect of the act was resisted in this town by a non-importation among the merchants, and the measure was followed by some of the commercial ports of the other colonies. The prompt and decided opposition with which every infraction of their rights had been met by the inhabitants of Boston, while it brought upon them the hostility of the British ministry, obtained the applause of every friend to political liberty. Its patriots became the objects of ministerial vengeance: the royal governor of the province was directed to seize upon some of those illustrious men, who dared to assert their country's freedom, in defiance of the threats of power. These magnanimous Republicans were to be torn from their families and their homes; transported across the wide Atlantic, to appear before the royal tribunal of *justice*, there for

their patriotism to be condemned to suffer the penalties of treason. But, fellow citizens, the hand of arbitrary power was not sufficiently strong to dare to execute so base a design in this land of freedom.

To enforce submission to the last act of parliament a fleet and army were ordered for this port. To augment the difficulties which such a measure naturally tended to create, the troops on their arrival were landed in the town and quartered upon the inhabitants. Sentries were posted around the hall of legislation: cannon were planted at its doors, and the members of the legislature were challenged when passing to perform their public duties. The engines of arbitrary power were displayed in all their terrors; but the designed effect was lost: the people were not discouraged, nor intimidated by them from a manly and decided expression of their sentiments. The House of Representatives resented with spirit the indignities that were offered them. The Assembly refused to proceed to business while they were surrounded by military power. Their language was firm, dignified and patriotic, and they evinced the spirit of men who were determined to be free.

The consequences that flowed from those measures might have been foreseen. The tragical events on the night of the 5th of March, 1770, were the terrible result. The sanguinary deeds that are recorded on that page of your history, filled the measure of public indignation. It was proclaimed in tones that caused

the minions of power to tremble, and to bow with submission to the majesty of the people. The mandate went forth that the soldiers should be removed from the town. It was obeyed; the whirlwind of popular fury passed, and the capital, for a season, reposed in peace.

The parliament, apparently conscious of the injustice of their acts, and convinced that the colonists were not to be reduced under their subjection without a struggle, sought to effect a retreat without wounding their pride. For this purpose the last act like that of the same nature which had preceded it, was partially repealed: but in order to preserve their claim to the right which they had assumed, the tax upon the article of tea for the raising of a revenue was continued. To reconcile the people to their procedure, and, as they thought, to prevent their opposition, the former duty of one shilling for the regulation of trade, was reduced to three pence for raising a revenue. But, fellow citizens, it was the principle, against which our patriots contended; not the amount of the tax: the nature of slavery is not altered by the weight of the chain. But the British parliament had retreated to their last position, and this they intended to maintain at all hazards. Ships with that article on board were expedited from England to several ports on this continent. The fact was known in the colonies before their arrival, and measures were taken to defeat the design. It was settled among the principal persons in several colonies that the tea should not be landed, but sent back in the same

vessels in which it should arrive. This measure was successful in some of American ports : but the glory of an open and manly resistance was to be reserved for the town of Boston. When the ships with the tea were arrived, a town meeting was called and every measure was pursued to avert the necessity of their final determination. The persons interested expressed a willingness to comply with the general wish, by sending it back. Repeated applications were made to the governor for permission for the ships to pass the castle with the tea on board : but without success. What then, fellow citizens remained to be done? If the tea had been landed the duty must have been paid, the ministry would have been victorious, and a fatal precedent established. The alternative that they embraced, and the act which followed were justifiable in the eye of heaven, and in the disinterested estimation of men. They defeated the insidious designs of a corrupt ministry to make them slaves. The tea was destroyed, and by a band of patriots, whose garb was indicative of the native freedom of the land. It was executed with a spirit that was worthy of the cause in which they were engaged. The ministry having failed to accomplish this, their favourite plan, resentment took the place of wisdom. The efficacy of punishment was to be tried to reduce the people to submission. The Boston Port Bill was accordingly passed with that intent. This was soon followed by the act for the Impartial Administration of Justice, so called. By the first the port was shut against all trade. No vessels were allowed to enter, or to depart. The

Custom-house was removed to Salem ; all business was suspended ; the consequent distress was heavy and general. The weight of this oppressive act was to be removed upon condition, that the inhabitants would make a pecuniary compensation for the tea that had been destroyed ; thereby to acknowledge themselves to have been in the wrong, and to yield up those positions, which, with a Roman fortitude they had so long and so nobly defended. This measure of the ministry was supported by their friends in the town, who strenuously exerted themselves to obtain the compliance of the inhabitants with this condition ; but the people were deaf to their arguments and to the voice of their own sufferings. They rejected the terms with indignation and gloriously adhered to their principles.

The second act was of a nature far more serious in its consequences. By this a radical change was to be effected in their government. The salaries of the governor, lieutenant governor and judges were to be paid by a grant of the King, and from taxes levied upon them by parliament : the council was to be chosen by *mandamus* of the crown, instead of being elected by the ^{*representatives*} people. ^{*of the*} The judicial officers were to be appointed by the governor and to be removed by him at pleasure : trials by jury were infringed : and the soldiers of his majesty were shielded in a manner by which they might escape from punishment due to the commission of the most atrocious crimes. To silence complaint and to enforce submission a powerful fleet and army were again sent to this metropolis. What liberty, what security was there for a people under such a government?

The cloud of despotism overshadowed the land ; but the light of liberty was not extinct. As the gloom increased in which the cause of your Country was involved, the glory of your patriots was more resplendent, and new stars appeared in the political hemisphere. These last proceedings of the British government, were productive of important consequences. Sympathy for the distress of the people in this town was evinced by all the Colonies. Boston was considered as suffering in a cause in which they all were equally interested. By these measures, that union was established which now constitutes our strength and security. The public calamities were so serious and alarming, that a general congress was agreed upon in the several colonies ; and delegates were chosen, who assembled in Philadelphia in 1774. Their proceedings were marked with wisdom, temperance and magnanimity. They professed their loyalty and allegiance to the British crown ; they stated their rights as British subjects ; they enumerated their violations ; they supplicated the throne for a restoration to peace, liberty and security. But while they prayed for justice, they showed that they were not insensible to their injuries. Their measures though pacific, were firm ; their professions, though loyal, were dignified. Though they plead for the restoration of their rights, they evinced a determination to oppose their invasion by such modes of resistance, as might be peaceable ; but not submissive.—They entered into a general non-importation agreement in behalf of their several colonies, and an association not to consume any articles of the produce or manufacture of Great Britain or Ireland : after hav-

ing adopted some other important measures, they dissolved ; but to meet again in May 1775.

The patriots of Massachusetts had so often witnessed the failure of similar proceedings, that they had but little hope in the success of these measures : they, therefore, like skilful pilots, wisely prepared for a storm of which they foresaw, they should feel the first effects. The provincial congress of Massachusetts assembled at Concord : they raised an army of 13,000 men to act upon any emergency. General Gage was then the Governor and Commander in Chief. At this period he had under his command fourteen regiments of British troops, which were encamped on Boston Common : the harbor was crowded with ships of war. All intercourse between the town and country was prohibited. Appearances were threatening and formidable. A crisis rapidly approached ; but the people were unappalled and prepared for the shock. At length the plains of Lexington were visited by the fury of the tempest ; its name is immortalized by its fields being moistened by the blood of the first martyrs in the cause of liberty. The enemy was there met by the brave and hardy yeomanry of the country, and the result was honourable to themselves and the cause.

The controversy was now to be decided by arms. The colonists to be reinstated in the possession of their natural and constitutional rights, had unsuccessfully pursued every method which justice and honor required. The efforts of Congress to this effect like all others that had preceded them, failed. Their petition was rejected ; and instead of granting them peace, they saw

the sword. The alternative now was submission and slavery ; or freedom and independence. A brave, virtuous and injured people could not hesitate in their choice : and they gloriously bid their enemies defiance. Conscious in the justice of their cause, they placed a firm reliance on the God of armies. Massachusetts having been the chief object of ministerial wrath, its inhabitants were sooner prepared for resistance than those of the other colonies, because they had longer felt the effect of those oppressive measures which urged its necessity. Congress at its next meeting raised an army, built and equipped a navy. Notwithstanding they had proceeded to this extremity, the attachment to the parent country by many of the colonies was so strong, that the public mind was not sufficiently ripened for the adoption of the great question of a political separation. But the flame of war blazed in every colony ; they all began to feel its effects, and to witness its desolating horrors. The supplications of your Congress for peace, liberty and security, were answered by the bayonets of mercenaries, and the tomahawk of savages. From the consequent sufferings of your country, and the smoking ruins of your defenceless towns, independence arose and that solemn declaration was made to God and the nations, that the colonies are, and of right ought to be, **FREE, SOVEREIGN, and INDEPENDENT STATES**, and that they are absolved from all allegiance to the **British crown**.

The permanent glory of this act, fellow citizens, consists not merely in the magnitude and importance of its consequences ; but in the temperate firmness by which it was effected, and the just and correct princi-

ples upon which it is founded. It was not produced by individual ambition for personal aggrandizement; but by the disinterested virtue and patriotic devotion of a body of men to the cause of liberty and the happiness of man. It was not a rash and hasty measure; but produced by slow and deliberate councils, and supported by a perseverance and fortitude which justice only could have inspired. To maintain with dignity the rank our country had assumed, required further efforts and renewed exertions. The fortune of war had been capricious; the genius of Washington did not always command success, and the first year after the Declaration of Independence, presented a melancholy presage of final success. To recover from the effects which our reverses had upon the public mind, seemed to be a desperate hope. The credit of the government was in ruins; their resources were exhausted; our troops were badly fed and clothed; the enemy was powerful by land and sea; his army was well appointed and equipped, and exulting in all the pride of victory. Your Congress was obliged to fly from their place of session; their deliberations were disturbed by the roar of the artillery of the enemy. The period, fellow citizens, was dark and gloomy. Independence was tottering from its base, and our national existence was suspended by a thread. But the tide of national distress was full. As the last ray of hope was glimmering upon the horizon, the glad tidings arrived of the glorious success at Saratoga. The songs of victory gladdened the hearts of our patriots, and the sons of liberty shouted with joy.

Our cause found advocates as we proved our ability to support it. France acknowledged our independence, and became the generous ally of a people who were struggling for their political existence. She magnanimously assisted us with troops and with money. Her arms were incorporated with ours, and the allied army marched to victory and to glory. The siege and capture of Yorktown and of the British army were the results of their united efforts. By this important blow the enemies of our republic were scattered, and their pride was humbled. A ray of peace beamed upon the horizon; it soon rose and spread over the land, and the elements of war were hushed. Our independence was acknowledged, and peace proclaimed.

Thus, fellow-citizens, an event was accomplished which is without a parallel in the political history of nations. We can no where find the record of a revolution in which the causes were more just, the objects more pure, and the effects more important. In its course were exhibited examples of individual patriotism in all its sublimity, and national virtue in all its grandeur. The importance of this mighty achievement is not merely the adding of an empire to the catalogue of nations; it has consequences far more important to the world at large. The science of government, in which the happiness of the great family of man is involved, has received new light. This interesting subject had long engaged the attention of statesmen and philosophers. Systems had been invented and exploded. Theories had been multiplied; but their practical application had been wanting. The minds of men were yet enslaved by the shackles of prejudice and

ignorance. But with American independence a political era commenced, and the human mind was free.

Our parent country had been several ages in arriving at the point which she had reached on that important subject. The degree of freedom that she possessed had been obtained at different periods of her history, and by many violent internal conflicts. Her constitution had been gradually raised from the abyss of despotism to that point of political liberty which she then enjoyed. Her institutions excited the envy and admiration of the neighbouring kingdoms. To be secure of all the benefits which that constitution guaranteed to the subject, was the point for which our patriots contended in the early stages of the controversy. It was not from a desire of innovation, or change that they combatted; but for the preservation of that liberty to which they were entitled, both by the laws of nature and the constitution under which they lived. The questions of controversy between Great-Britain and her Colonies, involved the most important principles of a free government. Their public discussion enlightened the public mind. The people were instructed in their political rights; and the nature and principles of government were more generally understood in this age than at any former period. To the degree of liberty, that the people of this country enjoyed before the revolution, may, in a great measure, be attributed the establishment of that perfect system of republican freedom which we now possess. A people who suddenly emerge from a state of slavery and oppression, are apt to fly to the opposite extreme of anarchy and licentiousness; from the tyranny of the one, to the tyranny

of the many, till they again relapse into a worse state of despotism than that from which they had previously emancipated themselves. But we, fortunately, had been ripened by the enjoyment of a sufficient degree of liberty to avoid licentiousness; and had resisted oppression before we felt its weight. The public mind enriched by experience and enlightened by instruction, calmly and temperately adopted our present systems of government which are the fruits of those lessons of wisdom and virtue which were taught by the patriots of the revolution.

The present political institutions of our Country are free from the absurdities which are engrafted in the government of our Mother Country, and that perfect system of representative democracy is established which best comports with the laws of God, of nature and of reason. By these the citizen retains every right which is not of necessity relinquished on his entering society, and for the support of government. The rights of man and of society are equally secured and protected. No man by law is elevated above another; but we all stand upon the same political level; and it is to be hoped that no other distinctions will ever exist among the people, than those which are founded upon wisdom and public virtue. A society that is regulated by such principles must be happy and prosperous.

Revolutions have too often terminated in a mere change of masters; they often in professing to correct abuses, augment them. Popular excitement moves in extremes; but it is the greatest glory to the actors in the American revolution, that justice, temperance and fortitude, marked its rise, progress and conclusion.

The abuses which occasioned it are corrected, and the originally professed principles of those who were its chief promoters are established. Public liberty is fixed upon the firmest basis, and it will be the fault of ourselves if it be removed from its position.

Our patriots lived for their country ; not for themselves. They toiled for the public good ; not for their own. We have not found that they secured to themselves either titles, honors, or wealth ; but faithful to their own principles they finished their work in conformity to their professed design. They rested from the toils of public life, rich only in the affections of the people, and the gratitude of their country. Of those illustrious men, how few are now to be numbered among the living ! A few returns of this anniversary and every star of the revolution will have sunk below the horizon. For those whose course is already run, we perceive no stately columns erected to commemorate their virtues : no mausolea to direct us where their ashes is inshrined. But their monuments are our political institutions, the general happiness of the people, and the prosperous condition of the Country. They require no statues of brass or of marble : no proud monumental columns to perpetuate their memories : the fame of their glorious deeds will be as durable, as the imperishable record of their works.

Under our republican institutions we have increased in wealth and in strength ; we have been prosperous and happy. But our prosperity has been occasionally interrupted. Internal dissensions have distracted our national councils, and influenced their decisions.

The contending powers of Europe made us a prey to their injustice and rapacity. With them national law was prostrated for national expediency. Under these circumstances our commercial rights were invaded. Our property was the prey to the commissioned freebooters upon the ocean. Our flag was no longer a security to the persons, nor a protection to the property which it covered. We were, as a people, the reproach of Europe, and the victims of their iniquity.— But our national policy was that of peace. True to this policy insults and indignities were endured, till our magnanimity was considered weakness, and our forbearance pusillanimity. The calamities of war could not be averted by equity and justice. The republic was roused to a sense of her own dignity; and war was declared, when peace would have been ignominious.

The sleeping energies of our country were awakened and brought into action: though enfeebled by internal divisions; yet, retributive justice was exercised with a terrible vengeance upon our enemy. If in this contest you would search for the glory of your army? turn to the west and to the south: if for the glory of your gallant little navy? look to your inland seas and to the two oceans which bound the continent: if for the wisdom of your statesmen? turn to the record of the negotiations at Ghent: and we shall find in them all sufficient to gratify the honest pride of every citizen of the republic. In this conflict victory, glory and peace were its fruits. Our national character was redeemed. And our republic, now stands “proudly eminent” among the kingdoms of the earth.

But, fellow citizens, what shall we say of Massachusetts in this conflict for the defence of those rights, which she had so largely aided to establish? Did she act worthy of herself? Did she display that patriotism for which she was once so highly exalted in the estimation of the world? Did she show her attachment to those principles by which she was actuated in the war of the revolution? But, let us proceed no further in the enquiry. We are all interested in her honor, let us veil her infirmities. If she has fallen from that lofty position to which she was so justly entitled, let us endeavour to restore her to her proper place in the political system. If her character has been sacrificed by the measures of the cabinet; her glory was sustained by her sons in the field. Search the historic page and we shall find them honorably enrolled among the defenders of our country's rights. We shall find evidence that the former valor and patriotism of Massachusetts ^{are} not degenerated: that this cradle of Independence has furnished its proportion of those heroes, who fought in the defence of its principles. Let us remember too, that Massachusetts was once eminently distinguished for her attachment to the principles of freedom; that she has been fruitful of patriots; that in the war for the establishment of our independence, she was always in the front ranks of liberty, in opposition to tyranny and oppression; that she was the chief directress of the revolution, and formed the key stone to the arch of the grand confederacy. While we reflect on what she was, and see what she now is, we may weep for her late follies; but we can exult at her for-

mer glory. Let us hope that she will soon return to that course which her honor and her dignity require, and that the spots which have appeared upon her bright surface, will soon become invisible and lost in the blaze of her native splendour.

We have great reason to rejoice, fellow citizens, for the manifold blessings we enjoy. The war through which we so triumphantly passed, not only has made us respected abroad ; but has restored to us domestic peace and tranquility. The voice of faction is hushed, the passions of party sleep, and harmony prevails over the land. The national administration possess the affection and confidence of the people ; the laws of the nation are respected and obeyed ; commerce is protected ; literature and the arts are encouraged ; the earth yields her increase ; the public burdens are light, and our resources are abundant. Our political institutions strengthen with their age. The tree of liberty flourishes : planted in a genial soil, its roots flourish by the fertilizing streams of republicanism, its trunk is strengthened, and its arms extend ; the Eagle of our republic reposes upon its branches ; and the wearied pilgrim from the deserts of tyranny, finds shelter and repose under its foliage.

When we reflect, fellow citizens, on the innumerable blessings we enjoy ; the few, very few evils we suffer, we shall find great reason to rejoice in being citizens of a country so abundantly favored by Heaven.