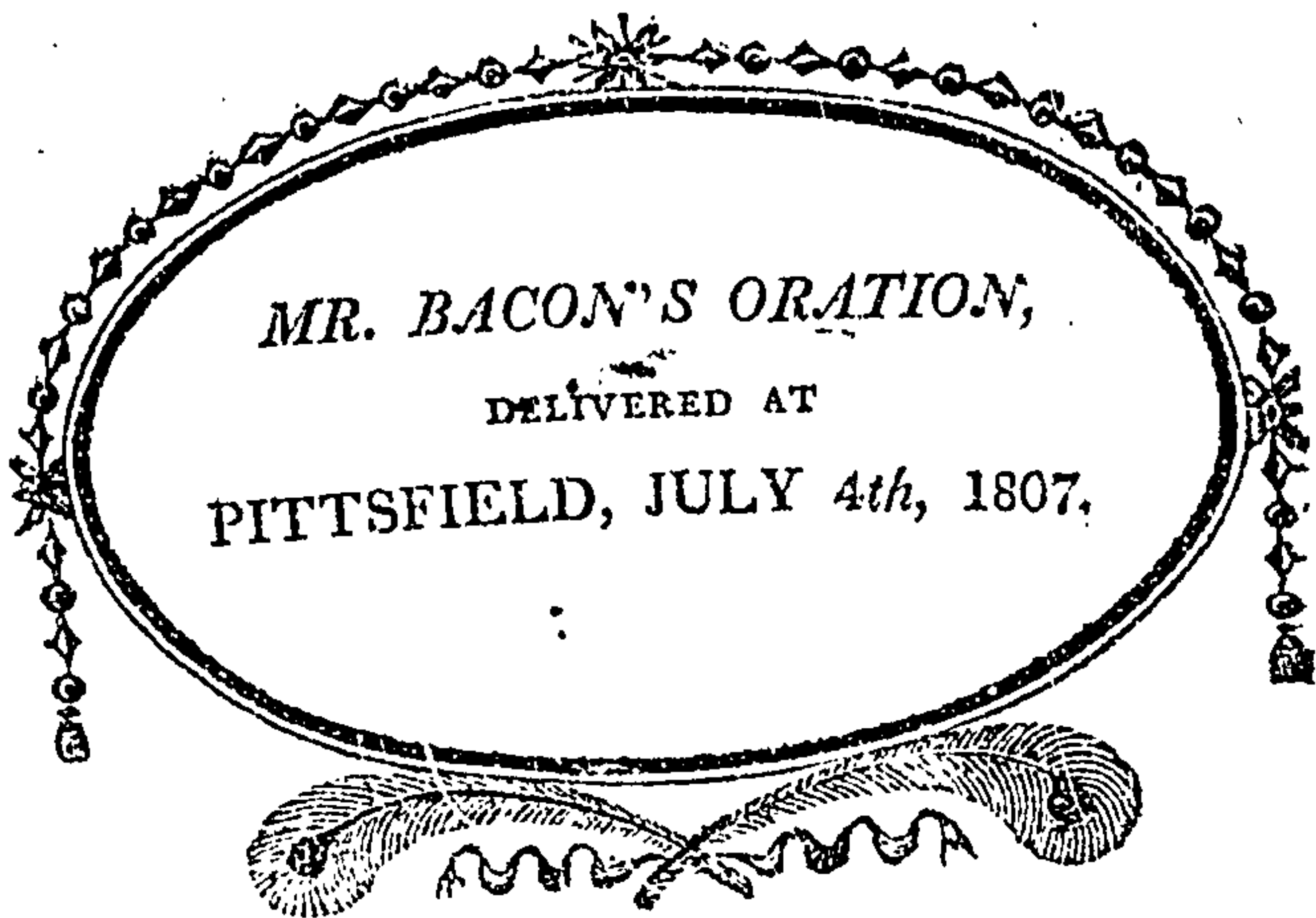


Maja Amasa Tuttle
from his friend.

C. P. Tuttle



AN
ORATION,
DELIVERED AT PITTSFIELD,
ON THE THIRTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY
OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

JULY 4th, 1807.

BY EZEKIEL BACON.

“We are too apt to regret as an evil the disputes and agitations of a free people; forgetting that man’s nature being active, he must continue to act, or cease to exist.”

DALRYMPLE.

[PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CITIZENS CONVEN-
ED ON SAID OCCASION.]

PRINTED AT PITTSFIELD,
BY PHINEHAS ALLEN....*July*, 1807.

AN ORATION.

“**I**N the day of prosperity to rejoice,” is an exercise of our faculties, as well in unison with the finest feelings of the human heart, as in accordance with the rational allowance of our holy Religion.

To solemnize by festive and appropriate rites, those momentous events which the history of our nation affords, has an obvious tendency to perpetuate their remembrance, and to cherish the principles upon which they were founded.

It is to commemorate an era, memorable for the triumph of principles the most conducive to the happiness of man, and the exaltation of the nation in which we live ; and it is at a period the most auspicious for their contemplation, and the most evincive of their beneficent effects, that we, my Fellow-Citizens, uniting our voices with millions of Freemen, have assembled on this joyful Anniversary.

A MINUTE review of the early annals of our nation, from its original settlement, or an historical detail of the prominent events of our Revolution, would be but a repetition of scenes which have often been displayed to my audience on occasions like the present, and would possess too little of novelty, either for instruction or entertainment. To many who are here assembled, such a sketch of the latter, would probably exhibit but a faint outline of that picture, which their own hands had contributed to form, and the viv-
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id colours of which are still fresh in their remembrance. For with the most cordial feelings of gratification and respect, do I behold around me many of those aged citizens, whose venerable countenances, and locks silvered with the lapse of years, bespeak them to have been the Patriots of the days sacred to Liberty, and the Heroes of the Battles of our Independence. Permit me to offer them the homage of that respectful veneration, which is due from the present generation to the veteran defenders of their country's rights; and to congratulate them on their arrival at a period, when the successful triumph of that sacred cause, for which they have jeopardized their lives "on the high places of the field," affords them the consoling assurance, that they have not toiled in vain, or wasted the vigor of their manhood for nought.

REFERRING you then to the pen of History, for the record of our colonization and settlement, and to the experience of age for the recital of our Revolutionary dangers, sufferings and achievements; a rapid sketch of *those objects*, for the acquirement of which our sturdy ancestors "held not their lives dear to them," and of *those principles*, whose maintenance was deemed worthy of the price of blood, will occupy a few moments of your attention,

IMPELLED uniformly by a spirit of civil and political Liberty, and guided by sentiments of Religion, which though at times beclouded by the mists of bigotry and fanaticism, were in their nature tolerant and mild, the enterprizing genius of our ancestors, burst from the restraints of domestic tyranny at home, and forced their passage through the accumulated difficulties which embittered their pilgrimage abroad. With all their discouragements and embarrassments, such was their rapid progress in national greatness, that their unnatural mother soon viewed them with an eye of avarice for their increasing wealth, and perhaps of jealousy for their future fortunes.

PURSING

PURSUING their progress for a century and an half, through a course of unexampled prosperity and successful enterprize, we arrive at that memorable crisis of their affairs, which more particularly relates to the concerns of this day, and to an event by far more interesting to us, than any other on the page of their eventful history.

THE great objects of that Revolution, for the accomplishment of which no sacrifices were deemed too distressing to be submitted to, and no dangers too threatening to be encountered, were in the first place *national Independence*; and in the second *individual Liberty*.* As the possession of the former furnished the only security for the enjoyment of the latter, its acquirement was justly deemed an object of primary importance, in the view of a discerning people. Without it, the tenure of every civil right must be precarious and uncertain, and at best furnish to its possessor a mere tenancy at the will of another. To a people who in the pursuit of that Freedom which the land of their nativity denied them, had but the century before, braved the dangers of the deep, and the perils of an inhospitable shore, a state of foreign dependence for all that they in this life held dear, was not to be endured. And when to theoretical claims of unlimited supremacy on the part of Great-Britain, came to be added overt acts of practical oppression, the spirit of American Independence, lighted at the sacred Altar of Liberty, burst into a flame, which all the engines of a foreign power were unable to quench or subdue.

BUT the attainment of national Independence, however essential to the best interests of America, was not in itself an object worth the struggle which it cost, except so far as it paved the way to rational Freedom, and the individual Liberty of the Citizen. The most entire possession of national sovereignty, is by no means inconsistent with a state of the most degrading personal subjection. It is a consideration of little consequence

* See Note A.

sequence to the hapless victim of despotic power, from what quarter the chilling blasts of tyranny blow upon his habitation. Let the bitter waters of oppression flow from whatever source, or be disguised in whatever shape they may, “still Slavery, thou art a bitter draught !” In that great monumental act, into which, through the pen of that illustrious Chief, who now, honorably for himself, and gloriously for his Country, presides over the concerns of a free people, “was poured the soul of the American Continent ;” in this expressive instrument, the founders of our Empire were therefore careful, not only to declare to the world the measure of their wrongs, as a justification of their rightful resistance to arbitrary power, and to assert their indubitable right to national sovereignty ; but likewise to hold up a recognition of those maxims of government, which in all situations they deemed essential to the security of their rights as citizens. As the most prominent of these are distinguished the natural equality of man, the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the supremacy of popular sovereignty, and the duties of resistance to illegitimate and oppressive rule.

THESE principles, although they had before that time been asserted as theoretical truths, by the Lockes and the Sidneys of the ancient world, and though a Hampden had once sealed them with his unsullied blood, had never before been practically adopted as the fundamental maxims of any well ordered government. Never before had a nation rose up, avowing them as the rules of their political faith, and “with their lives and their fortunes,” offering to vindicate them to the world. Yes, ye sainted spirits of departed Patriots, and ye surviving cotemporaries of an illustrious band ; your’s is the boast, that few as ye were in numbers, and feeble as were the means of your defence, you for the first time stood forth, as the practical assertors of doctrines, which the hand of tyranny had at that time well nigh obliterated from the earth, or had confined to the breasts of a few scattering votaries of Liberty and Philosophy in Europe and America ! ASTON.

ASTONISHED as well at their boldness as their novelty, no doubt many of our citizens, whose general loyalty to their country, and whose attachment to her interests could not be doubted, hesitated at the bold attempt of reducing to practice, a system which habit and prejudice had represented to their imaginations, as absurd in theory, and impracticable in execution. The supposed rashness of resisting the claims of a nation, then the most powerful in the world, appalled the feeble nerves of others ; and a few were doubtless influenced in their secession from the great body of American Whigs, by the influence of office and the lure of personal emolument.

THE two last descriptions of men, are only either to be pitied for their pusillanimity, or despised for their venality, and cannot now be dangerous either for their numbers or their influence. But of the former class, whose opposition to the general sentiments of the nation, sprang from their want of confidence in the practical success of popular Liberty, and from the distrusts which they entertained of the necessary stability of a Republican Government, there are probably still remaining in our country a considerable number, respectable for their talents, and formidable for their wealth, their activity and their influence.

To the doubts of the permanent continuance of our Republican systems, which these men are accustomed to inculcate, and the objections which they are in the habit of urging against the characteristic features of an elective government, some attention is undoubtedly due ; as well because Republicans should always shew themselves ready and able to give “ a reason for that faith that is in them,” as to counteract the effect of those suggestions, which if suffered to take root amongst us, must clearly have a tendency to lessen our confidence in the ultimate success of our cause, and to paralyze our efforts for its maintenance and support.

YES,

Yes, my Fellow-Citizens, that a Republican Government, founded on the basis of equal rights, elective privileges, and popular sovereignty, is alone competent to the secure enjoyment of general Liberty, and the essential immunities of the citizen, is a position, which although recognized as a fundamental axiom in all our political institutions, is openly controverted by a few; and we have reason to fear, secretly and covertly attempted to be drawn into doubt and disrepute by many. Hence it is, that we are so frequently assailed by the discouraging suggestions, that the pen of History furnishes no instance of the perpetuity of a Republican Government; and that every free Constitution hath either crumbled into Anarchy, or sunk into Despotism. Neither (we answer) has any other political fabric, which has as yet been devised by the wisdom of ages, the merit of perpetuity, or a title to unchangeable duration. In a world subject to imperfection, vicissitude and change, nothing can aspire to the hope of immortality below. Time and chance must forever happen alike to frail man, and his imperfect structures. And let those who contemptuously demand, "Where are the boasted Republics of antiquity, and the free governments of former times?" inform us, where are the proud Monarchies and Aristocracies of the same period. The sweeping surges of destruction have long since broken over their lofty ramparts, and on the wasting waves of time now float the fragments of their grandeur.

But although an ultimate exemption from the fate of all sublunary objects, is not claimed in behalf of our own Republican institutions, yet the improvements which they may justly boast, over all former attempts to reconcile the dominion of Laws, with the security of Liberty, we think justify the elevated expectations which we cherish, of their superior durability and continuance. Where before has existed a government founded on a well balanced Representation of every portion of its citizens, in every branch of Legislation; bottomed on fundamental laws to regulate the exercise
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of delegated power ; and containing within itself the means of correction, amendment and reform, without any resort to forcible resistance or internal convulsion ? And where has the light of information been so widely diffused, or the capacity of self-government so eminently possessed by the people of any other country ? If then the sacred cause of Freedom may count with us so many superior chances in her favor, surely is not the cheering hope of her maintenance and enjoyment, well worthy of our faithful endeavors, and unremitting struggles in her defence ? For second only in its importance to imperfect man, as are the assurances of life and immortality in a world to come, are the blessings of Freedom and Independence in the present ; and next to that does their enjoyment demand our devout gratitude and ardent pursuit.

INSTABILITY in council, inconstancy in measures, the caprice of popular favor, and the injustice of its resentments, are likewise represented as the peculiar sins by which Republican Governments are exposed to be the most easily beset. That the human mind, left to the free exercise of its functions, and in its best regulated estate, is of all other mutable things the subject of fluctuation and change, is certainly one of the frailties of our nature, both in an individual and collective capacity. But does a concentration of the public will in the breast of a single individual, prone in his best estate to like passions with ourselves, and liable to be veered from his course by the intrigues of a courtier, or the wiles of a sycophant, ensure a greater chance for stability in council, constancy in measures, permanency in opinion, and justice in decision, than entrusting it to the control of the collective body of the nation ; each of whom furnishes in some measure the means of a check upon the other, and has a tendency to prevent those sudden transitions, to which, by the operation of the passions, and the imbecility of reason, a single mind, unchecked in its movements, and irresponsible for its errors, is inevitably exposed ?—
Were even that mixed and indigested mass who com-
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posed the Assemblies of the whole Roman People, in the best days of their Republic, less constant in their resolutions, less persevering in their enterprizes, or less faithful to their public servants, than were the Tarquins, the Cæsars, and the Caligulas, in the degenerate periods of monarchical and imperial declension? Were the Republics of Greece, ill modelled and imperfectly organized as they were, more prone to fluctuation, folly and injustice, than a modern Turkish Divan, or the Grand Scignior of the Ottoman Porte?

But if these are objected to as unfair examples of the boasted stability of Monarchical councils, let us go even to that "stupendous fabric of human invention," the Idol of Aristocracy, and the pride of modern Monarchists, the government of Great-Britain. There, although under the protecting care of hereditary wisdom, and the steady guidance of a Monarch, whose first constitutional attribute is an incapacity to error! what vicissitudes of administration, what vibrating resolutions, and what a fleeting succession of court favorites and disgraced confidants, does a single reign, and often a single year produce. From the days of BECKET, the haughty Prelate and profligate favorite of HENRY 2d, to WOOLSEY, the idol and confidant of HENRY 8th, and from him to the WALPOLES, the NORTHs, and the BUTES of modern times, has the inconstancy, the capriciousness and the injustice of Monarchical favor been exemplified. Well might their own great Poet, from a view of the history of his own country, in the person of a fallen and degraded Minister of his capricious Sovereign, deplore the fate of him, "who built his greatness on his Princes favor." And yet when we have the example of a Sir WALTER RALEIGH, the benefactor of his country, sacrificed by a faithless government to the resentment of his enemies; and a COLUMBUS, who added a new world to the crown of his royal master, deserted and betrayed by a thankless Monarch, shall we be told, that Republics alone are ungrateful to their deserving benefactors, faithless in their attachments, and unjust in their resentments? §

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§ See Note B.

As the possession of power in a well organized Republic, does not confer upon its possessor those inordinate emoluments and unequal advantages, which despotic systems are calculated and designed to afford to the few who are allowed a participation in their concerns, so the descent from its elevated stations is not so dangerous or precipitate. With us, although the mortified partisans of a dismissed servant, are sometimes heard to whine over the honors of which he has been shorn, and to prate of the ingratitude and injustice of popular favor ; and although it should be granted, that this favor may sometimes “ be obtained without merit, and lost without a crime ;” yet its loss subjects its object to no further punishment, and is attended with no personal dangers. While under the dreary reign of Eastern Despotism, the life of the pampered favorite is frequently held upon the same tenure with his office, and the loss of his post is but a prelude to the loss of his head.

THE fact is, that those changes of system and fluctuations of measures, in Monarchical Governments, which flow from the resolutions of a single will, not being the subject of general discussion, frequently pass unnoticed and almost unobserved ; and we are thence led erroneously to conclude, that they are less frequent in their occurrence and less violent in their effects, than those which, as they spring from the exercise of the popular will, must of course become the topics of popular deliberation, and the objects of general contemplation.

THE personal controversies occasioned by free discussions, the tumults of popular elections, and the agitations which grow out of political pursuits in a free country, and which are usually magnified by our adversaries, into dangers of the most threatening aspect ; although at times unpleasant and painful to a susceptible mind, should be considered as the price which we pay for our Liberties ; and small indeed it is, in comparison with the innumerable blessings which its enjoyment

joyment affords. The storms and tempests which disturb the elements of nature, are not upon the whole considered as an evil from a consideration of their salutary effects ; and the ocean, agitated as it is by all the winds of heaven, is still a more desirable and salubrious object, than the sluggish and unruffled mass of the stagnant pool. Nothing is more true, than that “ we are apt to regret as an evil, the disputes and agitations of a free people, forgetting that man’s nature being active, he must continue to act or cease to exist.”*

BUT it is not after all, from settled Republican systems of Government, administered upon their natural and legitimate principles of economy and peace, that scenes of violent commotion and revolutionary excesses naturally spring. In the language of a profound statesman of our own country, may it justly be said ; “ That Revolutions and Jacobinism do not flow from that system which we wish to see adopted. They belong, they exclusively belong to the system we resist ; they are its last stage ; the last page in the book of the history of governments under its influence. It is after centuries of extravagance, vice and oppression, that the People make Revolutions ; and it is then, it is during the general convulsion that ensues, that the dregs of the nation rise to the surface, and overwhelm in a common ruin, both the oppressors and deliverers of the People.”†

I TRUST that the brief vindication of the great principles of a Republican Government against the cavils of its enemies, with which I have ventured for a few moments to detain your attention, will not be received as altogether foreign from the purposes for which we have assembled. The adversaries of our free institutions, can only hope to effect their advances upon our entrenchments, but by insidious and artful approaches ; and against such attacks, it is important that

* *Dalrymple.*

† *Gallatin’s Speech on the Foreign Intercourse Bill, March 1, 1798.*

that even the outworks be defended. Let us not be shaken in our adherence to those institutions, and let not our confidence in their practical success be abated, by misconceptions of their genuine principles, or misrepresentations of their tendencies, and their dangers. Let us be true to our Country, our Constitution, and ourselves, and not be deterred from our purposes, by the doubts of political sceptics, or driven from our pursuits by the alarms of designing intriguers.

ASSEMBLED as we are, my friends, to celebrate the good fortunes of our country, and to rejoice on one of her most auspicious days, it would denote an apathy of feeling, dishonorable to our hearts, did we fail to felicitate each other upon the general prevalence of those principles which we profess to venerate, with the great body of our fellow-citizens through the Union ; and their recent triumph in the councils of this important member of our national confederacy. And it would exemplify that ingratitude to our benefactors, with which our enemies would wish to reproach us, were Republicans to omit those expressions of heartfelt approbation with which they are penetrated towards an administration, who true to the first principles of our glorious Revolution, and pursuing the genuine spirit of our free institutions, have by their moderation, their magnanimity, and their perseverance, secured to their country all the blessings which flow from a well ordered government ; and have afforded to the advocates of Freedom through the world, an argument in its favor, at which the partisans of Despotism may well stand appalled. It would indeed be desirable, could we add with truth, that the character of a government, so mild in its principles, so pacific in its policy, and so propitious in its influence to the domestic welfare of the people, commanded, as we think it ought, the respectful homage of every grateful citizen, and the cordial support of every American heart.— But that collisions of sentiment, and discordancies of opinion, in relation to the great measures of our foreign and domestic policy, have long abounded amongst

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us, is a fact which as every lover of his country has been called to lament, so it should be his ardent endeavor to reconcile and allay. We have indeed now the consolation of reflecting, that the spirit of Union with each other, and of harmony with our Government, has at length experienced a very general diffusion through the great mass of the Nation, and is perhaps already as extensive as might reasonably be expected, amongst a people so various in their situations, and so free in their enquiries and pursuits. It is not in any event to be hoped, that that class of politicians, whose dark views of human nature are in avowed hostility to the existence of a free government, or the predominance of civil and religious Liberty, on the broad basis of equal rights, and reciprocal advantages, should ever be disarmed of their opposition to a system, conducted only with a primary reference to these great and essential objects. Or that the interested and disappointed partisans of a system which has been put down by the controlling voice of the nation, should at once relinquish their prejudices and their passions on the Altar of Union. To such, therefore, we have no considerations to offer, which we can hope should be availing, and no grounds of mutual reconciliation to state on which we should probably meet. But as it respects that class of our fellow-citizens, who through misapprehension of our objects, misinformation of our measures, and ill-founded prejudices against our characters, are still retained in the ranks of our political adversaries, no reasonable means of winning them to our principles, or reclaiming them from their errors, should at any proper time be omitted.

It was a sentiment founded in justice and magnanimity, and worthy of the elevated character from whom it was received, "That the minority too have their rights, which to violate would be oppressive."* It is not, therefore, by insolent menaces, reproachful epithets, uncharitable accusations, or triumphant displays of our numbers, and our successes; but by a candid

* *Jefferson.*

candid exposition of our views, and a rational solution of their objections, that a harmonious understanding of our differences can be effected. By such means have we every reason to hope, that a reclamation of the great mass of our opponents, honorable to the real cause of Republicanism, and a confirmation of our doubting brethren, subservient to the best interests of our country, may be cultivated and ensured.

For this purpose it is not so material to enquire, from what causes our past differences may have originated, as to ascertain wherein they now consist; nor would the history of past dissensions tend perhaps much to allay present animosities. To those who from misconception and prejudice, have been induced to distrust the purity of our views, to mistake the operation of our measures, and to doubt the practicability of our projects, we would appeal from the deceptive predictions of distempered imaginations, to the results of experience, and the evidence of facts. Let them once more coolly review the leading measures of our government for the last six years, and compare their actual effects with the gloomy forebodings of their adversaries, and the disastrous apprehensions which they had been led to entertain from their adoption. Has the reduction of the Judiciary establishment to its original limits, in any measure relaxed the due administration of the laws, or in a single instance been productive of a delay of justice to the citizens? And is not the present number of our Judges abundantly competent to the discharge of every duty which is assigned them? Has the discontinuance of the Land and House Tax, or the abrogation of the whole system of Excises, cramped the necessary revenues of the government, or produced any embarrassment in its financial operations? Has not a Debt, which threatened to swallow up the active resources of the nation, been redeemed more rapidly than our most sanguine anticipations had promised? Have we not, by the prudential management of our foreign relations, continued to be the only commercial nation in the world, who have experienced
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the vast and incalculable advantages of an uninterrupted neutrality, during a period of general convulsion? Has the honor of the nation been tarnished by a single breach of faith, or the public engagements carelessly or negligently observed?

BUT the time to which we are confined, forbids us to attempt even an outline of that general system of policy, which in despite of premature discontents, and an opposition apparently inexorable, has at length by the force of its merit, and the evidence of its effects, commanded the applause of foreign nations, and conciliated to its standard an unexampled majority of our own.

THAT local jealousies will ever be totally eradicated, or the divers interests and prejudices of every portion of our Union perfectly satisfied, is too much to expect from the operation of any system dictated by omniscience itself.

FROM the general agricultural occupations which interest the great body of the people in this extensive country, and the spirit of commercial adventure which distinguishes others, it is unavoidable that differing views as to the policy which should be pursued in relation to these great objects of national attention, should be cherished and entertained. And it is not to be disguised, that this is a subject on which variant opinions appear to be already formed, by many of those who on most general questions of public policy, are "brethren of the same principle." And as it is certainly a question of very high import, to what extent, or by what means, it is the duty of the government to afford its aid in protecting the commercial enterprizes of our country, it demands the mature consideration, and cautious reflection of its citizens. On this topic momentous to our future welfare, as is apprehended to be our correct decision, you will allow me to trespass upon your patience, as I have perhaps done too long already, by a few imperfect suggestions.

INHABITING as we do a country vast in extent, inexhaustible in its capacity for internal improvement, and capable of employing many additional millions of hardy cultivators ; to apply to our case the same regimen which may be advisable for a nation, overburdened with a superfluous mass of population, cramped in her territorial limits, and furnishing inadequate means of domestic employment to her citizens, would certainly be the height of political quackery, and pursuing from an inconsiderate rage for imitation, a system which had been adopted by others only from necessity.

FROM the unrivalled advantages which we possess for its pursuit, from its superior productiveness, from the greater certainty of its avails, from the more general diffusion of its profits, from its friendly influence upon morals and industry, and from the facility and safety with which its operations may be protected, it ought never to be forgotten, that Agriculture is the first and paramount interest of America. With this, no other of a mere pecuniary nature should be suffered to stand in competition, or to demand of the government larger means of protection, than its intrinsic worth demands.

SECONDARY then in its value, and comparatively trifling in its extent, as is to us the interest of foreign trade and commercial speculation, has it a right to claim from the country, those immense sacrifices for its protection, and those hazardous projects for its defence, to which many of its partizans aspire ? And will a people, blessed with the means of internal prosperity, and secure in the enjoyment of domestic wealth, consent to jeopardize the peace of their country, and rush into the vortex of Wars, Taxation and Debt, for the attainment of an object, which has cost every other nation torrents of blood, and millions of wealth, to acquire and maintain ? To us, my Fellow-Citizens, there are but two alternatives ; whether we shall hereafter continue as we have done, a free, an independent and a contented people at home, cultivating those un-

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failing sources of competence and enjoyment, with which we are favored by an indulgent Providence ; improving the opportunities of foreign intercourse and commercial enterprize as they fall in our way ; and enforcing their exercise by such means as are placed within our reach ; or whether, quitting the natural station so happily assigned us, we will, like the other nations of the world, build our greatness on adventitious acquirements, and precarious adventures ; and like them sink at last into a state of splendid beggary at home, and foreign dependence abroad, under the ruinous load of naval establishments, and burdensome expenditures ; a system which in the most successful form which it has ever assumed, has in the language of a distinguished Orator and Patriot on another occasion, “ finally at an immense expence, and through a sea of blood, stranded the kingdom of Great-Britain on a solitary shore ; naked of Empire, naked of Liberty, and bereft of innocence, to ponder on an abyss, which has swallowed up one part of their fortunes, and yawns for the remainder.”*

FULLY am I sensible, that sentiments like these, are by no means calculated for universal acceptation. The sudden gains of commercial speculation, the attractive glare of foreign wealth, the ambition for national splendor, and the delusive advantages of naval and maritime ascendancy, have a tendency to beguile the passions of the aspiring, and to stimulate the avidity of the avaricious. It is through the influence of these allurements, that the road to national ruin is so easy in its descent, and so rapid in its progress. To resist their enchantments requires all our fortitude, and to baffle their wiles all our wisdom.

LET it not however be imagined, that the interests of Commerce are contemplated as an object of no consideration to our country ; or that they have not a right to claim in a proper degree, the fostering care of its Government. Let its progress be facilitated by a
free

* *Grattan.*

free passage through all its natural channels, its security guaranteed by wholesome regulations, and its protection enforced by those effective means with which God and Nature have furnished us. Means beyond comparison more efficacious than the "floating batteries, and wooden walls," with which we have been threatened, and at the same time unattended with their disastrous concomitants, endless Wars, and insufferable Taxes.*

ON a subject, however, so delicate in its nature, so various in its relations, and so eminently calculated to excite a diversity of opinions, it is with deference that a few considerations have been at this time suggested to your attention, and recommended to your reflection. It has been ventured upon from a conviction, that much of the future happiness of our nation depends upon our settling down at this time upon fixed and proper views, in relation to this great and important subject ; and upon our maintaining those views with constancy and firmness.

SITUATED as we are, my Fellow-Citizens, at a period of the world, not less distinguished for its superior light and information in most human attainments, than it is for its unexampled folly, degeneracy and corruption in many of its pursuits ; and destined to be Lords of a Country which alone affords a refuge from wasting oppression, and a shelter from the storms which desolate humanity ; with what a weight of responsibility to ourselves, our posterity and our God, are we invested !—For the secure enjoyment of all the blessings which the lot of man below admits, we have no obstacles but our own passions to surmount ; and for their loss, we can have nothing but our own follies to reproach. And oh, may that beneficent Being, in whose hands are the events of nations, protect by his Providence, the People whom he hath redeemed by his power ; and give to the inheritance of Freedom, a duration lasting as time, and permanent as his own immutable purposes !

* See Note C.

* NOTE A.

THE assertion that National Independence was *the first object* of our Revolution, may perhaps be thought incorrect in point of fact. It is undoubtedly true, that at the commencement of the contest between this Country and Great-Britain, with respect to the right of Taxation "in all cases whatsoever," which was claimed by the latter, the idea of National Independence was entertained but by a very few of our countrymen. But it must very soon have been perceived, that effectual security against these unlimited claims, could be obtained only through the medium of Independence; and consequently that the right to assert, and the ability to defend *that* must first be established. The right of National Independence, therefore, in its nature, preceded those private rights, which were asserted by the Americans. And in this view, was certainly "the first object," which they were reduced to the necessity of contending for.

* NOTE B.

THE History of few Governments furnish a more fluctuating and unstable picture; than that which has been presented by the Government of Great-Britain even within the last six years. During that period, we have seen almost as many changes of administration, bottomed on as many different systems of foreign and domestic policy. The capricious will of the Monarch (so far as he exercises any) has vibrated from PITT to the ADDINGTONS, from them back again to PITT, from him to the FOXITES, and from them to the present motley, and probably short lived administration.—The Parliament almost invariably true to the influence of patronage and power, generally conform to the politics of the Ministry. If not, a dissolution and a new election is sure to secure a convenient and pliable majority in favor of the prevailing faction. Is there in any regularly organized Republic, an instance of such unexampled instability, and popular inconstancy?

* NOTE C.

THE great *ostensible* object, which the advocates of a Navy Establishment profess to have in view from its operations, is the Protection of Commerce. Much is said of the immense advantages which we derived from that which was organized during the period of Mr. ADAMS's administration. We are frequently told, that more property is annually lost by violations of our commercial rights, than the whole annual expence of a Navy adequate to its protection ; and that, therefore, instead of being a burden, it would, merely in a pecuniary view, be an object of national economy. Such loose assertions certainly deserve no credit, further than they are supported by facts and documents. It may perhaps be considered as altogether visionary and ridiculous to assert, that so far from decreasing the risques to which our commerce is exposed, from illegal captures and detentions, it has in fact so far as we can judge, had a tendency to *increase* them. The reasons which justify this position are too lengthy to be here given in detail. It is however worthy of remark, that the rates of Insurance on foreign voyages, at different periods, furnishes perhaps the only sure index of the degree of risque attending those voyages, at those several periods. The following statement of the different rates of Insurance on American vessels at two different periods, may serve to shew, how little an effect upon the security of our Commerce, our Naval Establishments have heretofore had ; as well as how little cause there is for the complaints against its present ruinous and unprotected state.

THE statement of the current rates of Insurance in the year 1799, is taken from the Report of a Committee of the House of Representatives of the United States for that year. That for the present time is collected from a careful enquiry at two principal Insurance Offices in *Boston*, during the last month. It will be recollected, that during the former period, the United States had a very considerable naval force, which was employed in the defence of our trade. At the present time they have none except what is employed in the Mediterranean service, protecting some of our coasts and rivers, and other domestic and governmental purposes.

In February 1799, the Rates of Insurance were stated as follows :

To Russia,	out,	12 1-2 per cent.	home,	12 1-2
Sweden,		12 1-2		12 1-2
Denmark and Hanse Towns,	}	10		10
Holland,				
Great-Britain,		10		10
Spain,		12 1-2		12 1-2
France,	<i>We had then no intercourse.</i>			
Portugal,		10		10
Morocco,		12 1-2		12 1-2
Italy,		17 1-2		17
China & E. In.		10		10
West-Indies,		12 1-2		12 1-2
Africa,		12 1-2		12 1-2

And in June, 1807, they are as follows :

Russia,	out,	3 1-2 per cent.	home,	3 1-2
Sweden,		3 1-2		3 1-2
Denmark and Hanse Towns,	}	3 1-2		3 1-2
Holland,				
Great-Britain,		3		3
Spain,		3 1-2		2 1-2
France,		3 1-2		2 1-2
Portugal,		3		3
Morocco,		3		3
Italy,		4		4 1-2
China & E. In.		4 1-2		3 1-2
West-Indies,		4 1-2		3 1-2
Africa,		3 1-2		2 1-2

By these statements it appears that the average rate of Insurance in the year 1799, was rather more than 12 per cent; and at the present time is not quite 3 1-2 per cent: making a difference in favor of the present system of about 8 1-2 per cent. The amount of our Exports and Imports,

at

at the former period, were estimated at 100 millions of Dollars ; they are now about 180 millions.

THIS statement is not exhibited as proving that the great hazards to which our Commerce was exposed in 1799, was altogether the effect of our naval operations ; or that the present increased amount of our Exports and Imports is entirely owing to the diminution of our Navy. Both these might be and undoubtedly were occasioned in some measure by other causes. But it incontestibly shews two things. 1st. That without the protection of a Navy, our Commerce has experienced a great and unexampled increase, although exposed to all the interruptions, which flow from a maritime war amongst the nations with whom we have the most intercourse. 2d. That the extravagant effects in relation to its protection and encouragement, which are frequently ascribed to our former Navy, are altogether fallacious, and unsupported by fact. It was well observed by THOMAS PAINE, more than thirty years since, " that Neutrality would always be a safer Convoy for the Trade of America, than a Man of War."— The events of the last ten years, have demonstrated the truth of his position.