

36736

AN

ORATION

DELIVERED

BY REQUEST OF THE CITY AUTHORITIES,

BEFORE

THE CITIZENS OF BOSTON,

ON THE

SIXTY THIRD ANNIVERSARY

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

JULY 4, 1839.

BY IVERS JAMES AUSTIN.

BOSTON:

JOHN H. EASTBURN, CITY PRINTER,

No. 18 State Street.

1839.

M. S. W. & N. 69

CITY OF BOSTON.

In the Board of Aldermen, July 8, 1839.

RESOLVED, That the thanks of the City Council be presented to **IVERS J. AUSTIN, Esq.**, for the eloquent and patriotic Oration, delivered by him, before the Municipal Authorities, on the fourth instant, being the Anniversary of American Independence, and that the Mayor be requested to ask of him, a copy for the press.

Sent down for concurrence.

SAMUEL A. ELIOT, Mayor.

In Common Council, July 11, 1839.

Read and concurred.

PH. MARETT, President.

A true copy—Attest,

S. F. McCLEARY, City Clerk.

O R A T I O N .

THE history of the United States is the record of constant improvement.

What has urged this mighty nation onward? Amidst the unceasing vicissitude of human affairs, in sunshine and in shade, in tempest and in calm, in danger, trouble and distress, amidst the terrific convulsions which have agitated the civilized world, what energy has secured to this country a continual career of splendid and progressive triumph?

THE SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE! The earliest, loftiest inspiration of the soul. The source of courage, constancy and hope. The spirit which teaches man, his dignity and his destiny. The power which develops his moral, his intellectual and his physical capacities and assimilates him to his Creator. The great artificer of human character, the mighty controller of human fate.

This spirit restrained by religion and directed by law, enlightened by reason and chastened by virtue, is the hereditary characteristic of the American people.

It was the spirit of the Pilgrims in their native land. It armed them against ecclesiastical domination and dictated their charter of religious freedom.* It severed the ties of

*The "ideal schemes of ecclesiastical policy" which Robert Brown in 1580 reduced to a system.

"He maintained, that a society of Christians, uniting together to worship God, constituted a church, possessed of complete jurisdiction in the conduct of its own affairs independent of any other society, and unaccountable to any

kindred and rationalized the instinct of loyalty. It sought abroad the encouragement denied at home. Its prophetic vision pierced all future time. In the desolation of a trackless ocean it promised them a refuge and a country. It battled with the savage and subdued the desert. It protected their descendants through the perils of colonial infancy. It blazed in the Declaration of the Congress of '76 and burned as a beacon fire to gather the patriots of the Revolution.

It evoked the Federal Constitution out of Confederate Chaos as if the spirit of Peace had moved over the turbulence of passion and by the fiat of Omnipotence had again brought light out of darkness.

It carried the country through its second war for freedom. It conquered with Hull and Decatur on the ocean, with Brown, with Scott, with Jackson on the land.

In those recent commotions which swept over the nation with the fury of a whirlwind, it endowed our countrymen with the energy of self reliance, contended with success against despair, and like the giant of the fable acquired new strength from every prostration.

It reanimated commerce which no longer droops like a fading flower, but flourishes in the beauty of its primitive strength. Hundreds of vessels crowd our ports: wherever

“superior; that the priesthood was neither a distinct order in the church nor
 “conferred an indelible character; but that every man qualified to teach
 “might be set apart for that office *by the election of the brethren* and by im-
 “position of their hands; in like manner, by their authority, he might be dis-
 “charged from that function and reduced to the rank of a private christian;
 “that every person, when admitted a member of a church, ought to make a
 “public confession of his faith, and give evidence of his being in a state of
 “favor with God; and that all the affairs of a church were to be regulated by
 “the decision of the majority of its members.” *Robertson's America, vol. 4th,*
 p. 269, 70.

From this sect a body under Robinson fled to Leyden and subsequently to America. These were the Pilgrims who carried with them what the historian calls a “democratical form of government” which “accorded perfectly with the levelling genius of fanaticism!” The early memoirs of these men would form a curious commencement to the history of New England.

enterprise can force its way there floats the proud flag of American Independence.

It invigorated credit. That life blood of commerce flows with renewed energy through its thousand channels of circulation, not with

———"the burning might
"Delirium gathers from the fever's height,"

but with the uniform pulsation of permanent health. Now bounding through its arteries in rich and copious streams, carrying substance to each member of the political body; now returning to its source to acquire there regenerated freshness for the performance of its duty. At times its regularity seems deranged. To day it courses less swiftly on, chilled by apprehension of imagined danger. Tomorrow the flushed cheek and restless eye will show its power undiminished and attest its rapid career.

These are the natural vagaries of tumultuous health, the fancied indications of disease without the reality. If some movements of the great fountain be irregular, no lasting malady has fastened itself there. Ossification has not destroyed its sensibility, nor weakness wholly deranged its functions. The subjects of its action have force enough of muscle and firmness enough of nerve to apply the constitutional remedy and effect a cure.

It removed the incubus of enormous debt. The faith of our merchants, which no misfortune can obscure, shone brighter in that gloomiest hour which heralded the opening dawn. The moneyed institution of the country gifted with a giant's form and a monster's power, bore the author of its being safely through the scene of desolation. The tie of interest which binds us to our father land is strengthened by its increased respect. If some distant thunder lately rumbled in the east, no responsive echo came from its honored shores. If some few floating clouds yet speck the northern horizon, they cast no shadow beyond the broad ocean between us.

The national spirit requires not distress to concentrate its rays. All departments of American enterprise feel its power. In agriculture what wonders it has wrought! It peoples the vast West whose inexhaustible fertility tempts so many to seek the treasures of her soil. It sustains the vigor of the Middle States where science aids the farmer's skill. The sterile land of New England yields to its impulse. It animated our legislators, whose wise agricultural policy may yet teach the sons of Massachusetts, that fortune need not be sought for beyond her own limits.

In manufactures how mighty its influence! The immense capital they employ stimulates to the utmost that national industry which is the mainspring of our national greatness.

Wherever the busy hum of manufactures is heard, there behold an active, moral, frugal community. Our villages present not a mass of human machines, sunk into intellectual darkness and worn out by constant toil for scanty remuneration; but the offspring of freemen, whose labor is quickened by the certainty of liberal reward and whose minds are enlightened by the benevolent efforts of public instruction.

From this unfailing fountain flow fertilizing streams through all sections of the country. In its immediate neighborhood behold a dense and perpetually augmenting population. Behold in abundance the necessaries, the comforts, and even the luxuries of life. Mark how dwelling rises after dwelling, as if the genius of the lamp had lent his magic to the work. Behold cities where yesterday the wind howled through a desert and terror never drove the wild fox from his lair.

View its distant operation. See agriculture every where yield to its gentle but resistless power. The new demands it creates for the riches of the soil, require an increased supply, and the wilderness parts with its domain to the empire of cultivation. Each department of human labor is connected with every other. Each urges the rest, as each

wave of the sea or undulation of the air agitates its mass. But in civilized industry the strongest impetus is derived from manufactures.

They till our soil ; build up our marine ; raise our cities ; develop the national ingenuity and send it soaring to the skies or diving deep into the hidden recesses of nature's storehouse ; sharpen the intellect, refine the virtue of the people and secure the respect of the world.

Does the spirit of Independence animate the American mechanic ? Go to the scene of his labor. Let his untiring perseverance and successful industry answer the question. What has perfected our mechanical art ? What has caused it in all departments to equal, in most to excel the vaunted productions of foreign skill ? Personal, natural, original Independence, which neither the paralysing pressure of private distress, nor the calamitous consummation of executive experiment, has been able to discourage.

The dock and the ship-yard ; the private and the public building, the ponderous machine and the delicate fabric, whatever ministers to convenience or comfort attest the mechanic's preeminence. Old Faneuil Hall never in its proudest days, shone with more radiant beauty, than when the thousand products of his genius were gathered within its walls. The glory of that occasion, yet fresh in the memory of New England, is destined to fade before the increased splendor of the kindred spectacle which awaits us.

Who is more ready to maintain the law by the influence of his example, or if need be, to enforce obedience by the strength of his arm ? Whose charity is more enlarged ? Whose benevolence more active ? Whose enterprise more daring ? In youth should poverty oppose and temptation assail him, should he have no friend but the stoutness of his heart and no reliance but the Providence of his God ; difficulties vanish before the independence of his soul ; respected in manhood and revered in age, he stands a memorial of

the power of the national spirit, in that noblest of its works—a self-made man.

Trace the power of the national energy in works of public improvement. Each State has its rail-roads. Some just produced by the creative faculty of local legislation. Others in the full career of success. In all directions these miracles of modern genius send forth their winged messengers of union and peace. Let them multiply without limitation. Let them continue to set torrents at defiance and to laugh at the valleys' depth; to pierce the firmness of the solid rock, and to say to the mountain "Be thou removed and cast into the sea." Each bar of iron they fasten to the earth, is another link in that national net-work which neither internal commotion nor foreign assault can ever rend asunder.

Behold the Empire State, which, sixty years since, numbered fewer inhabitants within her whole territory than are now gathered within her commercial capital, incurring a debt exceeding the late surplus revenue of the nation, and glorying in nearly a thousand miles of canal and more than a thousand miles of rail-road. See Pennsylvania and Ohio intersected with the same noble works: Indiana received amongst us less than a generation since, expending twenty-one millions of dollars in their construction; and Illinois, still a younger sister, scarcely behind the foremost.

Behold the South, just awaking from her long lethargy. See her struggling against the dead weight of domestic slavery and striving to build up her maritime importance. May her most sanguine expectations be more than realized. The North finds no cause for jealous apprehension in this convulsive effort. Let commerce divide her capital with the great staples of her climate, if such be the dictate of wisdom. The North founds not its prosperity on the depression of the South. Her best success can never cause one Northern sail the less to flutter in the breeze, nor stop the music of a single spindle. Let her build her rail-roads and stretch

their iron arms deep into the exhaustless reservoirs of the West. Its measureless riches roll not in a single channel, but spread like the mighty Nile, which spurns the narrow bounds of its natural banks, and overflows whole regions with fertility and joy.

The energy of the national spirit is not confined to such gigantic works. The less imposing but more important institutions of learning, from the rich university to the modest primary school, through every intermediate gradation, proclaim its operation. The universal diffusion of education, while it tends to consolidate government, excites the latent talent of the country, which displays itself in numberless inventions or seeks perpetuity in the products of the press. To the insatiable thirst for knowledge which characterizes our countrymen, the press owes its ascendancy and the influence it exerts. This year completes the second century since the first printing machine was established on the northern continent. Although its first fruits were of small importance and although it was not until nearly sixty-five years afterwards that the first newspaper was committed to the world, and though for a hundred years more these had increased to only half a dozen feeble prints throughout the entire extent of the colonies, yet now more than *twelve hundred presses* send forth their annual millions of living sheets. Newspapers rank amongst the necessaries of life, swaying mind, morals and manners. This prodigious fecundity springs from the intelligence of the people fostered by universal education, and is an eloquent proof of that national prosperity created by national Independence.

Time would fail were the effects of this spirit fully traced. Perceive its power in the numberless charitable institutions every where shining in the pure radiance of Christian benevolence. In the flourishing villages of each State rising like the spring flowers after the early rain. In the calmness of the country, in the bustle of the city. In commerce winging her flight across the great deep or stretching

far over land into the midst of our frontier neighbors on the West. Hear it in the clank of our workshops; see it sparkle in the products of their skill. It sings in the thousand spindles of manufactures; is heard in the deep caverns of the mine. View it in the restless migration of the people who throng the car, the stage, and the steamboat. In these wonderful engines, the giant steamboats, more numerous on the bosom of the broad Mississippi alone, than in the whole continent of Europe, behold another of its mighty efforts.

What prophetic eye shall pierce the future and foretell the limits of its power? Already the Union has realized the patriarch's prediction, "*Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob: even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty who shall bless thee with blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb: The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of his progenitors, unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.*"

No imagination can exaggerate the future glory of this country, if faithful to itself. Within its borders are all productions of the soil, in boundless profusion. Every variety of climate has capacity for all species of agricultural wealth. The earth hides within its bosom mineral riches, the extent of which defies calculation. The mind is bewildered by the rapidity of population, which yet lies only scattered over the unlimited West. Before the resistless progress of civilization, barbarism disappears like the winter snow before the advancing spring. New States rise into political life, imperishable monuments of the wisdom of our system. One

government unites them into one nation, one interest binds them together, the generous inspiration of a common spirit animates the whole.

“ Aggredere, ô magnos, aderit jam tempus, honores,
 “ Cara deûm soboles, magnum Jovis incrementum !
 “ Aspice, convexo nutantem pondere mundum,
 “ Terrasque, tractusque maris, cœlumque profundum,
 “ Aspice venturo lætentur ut omnia sæclo.”

American ingenuity what shall fetter? Endless combinations of matter are yet undiscovered. The power of steam is only in its childhood. Science already points to the subtleties of nature. She calls upon us to write her story in letters of living fire; to gather in the lightning and chain it to our cars. New inventions daily challenge admiration. If some savor of romantic enthusiasm and now seem more like the “melancholy madness of poetry” than the sober aspirations of philosophy, so appeared all startling discoveries before use had familiarized their wonders. Let no one despise novelty because its principles are obscure, nor condemn the offspring of ingenuity because its aspect is strange. The impossibility of yesterday becomes the well known agent of to day, the mighty machines of this generation will yield to their mightier rivals of the next. Human genius is here unclogged by antiquated customs, urged onward by the spirit of Independence and retarded by no superstitious reverence for the follies of the past “the range of the mountains is its pasture, and it searcheth after every green thing” in the field of knowledge.

Yes, within our own borders lie the elements of our greatness physical or mental. Why should we care were an ocean of fire to surround us, securing us in the safety of solitary grandeur? Even then should this nation obey the energy within it, like those bright worlds which roll self balanced, self propelled in space.

Such are the results of the Spirit of Independence. For

these we venerate the men who gave the first impulse to its power. For these we revere the Statesmen who published the charter of human liberty; who pledged "their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor" to maintain it.

To these we owe the unobstructed splendor of the national spirit. Colonial vassalage could only obscure, but could not extinguish it. The eye of their faith pierced the mists which mantled it. The lightning glare of power could not dazzle their gaze on its unfading brightness. The bolt of tyranny might lay them prostrate on the earth; but they knew that

———"Freedom's battle once begun,
"Bequeath'd by bleeding Sire to Son,
"Though baffled oft, is ever won."

Ignominy and shame might be their portion. The minions of royalty might point with scorn at their tombs, and the tears of their children freshen the grass about their graves, in bitter lamentation over their failure. They braved this misery. Their hopes of fame, the natural longing of their souls for an honorable page in their country's story, were all pledged on the altar they erected to the Spirit of Independence.

"The very gale their names seems sighing :
"The waters murmur of their name ;
"The woods are peopled with their fame ;
"The silent pillar, lone and gray,
"Claims kindred with their sacred clay ;
"Their spirits wrap the dusky mountain,
"Their memory sparkles o'er the fountain,
"The meanest rill, the mightiest river
"Rolls mingling with their fame for ever."

While we remember the heroes of the revolution and thank in grateful adoration, that beneficent Being who "taught their hands to war and their fingers to fight," let not their radi-

ant glory hide those other stars, whose influence was not less potent because it operated silently. Wives and mothers, sisters and daughters, had their part to perform in the struggle. They performed it nobly. Not in weary watching on the field, nor in anxious hours of prolonged debate, were their lofty souls, their unquailing courage and unblenching firmness shown, but beside the bed of the wounded soldier, in the hopeless hour of captivity, when his pride was crushed by poverty, his spirit broken by misfortune, woman, like an angel of mercy, ministered her consolations of kindness. "The tender and delicate woman, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and tenderness," heeded no fatigue, regarded no danger. She visited the loathsome prison, there to lighten the fetters which she might not break. Her hand bandaged the broken limb, her sympathy sustained the sinking mind, while with silent eloquence sparkled in her eye,

"The tear most sacred, shed for others' pain,
 "That starts at once—bright—pure—from Pity's mine,
 "Already polish'd by the hand divine!"

In the horrors of that gloomy year, when the soldiers' bleeding feet crimsoned their tracks upon the snow, when famine fastened its fangs upon the body and despair weighed lead-like on the heart, woman hesitated at no sacrifice to alleviate their hardships. When the withering conviction of injustice pressed upon their minds, she reanimated their decaying patriotism and sent them forth again to conquer or to die. In the most hopeless period of that bitter strife, when the strongest mind began to bend and the stoutest heart to quail, women was ever

"The evening beam that smiles the clouds away,
 "And tints tomorrow with prophetic ray."

Invaluable as the labors of our early Statesmen are grate-

fully acknowledged to be, their sacrifices would avail us nothing, the tears and sighs of the widow and orphan would reach us only as the mournful dirge of withered hopes, if another revolution, equal in glory to that of '76, had not followed in its train. It would be a problem yet undetermined, and still perhaps to be solved in characters of blood, whether America had done well in shaking off its yoke, whether she had increased the aggregate of human happiness by her demonstration of human rights, if the Federal Constitution had not started into being, out of the chaos succeeding the war of Revolution.

There behold the concentrated rays of the Spirit of Independence. The great centre around which revolve these western planets: which preserves to each its appropriate orbit: which dissipates the darkest clouds that can hover about them. Which illuminates all with the splendor of its light and animates them with the energy of its power.

———"that with surpassing glory crown'd
 "Looks from its sole dominion like the God
 "Of this new world."

Let no star shoot madly from its sphere and "run lawless through the sky" and this great assemblage, which fifty years since first assumed its majesty of form, shall forever move on, in the sublime harmony of its nature.

Although every American feels the influence of the constitution, we are apt on this anniversary, to ascribe the entire glory of our present condition, to the patriots of '76. We overlook the stern combat fought by the statesmen of '87, not against foreign assault, but intestine discord. Not with weapons of steel, amidst the exciting scenes of mortal strife, but with the armament of reason, against the insidious attacks of selfish ambition.

It would be useless at this time to analyse that great instrument. To illustrate its value; to set forth the deep wisdom which pervades it. To show its wonderful adaptation to

the necessities of the country and the character of the people. To prove that its efficacy can never be impaired, however numerous the subjects of its action. It is nevertheless proper on this occasion, having just entered upon the second half century of national existence, while we exult over the prosperity it has caused, to recognize the merits of its framers and the power of that national spirit which sustained them in the formation of an empire.

When the project for this second revolution was first seriously entertained, there were few hopes of success.

Great Britain, though bound by the treaty of 1783 to relinquish the western posts, still retained them, while the arts of her agents, sanctioned by her cabinet, excited the Indians to murderous incursions on the frontiers. Spain occupied New Orleans; embarrassed or prevented the navigation of the Mississippi, and was daily encroaching on our territory on its banks, aiming to obtain by fraud what she dared not seize by force. She too instigated the Indians to attack the frontier settlers in the South, and thus the whole country, from the Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, was kept in constant alarm.

The pride of England had not recovered from the mortification of her recent defeat. Though she received our envoy with politic condescension, yet she would scarce notice our complaints of her continued violation of the treaty, peremptorily declined commercial arrangements and contemptuously omitted to send us a representative. Her people dissatisfied with their government for the loss of the colonies, clamored loudly against the ministry, and were daily in large numbers migrating to America. To quiet the nation, to reconcile it to its loss, and to prevent emigration, a profligate press, paid and controlled by the cabinet, poisoned the public mind with gross libels on the United States. It asserted that tumults and anarchy, bankruptcies and distress, discontent and civil war prevailed throughout the Union; that the nation was heartily wearied of its Independence, and that

the universal sentiment of intelligent minds, as well as of the mass of population, favored an immediate return to the vassalage of her King.

Our own honored City, was the object of peculiar malignity. Its part in the revolution rankled in the English mind, and the shafts of hatred were sped against it with unmeasured violence. No assertion was too absurd. "These Bostonians," said one newspaper,* "are the most insolent, most sanctified and most treacherous set of beings that ever degraded humanity. Their treachery is proverbial in every part of America. As to their sanctity, it is so glaringly besmeared with hypocrisy, that it is enough to make a man sick of all pretensions to religion!" Even such rank nonsense was favorably received.†

*St. James Chronicle, 1785.

†Boston seems to have been an early object of premeditated persecution, as the following anecdotes tend to prove.

"When the duties to be paid in America on paper, paint, and glass, were repealed, it was pretended that the Tea duty (which had been imposed by the same Act of Parliament) was left standing to serve the Company. But this was not the fact. The tax was left unrepealed to preserve the right, as it was called, to tax the colonies. That was the true motive. The service of the East India Company made no part of the consideration. The tea sent to Boston was that sort called *Bohea*, which was conferring no favor on the Company, but the reverse; for that sort of tea was no burden to the Company. It was the sort called *Singlo*, which lay heavy on their hands, and of which all their warehouses were full. But the resolution was agreed to in a private committee, when only three persons were present: Mr. Bolton was chairman. A matter of such importance ought to have been agitated in a full Committee, which consists of eleven. The truth is, the *Bohea* was more saleable than the *Singlo*; it was therefore the resolution of the Cabinet to send the most saleable: presuming that the temptation to purchase being greater by the offer of good tea, than by the offer of an inferior sort, some of the Americans might be thereby induced to barter liberty for luxury, and, perhaps, a schism might be created among them." "When the Directors" (of the E. I. Company) "were informed of the conduct of the Committee, they explained this distinction of the tea to the Ministry and wished to have the *Singlo* substituted. But the Ministry would not consent. It was again objected to, at the Minister's house. To the last application, Lord North, being perhaps wearied with representations on

The general enthusiasm which, on the peace, had greeted this country from the Continent, was at first cooled, and then converted to contempt. The unceasing repetition and unscrupulous audacity of these slanderous tales terminated investigation and quieted doubt. All Europe was deceived. It regarded as incontrovertible truths, assertions with no better foundation than the virulent animosity of mortified ministers. Educated individuals, whose connection with the country should have rendered them incredulous, were equally deceived. When Dr. Franklin left France, apprehensions for his safety were expressed by his friends. They feared the populace would stone him on his arrival in America, be-

“the subject, said—“ *It was to no purpose making objections, for the——**
 “*would have it so.* These were his Lordship’s words; and he added “*That*
 “*the ——* meant to try the question with America.*”

“The tea was consigned to the Governor’s son at Boston. When the ves-
 “sels with the tea arrived there, the people assembled on the wharves in
 “great multitudes, in order to prevent the tea being landed. Several mer-
 “chants, and other persons of the first consequence in Boston, solemnly assured
 “Captains of the vessels, that the inhabitants of the town were unanimously
 “resolved not to suffer the tea to be landed. The Captains finding this oppo-
 “sition, solicited the Governor’s permission to return to England; for the
 “King’s ships were stationed in such a position at the mouth of the harbor
 “that no vessel could escape their vigilance. The Governor answered, that
 “he could not permit them to depart, until they had obtained proper clearan-
 “ces. The officers of the Customs refused to grant clearances until their
 “cargoes were landed. This legal precision was not observed at the other
 “ports in America, when the Captains finding they could not land their car-
 “goes of tea, were permitted to return to Europe, without breaking bulk.
 “But Boston seems to have been the place fixed upon *to try the question.* If
 “the Governor had assisted the Captains, the tea might have been landed
 “without much difficulty: it might have been put into the barges of the men
 “of war then lying there, and being escorted by the marines, it might have
 “been safely landed in the King’s warehouses. But the design was other-
 “wise. The Captains were obliged to connive at the destruction of the tea,
 “in order to obtain their clearances, to return to England. The town was
 “afterwards punished for this act of necessity, which might have been avoid-
 “ed. Thus the civil war was created—*‘to try the question.’*” *Anecdotes*
of Chatham, vol. 2, pp. 240.

*King.

cause they believed the people were enraged to madness, by his success in promoting and carrying through the revolutionary war.

The credit of the nation was at the lowest stage of depreciation. The utmost skill of our financiers could scarce negotiate a loan to suppress the interest of our foreign debt.

The continued neglect of Congress, arising from its entire inability, to pay the amount due our creditors in France, created ill feeling throughout that country. This displayed itself in the debates of the Assembly whose language was little calculated to gratify our national self-esteem. The comparatively small sum due the French officers, who, for some years, had not received even the interest of their claims, excited loud murmurs, which were soothed only by the masterly management of our minister resident, aided by the exertions of La Fayette. These sources of discontent seemed at one time, to threaten the stability of our connection with those early friends, and to impeach the integrity of our magistrates and the justice of the nation.

At home the prospect was worse than abroad. The pressure of war being removed, the country plunged at once into a vortex of extravagance. The elastic spirit of the people, no longer depressed by care, was hurrying them to ruin. It was deemed by an eminent statesman of the day, that notwithstanding the severity of domestic distress, the anxiety and labor of the conflict, and all the privations of the people, they enjoyed more peace of mind and real satisfaction, that they slept sounder and woke happier, while the contest raged around them, than while they were thus wasting their substance in riotous living and rushing headlong into the gulf of hopeless insolvency.

Commerce disappeared. Even the carrying trade between the several States was usurped by British vessels. The avowed purpose of England was our commercial annihilation. No means existed to repair by industry the fortunes dissipated by folly. Treaties were either partially observed

or openly disregarded. Congress had lost its influence and its former shadow of power. The continual neglect of its recommendations had almost discouraged it from assembling. Individuals began to feel the slavery of debt and to set good faith at defiance; while the insurrections in Massachusetts and New Hampshire proved that if anarchy was not already arrived, its approach might be daily expected.

This glance at the condition of the country renders it not surprising that opinions were unanimous as to the necessity of an immediate revolution. It shows how complete and radical a change was required, and some of the difficulties encountered by those undertaking to effect it.

A slight inspection of the old fabric of confederation demonstrated that any time spent in repairing so badly contrived and ill jointed a structure, would be utterly wasted. It showed the necessity of pulling it down, of erecting a new building with a broader foundation and enlarged capacity, possessing improvements more suited to convenience and comfort, and of discarding even the materials of the other, except where they were uninjured by decay or where the skill of the architects might remodel them to advantage.

This resolution taken, the struggle commenced; equally important with the struggle of the war, but infinitely more complex in its nature.

Beyond the conviction that a revolution was required to save the country, the sages who formed the Constitution had scarce a sentiment in common. Patriotism was indeed their ruling passion. Honor their breath of life. They ranged themselves under the leader who had so often carried their armies to triumph, and who now was to aid them in the preservation of that Independence, his virtue and genius had achieved.

But local attachments, sectional feeling, utter dissimilarity in modes of life and habits of thinking, promised no prosperous termination of their labors.

Lapse of time, it is true, had much effaced the distinctive

traits of character their various origin had engendered. But there lingered amongst them, the pride of the Cavalier, the vivacity of the Huguenot, the formality of the Quaker, the bigotry of the Roman Catholic, the sternness of the Puritan and the frigid apathy of the German.

Some were inclined to a monarchy; others thought that "the only king of America should be he who rules and reigns in Heaven." Some deemed such an expedient the last to be tried. Others were deeply dyed in the democracy of the day, which, fortunately, had not acquired the offensive rankness of its degenerate substitute.

That national feeling which bends sectional interest to the welfare of the country, which elevates the name of American far above any local appellation, which makes the Union the pride of each individual, had yet to be created. It could be thoroughly established only after a long and successful administration of the general government about to be erected, had "rendered its authority venerable, and fortified it by habits of obedience."

No means of generating this comprehensive patriotism had hitherto existed. Before the old French war colonial intercommunication was comparatively small. Each Province had its own government, and in that remoter period, when the strength of all was in the gristle, while they were alternately fighting with the savages, squabbling with their magistrates, and learning the first lessons of independence, each was too much absorbed by its own affairs, to meddle with its neighbors.

Some attempts at confederations had indeed been made. The union of the New England colonies commencing in 1643, and lasting forty years, opened the eyes of all to the advantage of connection. It was easy for these to join, because there was much similarity in their laws, manners and religion, and a greater community of interest than could be found elsewhere.

Twenty two years before the Declaration of Indepen-

dence and thirty four years before the adoption of the Constitution, a convention of Delegates had assembled at Albany, by direction of the British Government. They proposed a general confederacy, and on the 4th July, 1754, promulgated the political axiom, that colonial existence depended on colonial union. But that 4th of July was scarcely the harbinger of our present anniversary. The spirit of Independence had not then fully inspired the American soul. Local attachment and sectional jealousy exerted paramount influence, and the plan proposed by the convention was rejected by every provincial Congress. So strong was the operation of colonial rivalry, that seven years afterwards, Dr. Franklin considered any union perfectly hopeless.

The ten years controversy with Great Britain, preceding the Congress of 1776, had partially generated a national feeling. The close contact into which the war had forced the discordant materials of the Colonies, fostered and increased it. But the innate tendency to repulsion, when this external force was finally removed, forbade the particles to cohere, was fast separating the mass and cooling the warmth its compression had excited. The national character, which can have no earlier date than the treaty closing the old French war, was far too feeble to soften prejudices imbibed at birth. State institutions, State manners and modes of thinking, local attachments, preferences and interests, influenced the minds of the Convention injuriously to the great object which assembled them. Several times they were about to dissolve in despair, but the good fortune of the country kept them together.

Even now, cherished and honored as the name of American citizen is to every American heart, glorying as the whole nation does in the splendor of the Union, sectional antipathies are displayed with dangerous distinctness. They show themselves in the press, speak out in personal collision, and clamor with threatening violence in national debates.

These were not the only obstacles to be surmounted. A

government was not to be altered merely, but a new one to be created. A league of thirteen independent nations was to be formed and no parallel case was found as a guide.

Local prepossessions were therefore not only to be overcome, but individual hopes to be sacrificed. Love of power was to be mortified. Self esteem, "the spring of motion," was to be regulated by "reason's comparing balance." Ambition would oftener be gratified, when each State could act for itself, than when all should be partially consolidated into one. The State Constitution more nearly affected the personal happiness of its citizens, than the new one would ever be able to affect them. It operated more immediately on the concerns of private life, brought itself more directly into view, was more felt, more revered, more loved and better understood, than any general Constitution ever could be. But now the State Constitution was to be altered, curbed, controlled by the new power about to arise. State Sovereignty was to be somewhat "shorn of its beams;" the personal distinction of great men to be impaired, numerous paths to office and honor to be closed, and a single road opened in the wilderness to the scattered occupants of a thousand avenues.

In the war of Independence but a single object presented itself. It united all hearts. The eye of the nation was never withdrawn from it. No way was open for retreat. Independence must be gained. The British flag must cease to wave over their battlements. The British lion must cease to roam in their forests and prey on the people. The whole national energy was directed to accomplish this result. If sometimes, when clouds of misery wrapped them in darkness, their hearts faltered with alarm, the blaze of some burning village darted a new light across their path; the blood of some murdered family dropped its acid on their soul and stung them into madness.

The devotion of the soldiers to their great commander, popular confidence in his integrity and talents, experience in

the wisdom of his plans, maintained the army in the extremes of peril and disaster. The excitement of a campaign has a conservative influence on a military body, which acts amidst all their distresses. Loss of property, health and life, is never heeded, for

“There is something of pride in the perilous hour,
 “What e’er be the shape in which death may lower ;
 “For Fame is there to say who bleeds,
 “And Honor’s eye on daring deeds.

But when the patriots of 1787 commenced their labors they assembled in secret. The regard of an approving world was not upon them. No voice but that of duty, no commendation but that of conscience, cheered them onward. There were no medals to perpetuate the memory of the part which each one took in the victory their united prowess gained. No multitude to shout forth their names in grateful exultation. Nothing to reward their labors or stimulate their exertions, but the benignant smiles of that Omnipotent Being, whose inspiration directed their thoughts.

The Spirit of Independence triumphed again! It overcame all obstacles. The variety of evils menacing the country were averted. Difference of personal opinion yielded to the importance of national quiet. Individual aspirations were immolated on the altar of Union. The narrow jealousy of sectional interest, fled from the nobler sentiment of American patriotism. National identity arose out of local discord. In the Constitution was reconciled that multiplicity of contending interests apparently so inconsistent, that philosophers and statesmen through the world, predicted a signal failure in any attempt to unite them. Well might each of those patriots have exclaimed,

“Jamque opus exegi, quod nec Jovis ira, nec ignes,
 “Nec poterit ferrum, nec edax abolere vetustas.
 * * * * *
 “Ore legar populi, perque omnia sæcula famâ
 * * * * * vivam.”

The prosperity of the country, evinces the wisdom of the system. But who shall do justice to the self denial of its framers; who shall rightly estimate that victory over themselves, which was the price of each concession? Mankind for the first time witnessed a civil revolution with no appeal to arms. They saw States obey the precepts of revelation, and practice the virtues of christianity. They saw a whole people range themselves under the banner of law, and move from anarchy to order with no guide but virtue, and the unerring, invincible Spirit of Independence.

Not solely to those who sanctioned the Federal Constitution by their names, should its glory be ascribed. They, who, poising themselves on their personal character, dared dissent from some of its principles, are entitled to more gratitude than posterity has bestowed.

Had the advocates of a stronger government succeeded in the Convention, had the President been invested with the useless tinsel of a regal title and the fatal brilliancy of royal authority, this anniversary would not now be hailed as the jubilee of freedom.

If the Executive, rising above the darkness of faction, make the national interest his cynosure, experience has proved that liberty is not endangered by the energy of government.

But if descending from the elevation intended by the framers of the Constitution, he mingles in the turmoil of political contest, placing himself first, his party next, and his country the last in his thoughts, experience has equally proved that tyranny may be concealed in republican robes.

The opponents of the Constitution distrusted human virtue. They foresaw that the "golden sceptre" of Executive authority, might become "an iron rod to bruise and break" the disobedient. They exerted their influence to diminish its power. Whether such apprehensions were founded in wisdom, modern experiment will be able to decide. The problem is yet unsolved, whether American freedom has

most to dread from the strength or weakness of the Federal head. Executive power has already proved a formidable foe to popular virtue, whether an invincible foe, coming events will shortly declare.

However mistaken the opponents of the Constitution may have been in the extent of their objections, their opposition lowered the high tones of those who desired more energy in the government. It is well that the ultraism of neither party prevailed, but were the Executive stronger, republicanism in this age, would be in danger of dissolution.

The minority of the Convention had a large, if not a principal share in the compromise it effected. The Spirit of Independence animated their souls. It raised them above personal considerations. It led them to sacrifice at the shrine of their country, the reward of long and successful toil for its welfare. If few in number, greater their praise. The cause of opposition was to them the cause of truth. They fearlessly maintained it;

“ And for the testimony of truth have borne
 “ Universal reproach, far worse to bear
 “ Than violence ; for this was all their care
 “ To stand approv'd in sight of God, though worlds
 “ Judg'd them perverse.”

The revolution which one hundred years before the era of the American Constitution, placed William and Mary on the throne of England, has been extolled as a wonder of political history ; but the splendor of the archetype fades before the greater glory of the copy.

James the Second assumed the sceptre strong in the affection of his people. Though the melancholy fate of Charles the First had exposed the absurdity of regal infallibility, they saw in his son the moral phenomenon of a prince who never broke his word. Their loyalty always exerting instinctive strength, was fortified by respect. While they

honored the King they loved the individual, and confidently anticipated, under his guidance, a prosperous career.

Even after he had proved himself no exception to his race ; after he had recklessly rent asunder those ties of respect and affection ; after he had abused the generous confidence of his subjects ; interfered, without pretext, in corporate elections, and filled places of trust with tools of superstition ; even after he had seized the revenue, threatened the national religion, immured in the tower the dignitaries of the church, even then the nation might have submitted to his usurpations, had the ruthlessness of the despot been supported by the courage of a man. His own pusillanimity wrought his downfall, and he fled in dismay from the spirit he had raised.

In the revolution of 1688, public sentiment was directed to a single point. The policy of the nation preserved its accustomed course. There was no new Constitution to form. The old one possessed the affection of the people and was revered as a well known, long-tried friend. No sacrifice was demanded. Inclination coincided with policy. Technical anarchy might indeed be said to have existed while the Convention debated the grave question of succession, but government moved on by its own momentum, and before this was dissipated, a new power was applied to preserve its progress. The channels of business were never varied, and the mass of the community bestowed scarce a thought on the change when once it was made. An energetic prince had lifted his banner on the English shore, and maintained by his arms, the stand taken by the country. The miserable cowardice and blind infatuation of the monarch, alone prevented a greater effusion of blood.

The scene presented one hundred years afterwards, was of a far different aspect. When the Federal Constitution was adopted, real anarchy existed, yet no aspiring ambition aimed at a throne. No army was near to lend its iron arguments to such a claim. The entire policy of the country

was subverted. The new government unsupported by experience, depended solely on the intelligent firmness of purpose, the unyielding independence of the people. No greater affection could be felt for it, than for a welcome stranger who promised much, but whose capacity to perform had yet to be tested. Even the great man, who by the resplendent wisdom of his administration, did so much toward the stability of the government, who placed a civic wreath upon his brow, more radiant in glory than the glittering diadem of military success, was thought by some to lack confidence in its permanence, and to believe that it would finally degenerate into a constitutional monarchy.

What care shall be deemed excessive, what caution pronounced superfluous, in guarding the integrity of this magnificent structure? Founded on the sacrifices of our early patriots, it was reared by the inspired wisdom of their successors. In its sacred proportions behold the holy temple of this chosen people, which honor and patriotism bind them to keep from desecration. It stands upon the lofty eminence of National Union and overlooks the whole country in its simple grandeur. Liberty and Law are its columns of durability and strength. There let the affection of this new Israel be forever centred. By all their present prosperity, by gratitude for the past and expectation for the future, let them save it from pollution. To that let the steps of faith be turned, to offer its morning and evening sacrifice of political devotion. Should false gods seduce the allegiance of the people, there, upon its consecrated altar, on the day of their great national festival, let them lay their offering of expiation.

Notwithstanding the advantages realized under the Constitution, complaints are rife as to the inefficiency of the government.

They who suffer from fluctuating policy and constant change of laws, who find their most careful calculations foiled, their hopes frustrated and their future prospects

wrecked, rail at the system as unsuited to the ends for which it was devised.

They too whose peace is disturbed, whose reputation is injured by the licentious attacks of some profligate partisan, who find even home insecure from his lawless visitations, that family and friends and all most prized, are involved in common and unsparing vituperation, bewail the nature of institutions which tolerate and require an inquisition so severe.

Nowhere does party spirit rage with more uncurbed violence than in this land of freedom. Nowhere does political hostility so nearly approach to personal enmity. Nowhere is it felt with such sad bitterness, in private and social relations; nowhere has it so often poisoned the fountain of domestic enjoyment.

Hence some doubt the benefit of a system of which such are the results. They are led to believe that our fathers overrated the probable virtue of posterity; that goodness declines as intelligence increases, and is most deficient when circumstances call most loudly for its presence.

Defects in the operation of the system of which its framers never dreamed, have indeed been developed by experience. They result from no inherent, irremediable imperfection, but from an unfortunate perversion of its powers.

The fertility of our institutions is too conspicuously shown on the statute book. Legislation is guided by no fixed rule: like the restless ocean, it contains within itself the principles of perpetual motion. The enactment of this year is almost sure to repeal that of the last, and laws appear to be made only to be changed. Yet this should not weaken our affection for the system, nor diminish our reliance on its value.

In this happy country, where all avenues to office and honor are freely opened, where genius and industry encounter no artificial barriers of birth, rank or wealth, to stay their progress to the highest stations, the serious busi-

ness of legislation is sometimes committed to those whose ambition outstrips their skill. As every man may be called upon to minister at the altar of public concerns, he is morally, as well as politically, bound to qualify himself for the duty. We deride that feature of the English Constitution which recognizes the existence of hereditary lawgivers, as if statesmanship came by nature, and rank supplied the place of mind ; yet in republican America, where every man has an inherent right to share in the councils of the country, the necessity of preparation is sometimes overlooked.

Growing and perpetually varying interests, require corresponding legislation. Better that innovation should sometimes be rash, that the giant strides of reform should occasionally crush the flowers of the field, as well as the weeds of the wilderness, than that both should flourish in the rank luxuriance of uncultivated nature.

Violence of party spirit naturally arises from that exuberant freedom which characterizes America as the freest spot on earth. Politics enter more largely into the pursuits and thoughts of men, under our form of government, than under any other, except perhaps, of old, under the petty democracies of ancient Greece. No one, however far inclination may remove him from the great concerns of the country, can fail to be affected by its policy. The General Government would be of little value to the nation and perhaps could not exist, if the interests committed to its care, were embarrassed by matters, which, though of less apparent magnitude, are equally important to the welfare of the people. Upon the State Governments the General Government rests, as the whole have for their common basis the mass of population.

Hence the necessity of every man's mingling more or less in politics. Hence the interest he must feel in local or general affairs. Hence too, the moral obligation under which he lies, to use his constitutional power at every election, whatever the relative importance of the occasion which de-

mands it. He is no good citizen who habitually withholds his vote, and he is still a worse one, who adds to his example the authority of his precept.

But in affairs of government, as in all human concerns, virtuous inclinations are lamentably liable to be biased by impulse. Pride of opinion largely mingles in all matters where great interest is excited, and in none more than in political discussion. Contention increases obstinacy. Interest blinds judgment. Disputes concerning the wisdom of measures, soon become arguments against the uprightness of motives, and the battle is waged for the pleasure of triumph.

So long as

———“lust and rapine wildly reign,
“To darken o’er the fair domain”

of the human heart, so long as man shall not have learned to regulate the impetuosity of his nature, by the rules of religion, so long will party strife be excessive, wherever he is free to think, and unrestrained in the expression of his thoughts.

Prevalence of party strife is no argument against the value of the system. Party rancor must be deprecated, and good men should seek by their influence, to mitigate its rage. But unfortunate for this country will it be, when the political atmosphere shall cease from commotion and assume the deadly calm of apathy. Even as nature

———“subsists by elemental strife
“And passions are the elements of life,”

so party discussions, arising from party opposition, are the elements of political life, which once stagnated by unnatural rest, it may be difficult to reanimate.

Too much steadiness in government is more fatal to freedom, than licentiousness of faction. Too much uniformity

more injures the energy of the people, than any fluctuation of policy, can palsy their enterprise. Extremes are to be avoided if the full measure of prosperity is desired, but better any condition than that of perfect repose.

Whatever defects may be discovered in the sacred edifice of the Constitution, it is the sole hope of national existence. Experience will suggest, as it hitherto has suggested, salutary improvements. We may enlarge its capacity, alter its shape and vary the duties of its officers, but once subverted, no human power can rebuild it. If Israel separate from Judah, if the letter of the law be disregarded, its spirit despised, and its holy places defiled, this chosen people, now the envy of the world, will be carried into a hopeless captivity of discord and disorder. No friendly aid will rear again their magnificent temple: no pious hand raise its sacred altar; no incense in their holy city, rise from a grateful, reunited people.

Sectional interests have assumed a magnitude, and are maintained with a pertinacious bitterness, which, were the Constitution overturned, would baffle all attempts to reconcile them.

Would the mighty West, with its unlimited resources and boundless prospect of future grandeur, which already sees approach a preponderating influence in the national councils, would the West yield up the public domain, which even now she seems ready almost lawlessly to grasp? Would her elder sisters, by whose toil and treasure it was won, consent to relinquish their birthright?

Would the North, which once wisely yielding to a policy it could not control, build up under the shadow of the protecting system, the numberless manufacturing towns which deck its surface, agree to diminish the power of Congress over commerce? Would the South join the Union unless that power were restrained?

Would the large States, whose number and relative importance have, within fifty years, so wonderfully increased,

which constantly augment in resources and start into life, would they again sacrifice a portion of their influence, from disinterested regard to their feebler sisters? Would these place their existence at the mere mercy of their powerful neighbors?

Under the Constitution, even during the short time it has preserved the nation in happy and prosperous Union, how many questions have arisen of which each agitated the States to their centre! Many more, yet unimagined, will arise hereafter, and all the force of individual interest, local dogmas and sectional prejudice, will be used in the process of solution. The limits of direct taxation; the power over commerce; the authority of Congress over the militia; the innumerable questions as to its implied powers, which as the country increases in size, and its affairs acquire still greater complexity, must also augment in number; the questions more directly affecting State sovereignty; the extent of the prohibition on *ex post facto* laws, and laws impairing the obligation of contracts; the right to control or interfere with the general laws, and many more which readily present themselves; all of which, so far as they have arisen, by a happy adjustment, have strengthened the Union, and while on the one hand, they have consolidated the nation, on the other have more clearly defined the limits of State authority, should a new Constitution be attempted, would be elements of discord no human wisdom could bring together.

If the South become independent of the North; if the West, uncontrolled by the Union, be free to follow its unregulated impulse; if that national spirit, which conviction of common welfare has reared into vigorous existence, be crushed by a ruthless destruction of the Constitution which preserves it, then in vain would experience bring repentance for the deed. In vain would years of internal warfare, and decaying industry, and foreign interference, and foreign domination, teach the value of our former condition.

Any one of these questions would forbid a reunion. However the necessity of a common government might then be felt, it would require greater sacrifices than humanity could make.

With this result as the cost of separation, who shall venture to calculate the value of the Union?

Philanthropy urges us, freedom adjures us to discourage the sacrilegious attempt. They beseech us to repress the exuberance of sectional feeling; to subject all natural attachment for local institutions, to an expanded affection for the country; to preserve in immortal purity the Spirit of Independence.

Massachusetts stands, as she always has stood, preeminent among the States of the Union.

From the moment our new-born Commonwealth, the child of its Pilgrim fathers, in the nakedness and feebleness of infancy, was cradled on Plymouth rock, till this day of her time honored glory, the Spirit of Independence has cheered her on her course.

In arts and arms, in enterprise and morals, in the constant struggles of colonial weakness, in the trying conflicts of revolutionary war, against the daring assaults of ambition and the treacherous stratagems of faction, the inspiration of the national spirit, has given her the lead.

The first free school and the first newspaper in America, were established in her Capital, our own venerated city; the first printing press was erected in the old Bay State: the first University was founded by her Legislature: the first militia corps was organized by her sons; the first canal and the first rail-road in the United States, found place within her honored territory; but more than all and above all, on this day to be remembered, the FIRST BLOOD OF THE REVOLUTION flowed from the bosoms of her children.

What son of Massachusetts does not exult in her reputation? In whose breast beats so recreant a heart, that he will not scorn to degrade it? Who can read with calm in-

difference the tale of her early privations, her generous devotion to the cause of freedom? Who can view the extended influence of her institutions and habits, her manners and morals, her unwavering firmness and unblemished integrity, and not thank God that he is a descendant of the Pilgrims?

Upon Massachusetts, thus distinguished, rests an immense responsibility. She has sustained it well. She gives no indication of shrinking from the burden. She has ever taken the lead in that national spirit which unites us, she never can, she never will abandon her noble situation.

Upon the Constitution then, let her affections be concentrated. She first laid its foundation, let her be the first to defend the superstructure. She was amongst the foremost in its dedication, let her perish rather than desert it. Let her glorious character invigorate her efforts to preserve the purity of the law. Let her children learn its value, and in all future vicissitudes of fortune, let the first words of political faith, which her young men shall be taught to utter, and the last caution of political wisdom, which shall falter on the lips of age, be

REVERENCE THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNION.