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AN

ORATION,

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DELIVERED

ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1829,

AT

THE CELEBRATION OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

IN THE

CITY OF BOSTON.

BY JAMES T. ^{RECOLLECTED} AUSTIN.



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ORATION.

A PEOPLE, satisfied with hereditary honor, might repose on the large inheritance derived from the fathers of the American revolution. Providence assigned to them a duty of immeasurable interest, and endowed them with feelings, manners and principles for its successful accomplishment.

In their adventurous courage chivalry revived again; and the armies of liberty rivalled in glory the soldiers of the cross. Their self devotion repeated ~~the~~ examples of apostolic zeal in a cause almost as holy, and joined in kindred veneration the martyrs of freedom and the evangelists of faith. Their country combined and concentrated every motive of action, and enforced the obedience of their souls, even when she seemed to require them, like the Patriarch of Israel, to bind their own children on the altar of patriotism, and with their own hands to offer an oblation dearer than life.

But the declaration of national independence—their enduring claim on the gratitude of posterity and the admiration of mankind—is not to be considered as the commencement of American liberty. More justice is due to the earlier settlers of Massachusetts, and more liberality to the country whence they sprang.

Our ancestors came here freemen, and by the blessing of God neither they nor their posterity ever were slaves.

Before they left the fragile bark, which bore on its deck the fortunes of a future empire, they framed a constitution of government suited to their humble condition and their better hopes. When they appointed Mr. John Carver to be their Governor, for the truly republican reason that "he would not adventure upon any thing of moment, without consent of the rest;" when they placed all military rule in the hands of a "gentleman very expert in matters of that nature, one Capt. Miles Standish, by name, by whom they were all willing to be ordered in these concerns," they established their little commonwealth on the principles of civil liberty. When subsequently they assembled to carry on the business of legislation, "every man being a member of the General Court," there was a practical illustration of a pure democracy, which convenience and not compulsion induced them afterwards to change.

Their allegiance to the British Crown was little more than a convenient compromise to pay easily for the protection they required; and hung so lightly that they would not permit the royal flag to float in their capital, because the cross in the standard of St. George offended their scrupulous consciences with its emblem of popery.

Laws were made by their own delegates, expounded by their own citizens, and generally administered without cause of complaint. No man was harmed in body or estate, but by judgment of his peers. The whole subject of ecclesiastical polity was under their controul. Education, the great bulwark of rational liberty, was under their sole direction, and was so early, thoroughly, permanently and generously provided for, that it may be doubted if the vast improvement of the human mind be here owing to any one cause more ~~wisely~~ than to the wise liberality of the founders of New-England. For more than a century and a half they enjoyed all the immunities of freedom, which their local situation and their sparse population would admit, and when at length the hand of arbitrary power was outstretched to oppress them, it found intelligence, which could not be deceived, resolution, which could not be broken down, confidence, which

could not be conquered; physical strength in awful disparity, to be sure, with their formidable foe, but directed by a high moral feeling, which is not to be measured by any mere human standard, for it is the instrument of Providence for the accomplishment of its grandest designs.

Resistance began, when oppression began. We do not know, said one of the leaders of the people, that this matter is determined upon—but *the report of it ought to alarm us.*

In the official enumeration of the colonies' complaints, none are mentioned beyond the administration of the then reigning monarch. There were therefore no chains to be destroyed, for none had been forged;—no yoke to be broken, for their gallant spirits had never bowed themselves to bondage. Danger existed only in prospect—The Stamps were sent back again—The ocean had drunk up the tea—The soldiers of the King had retired from this place at the voice of the people—The sympathy of a continent baffled the vengeance of the ministry, and the rays of royal indignation concentrated upon Boston, “illuminated, but could not consume her.” Military force attempted to compel submission, and lives were lost; but the blood that was shed, like dragon's teeth, sprung up armed ~~men~~ *men*. The musket, that had rusted since the French war, was brightened again; and the bayonet, if there were one, drawn from its worm-eaten scabbard. The little gun powder on hand was collected into arsenals, and sand deposited in barrels to prevent the enemy from knowing how very little there was. Valor supplied the place of experience. Against the veterans of the King, rich in military equipment, and proud of the blazonry of arms, a half fed and worse clad yeomanry made bare the sword of the Lord and of Washington.

We venerate the men of the revolution, for renouncing the colonial character, when its humble condition no longer comported with their dignity and honor; but we should not be unjust to the British Government, whose gentle and tolerant authority had prepared the way to independence. The spirit, which sustained it, grew out of habits and manners, which the mother

country had fostered. The intelligence which conducted the revolution, was the result of laws and institutions she had encouraged; and the moral sentiment of the people, if it had improved on her example, was supported by her character.

We are proud that the restraints of society were unbroken in the wildest commotions of civil war;—that the record of those days is not as elsewhere, a catalogue of crimes; that religion maintained her authority; that her temples were not deserted, nor her ministers neglected, nor her duties forgotten.—Such a state of public feeling, such propriety of public manners could be formed among colonists only under the influence of liberal government; they could not be found among a people, whose spirit had been depressed by slavery, or broken down beneath the fetters of despotism.

Had these States been the colonies of France, we might have been as dull and insensible as the Canadian peasantry, and quite as incapable of freedom. Had they been placed under Spanish domination we might have struggled through the dark night of ignorance in all the horrors of a gloomy superstition, and if at some period auspicious to the enterprise, a temple was erected to freedom, instead of the intelligence and truth, and moderation and piety, which are the only acceptable offerings at its shrine, its altars would have streamed with a constant sacrifice of blood.

Not only did civil liberty exist here anterior to national independence, but the actual independence of Massachusetts was anterior to that of the nation.

Massachusetts is the mother of the revolution. Her efforts in its commencement are too honorable to be omitted in the heraldry of her fame. Earliest and alone, without aid, without allies, connections or confederacy, singly, by her own will, she dissolved the royal power within her own territory and over her own people, and assumed to herself the prerogatives of independence.

When it was yet unknown how far the generosity of her sister colonies would support her in her extremest need, when it was not impossible that ancient loyalty might identify resistance with

rebellion, when it was uncertain how wide might be the desolation of the storm to which she exposed herself, and how fatal the consequences of a disaster beyond her own resources to repair, by a magnanimous effort of resolution—by the force of that attachment to freedom which education and law and habit and the recorded example of her pilgrim fathers had infused into the very soul of her people, she broke from the ancient connexion, and achieved her own independence, unassisted and alone.

When her Congress of delegates assembled at Watertown, in defiance of the royal charter, and spurned the representative of the crown, and assumed the powers of civil government, and took possession of the public treasury, and levied taxes, and established a navy, and commissioned that American vessel of war, that first captured a British Ship on the ocean, and erected maritime courts, and appointed Judges, and administered justice to belligerent and neutral by the law of nations, and raised an army, and nominated officers, and gathered soldiers under the pine-tree banner of Massachusetts, and poured out a rich libation of blood on the battle-field of freedom, the colonial character was at an end. The revolution had begun. The State was then free, sovereign and independent.

It might be that the strength of a confederated continent would come to her assistance. She might hope for the support, and she received the support, the full, generous, noble support of the country; but she began the revolution alone,—she took the first step in the march of independence resolutely, fearlessly, unaided and alone.

Yield to the honorable emulation of our friendly competitors all that may be challenged by their gallantry and zeal. Concede the debatable propositions that the first suggestion of committees of correspondence originated with them; that their chivalrous spirits projected the grand Congress of 1776.

While those committees were discussing the great interests of the country, and before that Congress had assembled, Massachusetts had ceased to be a colony of the crown. If the declara-

tion of independence was moved for by the most eloquent of their patriots, and draughted by the most eminent of their statesmen, independence itself was first established in Massachusetts, and its principles acted out by the humblest of our citizens.

Bring to the imagination that band of determined men assembled at Watertown, unarmed and defenceless within cannon shot of a disciplined army; their fortunes in the camp of a military commander, whose dignity they had offended; their persons liable to be seized and sent to Europe for trial as traitors; their conduct impeached in a public proclamation, and two of them proscribed as rebels whose offences were too heinous for the pardon of the King. Judge of their anxiety in that time that tried men's souls; their immense responsibility to the country, whose destiny they directed; to their children for the protection that was due to them; to posterity for that political condition, which would be a legacy of honor or of shame; to their God before whom they were answerable,—and felt themselves answerable, for all the blood of a war they might accelerate or prevent. How indistinct their vision of the future even when a strong faith threw its light upon their soul. How difficult their task to keep up the courage of the timid, the hopes of the desponding, the strength of the feeble; to enlighten the ignorant, restrain the rash, supply the destitute, and impart to all the pure motives, which consecrate success. Here was no mad ambition, no lust of power, no allurements of interest, no scheme of personal distinction. Few of them are remembered in history. Yet these are they, whose light gave promise of a coming dawn. If they recede from the general gaze, it is in the noon tide splendor of a brighter day.

They set as sets the morning star, which goes
Not down behind the darkened west, nor hides
Obscured among the tempests of the sky,
But melts away into the light of heaven.

Had these men proved incompetent to the task, the battle for that generation would have been lost when it began. Indepen-

dence might indeed have been obtained, for no foreign power could long hold a continent in its grasp; but the struggle must have been made in this age, and not that; and the desolation of civil war which marks the times of our forefathers, would have been the melancholy history of our own.

Appropriate honors have ever been accorded to the statesmen and soldiers of the revolution, yet it is not these classes alone that the successful issue of the conflict is chiefly to be attributed. The springs of the revolution lay deeper, and farther in the interior. It gushed not from one, or two great fountains. It rolled onward like our broad and fair rivers swollen by universal accessions from every point in the vast territories through which they flow. There was a quiet, unobtrusive, determined and patient spirit among the people, which submitted to sacrifices from devotion to liberty, and found a recompense for sufferings in consciousness of duty.

Let it be remembered that all the usual occupations of life were at a stand. Commerce was annihilated; the fisheries destroyed; agriculture deprived of her laborers; the mechanic arts suspended; the currency a depreciated paper, which mocked all calculations of mercantile acuteness; the treasury empty; credit at an end; private fortunes embarrassed; destitution and want bringing up their spectacles of wo, and many a voice like the widow of Jerusalem exclaiming in agony, "as the Lord thy God liveth I have not a cake, but only a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruise, and I am gathering two sticks that I may go in and dress it, for me and my son, that we may eat it and die."

But there was a prophet's miraculous power in the spirit of patriotism.

Families were fed, and children educated, and taxes paid, and recruits raised, and personal services rendered for precaution and defence—but how it was done—with what effort and exertion and toil and tears, may escape the researches of history and be lost to the gaze of the world, but it spreads itself to the

observation of that beneficent being, who disdains not the humble annals of the poor.

Nor in recurring to those agitating times should the country forget its obligations to the sex, whose influence in society is in proportion to civilization, and not the less powerful that it is unobtrusive and silent.

The revolution depended on opinion, and they cultivated high sentiments of honor, and proud principles of duty. It depended on enthusiasm, and their buoyant spirits reflected in wider circles the sunshine of success, and threw the brighter coloring of their hopes on the clouds of misfortune. It depended on effort and exertion, and there was no useful employment too humble for their assiduity. It depended on sacrifices, and they made them. No disaster fell upon the State, but a full share of it pressed upon them; no victory imparted confidence to the country, but their joy was chastened by the private suffering with which it was purchased. The course of the revolution was through trouble, and grief, and privation, and distress, and it was their peculiar office to soften the sorrows that could not be prevented, and to assuage the anguish of wounds, for which kindness is sometimes a cure.

In our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade,
By the light quivering aspen made;
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A minstrel's angel thou.

We are too often ungenerous to our own fame. The story of the British matron following the fortunes of our northern campaign has been repeated with pathetic tenderness, till the world wonders at her constancy; but the wives and mothers of the American soldiery are confounded with the common followers of an European camp, because history is too lofty, and poetry too fastidious to recount their interesting and romantic agency.

But go to the survivors of those days. Ask the veteran chilled now by the frosts of age, who yet remembers those perilous

and piercing times, ask him at what privation of domestic comfort the haversack and the canteen of the recruit were furnished with their scanty store? Ask him, who traversed the field of battle, to quench the burning thirst of the wounded, and parted with their garments for bandages, and when the wine and oil were wanting, ministered in the humblest offices of humanity with their tears? Who found their weary way to the prison door of the captive, to cheer him with the kindness of friendly salutation; whose generosity supplied the destitute hospital and fed the famishing, and watched the sick, and soothed the last moments of the dying soldier? He will tell you that these angel visits of mercy were paid by the daughters of the country. And the old man's countenance brightens at the recollection of their sympathy, and the animation of youth returns again as the images of their benevolence crowd freshly on his mind.

It is decorous on suitable occasions, of which this anniversary is one, to open the treasury of ancestral honor, and examine the splendid inheritance of glory derived from illustrious progenitors; not vainly to boast of it; not wastefully to expend it; not idly to rest upon its wealth; but to indulge in solemn feelings of gratitude for the blessings it confers, and to recognize at the same time the obligations it imposes.

We may gaze upon it with emotions of honest pride. It is a treasure incorruptable, immortal. We may feel a laudable self-satisfaction in possessing it, with a hope that the virtue, which acquired, may be continued to preserve it; that it will extend and multiply the bounties of a beneficent providence, when the rays of divine favor shine on our country, and moderate the rage of the elements, when tempests, which spare no human institution, sweep through the land.

We may feel some confidence that when contentions arise among the heirs of this noble inheritance, it may check the wantonness of dissention and repress even the acrimony of mutual reproach.

When they, to whom was bequeathed this legacy of honor,—

as times change and parties arise, and elections are to be carried—are charged with every possible violation of the political decalogue; when some, it is successively said, submit to foreign influence fatal to the public peace, or are corrupted by the examples of a demoralizing democracy; or are bewildered by the fascinations of imperial splendor; or are seduced by the meretricious charms of a titled aristocracy; or when invidious distinctions are made at home to our desparagement, and a yankee state is spoken of as something different from a patriot State; or when in ambiguous phrase unnamed but distinguished leaders of the people are denounced as traitors to the constitution and the laws, the indignant genius of the land may proclaim with a voice as resistless as the elements in triumphant refutation; These are the descendants of the puritans of New England. These are the sons of the patriots of the revolution. These are they, born on the modern Marathon of the republic, nursed in the cradle of liberty, baptized at the altar of their country's independence!

Could such men forget the example of their ancestors, the claims of posterity, their duty to God, the yawning graves would give back again their antiquated dead, and multitudes of regenerated patriots start from their unquiet repose to antedate the final retribution of mankind, and involve in premature conflagration the worthless tenants of a useless world.

But the glory, which belongs to the age of independence, would be remembered on these occasions with very little utility, if it did not impress on each successive generation its own high responsibility.

The duties of the citizen may change, but they never can cease. When great efforts are required large honors are the reward; when the task is comparatively easy the neglect of it is followed with severe reprobation. The public treasure, like the private fortune of individuals, cannot be secured without care, vigilance and discretion. It is exposed to the bad passions of the community, and must be surrounded by a rampart of as generous hearts as were concerned in procuring it.

Dissentions endanger it. In the violence of party zeal altars are erected to strange Gods, and the true worship is neglected. Competition ensues not to advance the interests of the State, but to promote the success of a party ; not for the prosperity of the people by wise laws, but the gratification of individuals by lucrative office.

Parties will exist in a republic, for were there is a right of private judgment there will be a difference of opinion. Sparks stricken off in collision fall on matter inflammable enough to blaze always with fierceness, and sometimes with danger. But the materials are not inexhaustible. It is not the holy fire, which burns without being consumed. The tendency of party strife to cease in one form and revive in another is the compensating power that prevents its producing the ravages it threatens. The ever varying interests and the multiplied circumstances of political excitement in an active and enlightened community prevent any dominion over the public mind for a period long enough to derange it.—The restless ingenuity of dissent traces out the lines of party with as much earnestness as if the record was to remain for ever, but the returning tide of time mocks this perishable industry, and smooths its shores for a new impression, equally interesting and equally transient.

One set of circumstances form one combination of men, but another set arise, and the former confederacy have no common interest to combine them as partizans. New events bring old opponents into the same ranks, and their better acquaintance softens former animosities, and reconciles conflicting opinions. Whoso endeavors to prolong the strife, beyond the existence of the causes whence it sprang, does violence to the spirit of the constitution, and impairs the principles of civil liberty.

Our history is replete with occurrences, which excited the rage, and almost the madness of rival factions, until their temporary importance yielded to others that seemed at the time quite as formidable.

Independence was not determined upon by universal consent.

There were men ;—good men too,—who expected defeat, and would not encourage resistance. But are there any who would now draw the permanent lines of a party between the descendants of the Tories and the Rebels, the Loyalists and Republicans of 1776. The constitution was proposed to a people divided in almost equal numbers on its fundamental provisions; but the original causes of dissatisfaction are forgotten by all parties, while some restless spirits, who call themselves its friends, are incessantly proposing alterations which never perplexed the controversy of its contemporary critics.

The French revolution, the British Treaty, the decrees of Napoleon, the orders in council, our own embargo, non intercourse and war, multiplied causes of quarrels and mutual reproach. But the revolution has burnt out; the treaty has expired; the Emperor is dead; the orders are repealed. And the embargo, non intercourse and war have gone down to one common grave together.

These were topics of fierce controversy between republicans and federalists. But the causes of the quarrel have ceased, and the parties to it have changed. The majority of the active men of the present day know as little, and care as little about their details, as they do about the prosecution of the Quakers or the persecution of the witches in the early history of New England—And an attempt to new marshal the ranks of republicans and federalists, as in other days, is as idle and hopeless as to revive here that grave dispute, which the historian of Lilliput informs us shook to its centre that mighty commonwealth, Whether when a man was about to eat an egg, it should be first broken on the big end, or the little end of the shell?

Some part of the acrimony of past contention may still linger in the recollection of the comparatively few, who were most intimately concerned in it; but even this is passing away. We do not believe the aspersions, which were cast on the eminent men of other days and earlier parties. We have sense enough to know, and candor enough to admit, that there were honest

men, and wise men, and great men in the ranks of both the contending parties ; and that there were questions at issue about which the most expanded minds and the most honest hearts might reasonably differ. Although on these questions we adhere to our original principles and still entertain our former sentiments, and continue to believe that our former opponents were wrong, yet the practical consequences of such opinions are at an end. They belong to history and philosophy, and not to private passions or personal interest ; and they do not come, and they cannot be forced to come from their present insignificance, into causes for individual hostility or political division.

We have now other causes of difference. We divide now about Tariffs and Rail roads, about reform and removals, about the mode of making a president and who he shall be. We are Adamsites or Jacksonites or follow the standard of some other one of the half dozen great men who divide public opinion. When the old republican party, which once in the integrity of its strength shook down its adversaries' battlements, and planted its standard on the Capitol,—and sent forth its triumphant detachments into every section of the country, is now called together on some general election, it comes like the gathering of the clans on the highlands, where each has its own leader, and its own piper, and its own pibroch—mingling their discordant notes in one wild din of dissonant confusion. .

And the great federal party, which claims to have erected the palace of constitutional liberty, and to have swayed the sceptre of public opinion, and to have set, like a monarch on his throne, with an empire at their feet, comes out now on some gala occasion like a decayed gentleman, whose pride has lasted longer than his fortune ; and when he would assemble the retainers of his house to display its accustomed magnificence, finds his ancient tenantry are dead ; that the younger have sought other service ; that his equipments for the field are marvelously out of fashion ; and that only a few family servants remain to preserve the ancient honors of his rank, and to prove, amid the

dilapidation of his estates, their attachment to his character, and their fidelity to his principles.

The preservation of our free institutions depends on the dissemination of pure principles, sound morals and a general regard to honest and honorable conduct. There is in these respects an imperative duty on the guardians of public liberty. And all the people are its guardians. To this office they are appointed by that good providence, which placed them in a country of freedom. They may not neglect it without the most alarming dereliction of duty. Each man in the sphere of his influence, and each woman in her domestic circle is bound to this task by all the obligations of natural allegiance.

A profligate people cannot long continue free. Public virtue is an inseparable condition of national freedom. To live under free institutions and wise laws is the highest and noblest condition of man in civil society, and cannot long be enjoyed by a people licentious and dissolute. Where the public mind is essentially corrupt, there is no capacity for the enjoyment of rational liberty. We need not look back upon antiquity for the colossal ruins of free states. History preserves the records of no empire to compare with this country in the extent of its civil and religious freedom. Such a condition marks the progress of man, the expansion of his capacity, the enlargement of his moral power, by which self government becomes good government, and judgment, and reason, and integrity, and honor, and religion are the household troops of the republic. It is not vain glory to say, that the first practical experiment of this government was made by a people, by education and character morally and religiously in advance of the rest of mankind. None other could comprehend its value. None other can sustain it. If the age recedes in virtue it cannot advance in freedom. If a people do not preserve a high distinction for purity of manners, sound principles, love of order, and voluntary obedience to the laws, they cannot keep possession of an intelligent liberty.

The sons and the daughters of this land, are called upon

therefore, by the most solemn adjurations of patriotism, to preserve the characteristic qualities of their honorable ancestry. If the strictness and simplicity of the puritans must yield to the refinement and luxury of more opulent times, the integrity of their conduct, the steadiness of their faith, the temperance of their lives, their zeal for virtue and disinterested exertions for the public good are examples, the true spirit of which this community must not abandon, if they would preserve the institutions of their fathers. A disposition to extravagant expenditure in dress, equipage and social intercourse, beyond the limits of individual fortune, demands that public sentiment should be awakened to its ruinous consequences; and that blasting sin of intemperance, which has threatened to become a national vice, should rouse the indignant eloquence of the patriot as well as the Christian, and be marked with equal reprobation by every lover of his country, and every worshipper of his God.

The nature of our political institutions more than of any other nation, places a peculiar responsibility on every individual citizen, because every one and all of them result from the aggregate of individual effort. Each man does a little, and no man does more. Single ballots select the public officers, and single actions form the public character. This is the consequence of a popular government. But we talk of popular governments without always understanding the magnitude of the agency, by which they are moved. The power of the people, almost infinitely divisible in its component parts, is yet in its aggregate a new display of power, very feebly developed in the republics of antiquity, little known as yet beyond the territory of the United States.

In other ages and other nations it was the monarch, or the nobles, or the clergy, or the rich, or the eminent, soldiers who had gained splendid victories—emperors, kings, consuls who concentrated upon themselves the glory of the nation, for whose benefit government was ordained and the people permitted to exist. With us the order is changed; the government and its

magistrates, its civil functionaries and its military officers are but parts of the people, from whom they proceed, for whom they are created, and by whom they live, and move, and have a being on the earth. And this great power is uncontrolled and uncontrollable but by God. It is illimitable in its strength, resistless in its energy, awful in its passion, tremendous in its rage. It but breathes in its anger, and the institutions it had erected fall like the gigantic architecture of human skill, when the earth shakes the monuments of ages from her surface, and crumbles them into dust.

He little understands the nature of a popular government, who affects to despise its democracy, or little knows his own insignificance when he attempts to resist it. All the tendencies of things among us enlarge and invigorate it. The advocates of strong government, if any remain, who thought it could be bound down by ingenious contrivances, may shudder at their imbecility of skill; and more jealous republicans, who apprehended that the ligatures provided in the Constitution were too tight, have not less occasion for alarm at the utter futility of their fears.

Its giant strength shakes off the fetters that would bind it

Like dew drops from the Lion's mane.

Look for a single moment at some of the theoretical impediments to its power. The Senate of the United States, intended to stand like an island among the waves and throw its beacon light of safety over their angry surges, is itself but a vessel on the same ocean, driven by all the impulses that move the elements about it. The Executive, placed on an eminence, as was supposed, whence it might overlook the turbulent atmosphere at its feet, finds the clouds rising to its own level and must be borne away by the blast unless it

Rides on the whirlwind and directs the storm.

The House of Representatives, where this power should chiefly take an official form under constitutional limitations

and restraint, is gradually increasing its prerogatives, forgetting all checks upon its will, and taking possession by its standing committees of every department of the administration, with a grasp that there is no where either ability or inclination to resist.

But confidence is placed in the judicial department. It is said, and said truly, that the national judiciary is a citadel of impregnable strength. Within the range of its formidable battery it commands obedience and respect; while those of the states like myrtillo towers in advance of the main position, delay the assault and repel the incursion of the most adventurous invader. The security is delusive. So long as they stand, the flag of the constitution will float proudly on their bastions. But they stand on the territory of the people. If public opinion cannot direct their artillery it dismantles it. If it cannot control the garrison it levels the ramparts with the adjacent soil; not indeed by right but by power; but when did supreme power ever take council of any thing but its will? *

Such is the potency of the popular principle, which resistless as lightning, melts even the materials intended to conduct it in safety.

Instruction and of course education is the only instrument of security for public liberty against its dangerous movements, as a director of its inclinations, not as a check on its power; but while the liberality and the wisdom of the generous and the eminent are devising schools and universities for this purpose an engine of mighty machinery confounds their calculations with an effect more summary than the laws, with results severer than the criminal code, and with an universality of operation as searching, penetrating and expansive as the element of steam.

In the desire of the people to acquire information, in the influence to be obtained by those, who communicate it, and in that indisposition for exertion, which had rather receive opinions than

*See debate in the Senate on the Judicial decisions of the United States Courts, 1822.

originate them, the periodical and daily press has established a weight in this community, as far beyond the anticipations of the founders of the government, as are the inventions of modern science over the dull limits of antiquity. A power is thus formed, which in the hands of educated and honest men is capable of vast force in improving and elevating the public mind; and under the direction of the ignorant, the profligate or the intemperate, of adventurers, who seek notoriety for extravagant paradox, or retailers of scandal, whose poverty takes pay for the poison which they sell, corrupts the fountains of the public health and scatters the miasma of leprosy and pestilence.

As regards individual, social and family happiness the domiciliary visits of this messenger of a modern inquisition is not unworthy of a more extended inquiry than this occasion allows: on the state of public liberty its operation cannot be much increased without serious alarm.

When the periodical and daily press may secure the election of a chief magistrate with the expectation of dividing in its own corps the ample donative that first gratitude and afterwards custom may be willing to bestow, it will be here as it was in those degenerate days when the Roman world was exposed to sale by public auction, not a question whether Pertinax be worthy to retain his honors, or Julian to supercede him,* but which of them will pay the largest price in promises, in offices, or in gold.

Such a power as that of the whole people exercised with its full weight upon all the institutions of government, and all the forms of public administration, and all the intimacies of private life can be safe only when it is intelligent, and beneficial only when its moral energy is in due proportion to its physical strength. The rash hand, which seized the promethean fire to animate the marble, raised a Demon instead of a man, by not giving him moral capacity; theirs would be an act more extensively fatal, who having imparted to a people the principles of civil liberty,

*1st vol. Gibbon's Rome, d 172.

and thus enabled them to do as they please, should not provide a moral and intellectual energy, that they may please to do only what is right.

Hence that ability of mind which is necessary to understand the true interests of the State, that firmness which maintains them, that coolness and steadiness which preserves itself against sudden excitement, and rash execution that discrimination, which distinguishes between flatterers and friends, and that high mindedness, which honors integrity even in its errors more than duplicity and artifice when they may chance to be right, are acquirements which must designate a people who would preserve the invaluable privileges of self-government. And these acquirements must be general;—they must form a public sentiment;—they must be ingrafted into the public mind; and early, extensive and thorough education providing a moral and intellectual aliment that will assimilate with the constitution in these respects must be as extensive as the right of suffrage.

That cultivation of mind, which merely controls the boldness of brutal strength, is not competent to advance the high destinies of a free people. Public liberty is intimately connected with a national literature. The general diffusion of knowledge can be secured only by high individual attainments—and the standard should be an elevated one, that the community may hold the national literature as it does the national courage, the national strength, the national honor, a possession of which all may be proud, and each do something to maintain.

There is infinite danger in a community like ours of giving a wrong direction to individual ambition. The emotion itself is a noble one; inherent, expansive, aspiring. The decorations of nobility inspire it in some countries, great wealth and its concomitants in others, but military glory is every where its idol and will every where collect its votaries unless some nobler object fastens itself on the affections of the people. National literature may be made a successful rival of military renown. It may provide for the cultivation of the arts of peace and the im-

provement of those of war. The advancement of legislation and jurisprudence, the development of the resources and wealth of the nation, devising larger means of general prosperity and new arrangements for individual happiness, are as legitimate objects of its attention as the cultivation of poetry and the fine arts to which it is sometimes supposed to be confined.

When the public mind is engaged in the advancement of a national literature it commands the exertions of genius and learning; and thus the richness and softness of their coloring is thrown upon the community itself. The fierceness and rudeness which seek occasion for strife, and promote foreign war and domestic dissention, are softened and smoothed, and a better direction given to the public feeling, which is taught more thoroughly to admire and more ardently to cherish the institutions of the country.

It is not a wise economy, which in a country like ours prevents the endowment of high seminaries of learning; nor is the argument against their republican utility well founded in fact, that because their advantages cannot be enjoyed directly by every member of the community they are exclusively the privileges of their immediate beneficiaries.

The advancement of a free people in intelligence, the progress of mind and refinement of manners among them are objects of as much public consequence as the increase of the general wealth; probably more;—for a poor people may be free, an ignorant people cannot continue so. But neither learning nor wealth can be equally distributed. Under the best order of things there must be some poor and some ignorant.—Yet the poor and the rich are required in every community to preserve those channels by which property is acquired, and to maintain the acquisitions which only one class possesses for the common benefit it secures to all; so the wise and the uneducated are bound to give facilities according to their means for the enlargement and preservation of the intellectual property of the public.

The obligation in this respect—fellow citizens—is peculiarly yours. The high and honorable rank you hold in the Union

imposes it upon you. Your liberal system of general education, your early taste for intellectual improvement, your state of freedom which is not shaded by the darkness of domestic slavery, your eminent means in point of wealth, which even under present embarrassments hold an enviable superiority over most other sections of the country, the habits of our community acquired in schools and churches, which adorn every village of the Commonwealth, and some progress already made and promised, have consigned to your care this glorious task, that as you began the revolution and supported it, so you may erect the first pillars of a national literature, and preserve in its temples your own and your country's honor to the last syllable of recorded time.

The preservation of public liberty depends on preserving the character of eminent public men. To great minds honorable fame is a motive and reward for exertions, which neither power nor wealth could of themselves command. Thus it was in the revolution. Thus it has been in the great crises of the country. Thus it may always be if the people protect the reputation acquired in their service.

The spirit of detraction is an evil spirit, which infests the land. That universal desecration of character, of which in the late canvass for President most lamentable instances have been given by all parties, should no longer be tolerated. It should be understood that we will not refer to posterity the payment of that praise due to talents and virtue exerted in the public service; that we will no longer give the rivals of our statesmen the advantage of upbraiding them with a want of estimation by their immediate constituents. Massachusetts has sent into every department of the public service both of the State and the Nation men of as great minds and as pure hearts as ever counselled for the happiness of a people; but she has too frequently deprived herself of the benefit of their exertions, by suffering their characters to be abused at home, and neglecting that maternal care of their reputation, which her more politic sisters have used in their own case with signal advantage.

Public liberty depends on the opinion of its vitality. It is the duty of every American to inculcate a belief of its immortal nature. He may not encourage feverish apprehensions. He may not indulge in prophecies of evil, which sometimes contribute to their own accomplishment. He is not required to be insensible to danger, but it is for preparation and not for alarm. Times of depression are not those of despair. None could be more discouraging than in the infancy of the republic ; but the patriots of the revolution stayed themselves on the goodness of their cause, the greatness and grandeur of their purposes, the enlargement of the moral powers of their race, which was the object of their pursuits, and the consequent diffusion of general happiness which was to be elaborated by their individual sufferings.

It is our equal duty to keep up the life of hope ; to restrain that sickly imagination, which in the shadows of occasional darkness conjures up the ghost of ruin, and peoples the political atmosphere with images of terror.

It cannot be that the good providence of God will desert us if we do not desert our duty. It cannot be that the soul which once had strength enough to break away from the fetters of ignorance and despotism can be reclaimed again as their slave. There is an enlarging, a purifying, a preserving spirit in civil and religious liberty, which like the immortal nature of man, is destined to a never ending existence.

The present time brings with it both opportunity and demand for exercising this paramount duty. The administration of the general government has been changed in opposition to the almost unanimous vote of New England, and while as yet its definitive policy is not fully disclosed, enough is apparent to excite consternation and regret.

But the influence of New England cannot be destroyed, if she be faithful to her principles, her interests and her fame, and where her influence is felt there is liberty. Her diffusive intelligence, her abundant wealth, her hardy industry and adventu-

rous enterprise are the elements of a power which no administration may despise with impunity, nor disturb even without consequences fatal to itself.

. Let her maintain her place in the confederacy without factious hostility. Submitting to the voice of the people, which removed her own candidates from authority, it is her duty, in the spirit of the constitution, to wage no war of extermination against their successors, merely because they are not the favorites of her choice.

But while on the one hand that partizan temper, which for its own personal aggrandizement would put down an administration even if it was as pure as the angels of light, belongs not to the dignity of the New England character, so on the other hand a prompt adhesion to the powers that be, merely because they exist, beyond a respectful obedience to the laws, is little capable of being reconciled to the duty of a public spirited and enlightened community.

Let the administration be judged by their measures, and wait the development of their measures for the means of a dispassionate opinion. Distrust is allowable, for the mode, in which they acquired power, is not calculated to give confidence in its useful exercise ; and its first movements, under the name of reform, look like payment from the public treasury for individual exertions in a successful cause. But New England has higher interests in the general government than the participation of its emoluments or office. If the great concerns of her commerce, her manufactures and her agriculture be protected ; if peace be secured by wise counsels, and the honor of the nation maintained in its diplomacy, she will look with proud indifference on the distribution of executive patronage.

It is impossible to destroy her title to consideration until the influences of the moral world are suspended, and the laws of nature itself shall be changed. Out of the very arrangements to diminish her inherent power are generated ample causes for its speedy restitution. The successors of Alexander contended

among themselves for empire, and here, also, ambitious men anticipate the time when the chair of the presidency will be a subject of new competition.

The umpirage of New England will assign its honors to the most worthy. He who may most advance the great interests of the nation, who places his claims, not on local prejudices, or sectional feelings, or the partizan temper of intriguing men, but on liberal exertions for the prosperity of the nation, on fidelity to the constitution and the great institutions of the country; he whose large and comprehensive policy rises above the misty atmosphere of personal contention, and looks out on the broad ocean he is appointed to navigate, with a consciousness of his immense responsibility to all the citizens of this increasing empire, to posterity whose destiny he may controul, and to the cause of civil and religious liberty embarked under the protection of the American people, whether such a man be found on this or the other side of the Potomac, whether he dwell on the shores of the Atlantic or the farthest mountains of the west, he will command the confidence and receive the support of New England. It will be her proud prerogative to decide between conflicting claims, and the knowledge that her confidence must be won for success and can be won only by merit, will ensure her that respect and consideration which ambitious men pay to power, wise men to intelligence, honorable men to high character, and the whole people to that chivalrous and gallant bearing, which spurning the paltry advantages of sectional interest, is devoted to the permanent prosperity of this vast Republic.