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AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED JUNE 5, 1819,

In the Chamber of the House of Representatives,

By **RICHARD BLAND LEE, Esq.**

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE COMMITTEE OF
ARRANGEMENTS.

FELLOW CITIZENS :

THE artillery of the nation hath solemnly proclaimed, in tones of thunder, throughout the vast bounds of the empire, the forty-third anniversary of that day which gave birth to our Republic; and we, uniting in the universal joy, have assembled, with pious and thankful hearts, to commemorate the sacred epoch. Though a period long in the life of individual man, it is short in the age of nations. Short as it is, it has been filled with the most important events: momentous in their effects on human society, but peculiarly auspicious to this our favored country.

At this propitious time, when neither foreign hostility vexes our shores, nor internal discord divides our people into malignant and exasperated parties; when brotherly concord and mutual confidence, the fruit of mutual virtue and of mutual efforts to maintain our common freedom, and to promote our common interests, have banished every angry passion and corroding suspicion; when each citizen "reposes under his own vine and his own fig tree, and there is none to make him afraid;" when the safety and stability of our nation seem to be impregably established on the foundations of liberty—a liberty, whose broad base is *union, concord, and justice*; at such a time it must be peculiarly gratifying and edifying to look back on the storms by which we have been tossed, and on the perils from which we have escaped: like the happy mariner who, having gained his port,

turns his delighted eye on the "ruffian" billows which had threatened to engulf him.

In this retrospect, it seems to be particularly proper to bring under our view the causes which produced the severance of these States from the British empire, and the generous motives which urged our wise and gallant fathers to the perilous and magnanimous act. These are unfolded, in terms the most sincere, the most fervid, the most solemn, the most dignified and sublime, in that Declaration which has been so emphatically read to you, and so forcibly impressed on your minds. From this exposition it appears, that no ordinary injuries induced, and that no grovelling motives, no vain or sordid ambition, no lust of conquest and of spoil, tarnished the conduct of the founders of our present liberty.

Born in the enjoyment of freedom, they sought only the continuance of that enjoyment, protected by the same government and laws under which they had derived their existence. A separation from the land of their fathers, who, under all vicissitudes, and through a lapse of ages, had kept alive the lamp of liberty, when it had become extinct in the rest of the world; who had endeavored, at the close of the seventeenth century, to establish it on a durable and impregnable basis; under whose auspices the goodly country which they possessed was peopled, protected and fostered; who introduced into it British liberty and British law; and from whom they imbibed their knowledge of social rights, and the spirit to defend them—such a separation was not only avoided with solicitude, but when compelled, by a refusal of connection, by the parent country, except on terms which made them slaves, was attended with indescribable anguish and distress.

But, in choosing between liberty and slavery, our virtuous ancestors had no hesitation. The ties of blood, the endearments of kindred, and the bonds of language and of interest, were at once broken asunder, and sacrificed on the altar of freedom.

No present suffering, no oppressive privation was felt. Light and trivial were the taxes attempted to be imposed. It was not the weight of these which induced our fathers to unfurl the standard of resistance; and, after exhausting every effort at reconciliation, by the most dutiful and affectionate appeals to the King, the Parliament, and People of Great Britain, to assume an equal station amongst the nations of the world. They repelled and spurned the principle avowed, "that the Parliament of Great Britain had a right to bind, by their laws, the American Colonies in all cases whatsoever." A principle which annihilated, as to them, the bulwark of Bri-

tish liberty—namely, “that taxes could only be imposed “by representatives, freely chosen by those who were “taxed.” Yes; not any practical evils then felt, but the fatal consequences which must result to their descendants, numerous future generations, from an acquiescence in the exercise of such a power, whose boundless sweep prostrated all the dearest privileges of a British subject, & constituted, at once, the freemen of America the abject vassals of a foreign dominion, induced their resistance.

To prevent this humiliation—to maintain the freedom of their country pure and uncontaminated—such, my fellow citizens, was the precious object for which our fathers fought; such the holy and generous motives which animated them in the perilous and doubtful conflict.

To their virtue, their fortitude; to their toils and heart-rending sacrifices; to their blood, freely and copiously shed, do we owe that liberty, and those multifarious blessings which we now possess. What a debt of gratitude have they heaped upon us! They are in the tomb—to them we can never pay it. Let us, however, endeavor to pay it to future generations, by cherishing the memory of their actions, by imitating their virtues, and by transmitting to our posterity, unimpaired, that liberty, which they so dearly purchased and bequeathed to us. Ample is the field of glory before us: Though to surpass we can never ~~be~~, let it be our unceasing effort to equal our fathers in virtue, ~~in~~ in self-denial, in patriotic sacrifices—above all, in ~~mutual~~ in self-bearance, sympathy and benevolence. Let, then, the demon faction be forever banished from this land of freedom. Here let thought range from man to man, unfettered and unrestrained. Thus let divine and fearless truth fix her empire amongst us. Then the only enquiry concerning each other will be, “is he honest, is he capable.” Such were our fathers—such be their sons; and such happily, at this time, they are.

I feel, my fellow citizens, as I proceed, the grandeur of the subject growing upon me; and myself, at every step, more incapable of rendering justice to it. For who can speak the praises of our fathers? Who can find words equal to their virtue, their courage, their perseverance, and their wisdom? The rich mind and brilliant fancy of him,* who, unfortunately for you and me, declined the task to-day, would have been hardly equal to it. My feeble strength sinks under the weight.

When we look at the relative power of the contending parties; the American Colonies feeble, poor, without arms as well as without money; divided into thirteen separ-

*Mr. Wirt, Attorney General.

ate governments; with a population spread thinly over a boundless territory; ignorant of each other; unassimilated in manners; unconnected by interests or common pursuits; and without a common head to direct their efforts—when we compare such a people, with the mighty monarchy of Britain, just triumphant over the two greatest potentates of Europe, and whose vast empire embraced under its dominion parts of the four quarters of the globe; with a government full of resources, in science, in men, in money, and in arms; with numerous disciplined armies and powerful fleets at its disposal; what fortitude must it have required in our fathers, calmly to have looked such danger in the face, boldly to have thrown the gauntlet of defiance, and risked both life and liberty on the issue. It is an act of firm, deliberate courage, unparalleled in the history of man.

Here we must not pass by thy capital, Massachusetts: Boston stands foremost in the glorious struggle: she first broke the oppressor's rod—she was the first victim of his ire: she led the way; her firm and patient virtue first rallied around her the sons of Massachusetts—then spread from place to place her generous ardor, till the thirteen colonies made her's the common cause. What praise is due to her Adamses, her Hancocks, her Quincys, her Otises, and an host of wise and virtuous citizens, who then marched foremost in the ^{hour of danger} issue of the long and arduous

~~Bold as war~~ ^{then} followed, proved that our fathers had neither miscalculated the resources of their country, nor the virtue of their fellow-citizens. Under the conduct of a military chief, pure as the cause which he defended, final success crowned the generous effort.

If time permitted, it would be a pleasing task to recount the appalling dangers which were overcome—the unequalled privations which were endured—the noble sacrifices of blood and treasure which were made, and the alternate defeats and victories which fill that eventful period when America fought for liberty and Britain for dominion. But these are themes which belong to the splendid and faithful historian and to the lofty bard. Let it suffice for the present, that the American commander, displaying courage unshaken by disaster—patience not to be subdued—caution not to be surprised—and enterprise which astounded his enemy, brought, after an eight years' war, to submission the legions of Britain, till then victorious o'er the world, and secured to these United States their present rank among the nations of the earth.

It is due, however, to truth & candor, to say, that the opportune and efficient aid of the King of France, in men & money, contributed not a little to our success. Though

the governing motive of this assistance may not have been so much a desire to establish our liberty as to humble and to cripple a powerful and dominant rival, it was not the less useful & important to us, & deserves our lasting gratitude.

But, were our dangers past when war had ceased, and the independence of these states was acknowledged?

What had we left? A wasted and dilapidated country, & every resource exhausted. Thirteen independent sovereignties, each supreme within the limits of its territorial jurisdiction, exercised the powers of government. A Congress, it is true, of the confederated states, existed. It was nominally clothed with the authority of managing the national concerns, both foreign and domestic; but the means necessary were to be voluntarily furnished by the states, on the requisitions of that body. Congress did its duty; it called upon the states for their contributions to the common fund. The states were deaf to those calls. The danger having ceased, a torpid apathy succeeded to exertion, to duty and honor. The government of the United States could, therefore, scarcely obtain on its own credit the means of meeting its most urgent current expenses, and it was wholly unable to pay the debts of the nation, even the most sacred—that to their brave and suffering army; which, goaded to despair by the supposed neglect and ingratitude of their country, in whose service they had met every peril, endured nakedness and hunger, and wasted property and health, discovered symptoms of mutiny, even in the camp, and under the eye of Washington. But the paternal voice of their beloved chief, always heard with reverence, in a moment recalled their wavering fidelity to the standard of honor and patriotism. They again reposed on the gratitude of their country. Congress, sensible of their just claims, urged with zeal by the commander in chief, but unable, from the feeble texture of their powers, to afford immediate relief, could only pledge the nation to a future and ample remuneration. The brave defenders of their country, imitating the great example of their leader, and guided by his counsels, accepted from an impoverished people a promise, in lieu of the substantial rewards to which they were entitled, and instantly sunk the soldier in the citizen.

This danger overcome, the army disbanded, and the civil authorities of the nation left in the uncontrolled possession of all the powers to provide for the general welfare, Washington, having repaired to Congress and restored to the hands of the nation (its liberty established) the sword with which he had been entrusted for its protection, again sought, after an eight years' absence, the shades of his beloved retreat.

But, were our dangers yet passed? or rather did they not thicken with encreasing gloom?

The states neglected their federal duties. The faith of the nation was violated to their faithful army and other public creditors. The states treated with contempt the authority of Congress: the states, between themselves, made conflicting regulations, generating jealousy, distrust, and hate. Nay, a general dissolution of the ties of moral obligation pervaded the society, and even laws were passed prostrating the rights of property. The good and the wise, throughout the nation, mourned this progress to evil, and began to fear that a revolution, so gloriously achieved, might prove a curse instead of a blessing to their country. Amid this gloom, in Virginia, under the auspices of Madison, who then laid the foundations of an imperishable fame, and established the most solid claims to his country's gratitude, the first attempt was made to arrest these accumulating ills.

A convention of deputies from the several states was proposed, to digest some uniform system for the regulation of commerce. Deputies only from five states met. Being too few in number to execute the object of their meeting, and finding moreover the disease too extensive and too radical to admit of a cure within the compass of their powers, they wisely determined to recommend to the nation the appointment of a general convention to take into consideration the deplorable condition of their country, and to provide a complete and durable remedy. Fortunately for America, this recommendation was generally adopted. This august assembly of statesmen met, and Washington presided. From their wisdom emanated the constitution which now rules these United States. Wisely as it was framed for the common good, a difficult task remained—its adoption by the states. State pride, state jealousy, combining with every wayward human passion, almost stifled in its birth this last hope of patriotism. Even in Virginia, the great author of the measure, the people were nearly divided. But a kind Providence ordained that wisdom should prevail—that virtue and order should triumph; and this stupendous fabric of human liberty was, I trust, immoveably established.

But vain was the adoption of the constitution, unless the nation derived from a wise and firm administration a relief from the evils which had so long degraded and oppressed it.

But where was to be found that weight of character, that popularity built on the most faithful, substantial, and eminent services—that patriotism, that purity, that awe and majesty of virtue—that sage foresight & solid wisdom taught in the schools of trial, adversity, and danger,

sufficient to control the tempest of conflicting passions, which threatened to annihilate the very elements of social order? Where were these to be found but in the firm, the pious Washington? Those who condemned fortunately united in opinion with those who approved the constitution, that he alone was capable of giving to the yet untried system a safe and salutary impulse. We, therefore, find him called, by the unanimous voice of three millions of people, to fill the station of first functionary of the regenerated Republic. How could he reject a summons so solemn, an appeal so impressive. Already, too, had anarchy and wild misrule* reared their hideous banner, and to the northern section of our states threatened desolation and ruin. However anxious for peaceful retirement, in a crisis so difficult and dangerous, it was impossible for Washington, without "attainting the lustre of his former name," to refuse his hand to a distressed and falling country. Duty therefore vanquishing every other feeling, he fled to her rescue. w

Repairing to the station to which he had been called in a manner so sacred and so forcible; summoning around his person the courage, the wisdom, and the virtue of the nation, and strenuously assisted in the legislative councils by the faithful representatives of the people; under his guidance order, as it were, by magic, rose out of chaos—impartial justice held again her even scales—confidence revived the drooping spirit of desponding industry—"yellow harvests shed again their mellow lustre o'er our fields"—commerce filled the ocean with its swelling sails—and the hum of happy labor was heard in every busy haunt. The war-worn soldier, too, with eyes beaming with joy, saw at length that liberty for which he fought and bled, securely fixed, and felt in every pore his country's gratitude cheering his declining age. Under thy plastic hand, immortal Hamilton, a renovated credit restored to health, to strength, to power, a sinking people. Foreign nations beheld with deep and silent wonder a change so sudden and so grand. Abroad, respect succeeded to contempt; at home, wealth to poverty, power to weakness, happiness to misery, confidence to distrust. Nor was there a corner of these U. States so remote and inaccessible, to which the benign rays of the government did not extend its vivifying influence.

Some may forget, but we cannot all forget, the man to whom most, next to one, we owed these blessings. Though cut off by too severe a doom, in the meridian of his days, in the splendor of his virtues, from family, friends, and country, he yet had lived enough for fame.

*Shay's Rebellion in Massachusetts.

In war, taught by Washington the way to glory, on the perilous edge of battle he stood, the intrepid defender of his country's rights ; in peace, a statesman firm and incorrupt, he planned with zeal, with courage, and with wisdom, her happiness and glory.†

But hardly was our political bark moored in port, escaped from the tempests by which it had been buffeted and almost foundered, when the French revolution, like a vast volcano, began to forebode, by distant and hollow rumblings, that dreadful explosion which we have seen shake Europe to its foundations, and desolate the fairest countries with its destructive lava. Even our remote and peaceful shores felt the shock. Under the garb of liberty, it approached us ; liberty dear to the American heart. The fair outside concealed the rottenness within ; but it could not deceive the Argus eyes of Washington. While others hailed the Revolution as a new Saturnian age returned, his penetrating eye found in it no stable base whereon to build the temple of liberty. The prostrate power of the Bourbons was succeeded by an impious licentiousness more terrible than despotism itself. Through havoc, blood, and rapine, each successive party waded to power. Religion, morality, justice, virtue, honor, innocence, learning, and patriotism, were whelmed under one common ruin. The nations of Europe rose to check the mighty mischief. Even Britons, in their sea girt isles, trembled for their safety, and prepared to meet in arms the stern defiance of their fierce antagonist. Then, America, thy Washington lived—thy faithful Polinurus stood at the helm. With an eagle eye, he descried at distance the coming storm, and prepared his feeble bark to meet its utmost rage. Exploring in his capacious mind the path which justice, honor, duty, interest, safety, liberty required, with firm, unyielding fortitude, he took his course. He declared our nation neutral in the dreadful conflict.

Disappointed in the object of his mission, by this act, a daring Minister of France, mistaking our ardent wishes that she might find the way to stable liberty, and taste like us the sweets of free well ordered government, for a zeal to fight her battles and avenge her wrongs, with bold audacious insolence strove, within the limits of our territory, to exercise a sovereign power, and to sever from the government the people. Little did he know the men, the

†Alexander Hamilton, then Colonel and Aid-de-Camp to General Washington, stormed and took one of the enemy's main redoubts at the siege of York, previous to the surrender of Cornwallis. His bravery on this and every other proper military occasion, and his conduct as first Secretary of the Treasury, is particularly alluded to in the text.

government, or the people whom thus he outraged. Then Jefferson, second to his Chief, shone with splendid and unfading lustre; with firmness, with dignity, with all the power of eloquence and majesty of reason, he repelled the base assault, and maintained his country's character and rights. The nation too, proud of its liberty, frowned indignant on the attempt, and France, appalled, recalled the offending minister.

But our difficulties were not with France alone; the animosity against Britain, excited by our revolutionary conflict, had not entirely subsided. The incomplete execution of the treaty of peace on their part, founded, as alleged by them, on an infraction by us, had kept alive the hostile feelings generated by the sufferings of the war. There were, therefore, not a few who panted for the opportunity of revenge: there was also a numerous body who sincerely believed the cause of France, the cause of liberty and mankind. Nor were there wanting those cormorants who in every age and in every country feed on the agitations and convulsions of society as their natural aliment. When to these causes was added a flagrant and violent attack on our commerce, by the British Orders in Council of November, '93—it was not wonderful that the most ardent desire for war with that nation burst forth at once. Washington beheld with deep concern, the tendency of so many causes to produce a second conflict with a people whose maritime means and pecuniary resources enabled them, though they could not conquer, to annoy and cripple our power, and to check our progress to prosperity and strength, to happiness and security. All the resources of his mighty mind were therefore employed to prevent so destructive a contest.

The British government having hearkened to his remonstrances, and declared that their orders were neither intended as an insult or injury to our country, but were merely directed against the enemy, having promised, if any improper procedure had taken place in the execution of them, that it should be corrected; in fine, having revoked them, he felt it his duty, under such circumstances, to arrest certain measures under discussion before the legislature, the adoption of which might inevitably lead to war, by the appointment of a special embassy, not only to demand retribution for recent injuries, but to propose a complete and final adjustment of all matters in controversy.

John Jay, Chief Justice of the United States, distinguished for his patriotism, his firmness, his wisdom, his eminent services, and the unblemished purity of his private life, was wisely selected for this weighty and solemn mission.

He happily succeeded, by an able negotiation, in settling by treaty, on fair, just, and reasonable terms, all the material points in dispute between the two countries.—Our western posts, so long detained, were surrendered; compensation to our merchants was secured in all cases of unlawful capture, and our commerce was placed on a safe and advantageous footing. This treaty was submitted to the Senate who advised a ratification.

Notwithstanding this solemn approbation, the fautors of war still attempted to control the decision of the President. Resolves, addresses—remonstrances innumerable were presented to the Chief Magistrate. Like a rock he stood unmoved amid the agitated billows. Consulting only his duty, and looking steadfastly to the safety and interests of his country, after deep and mature deliberation, became his awful sanction. The nation was satisfied, approved, and obeyed.

Here, my fellow-citizens, let us pause for a moment & look back with pious wonder & gratitude, on the dark & lowering tempests which enveloped us, & on the awful and tottering precipices on which we stood, and from which we have escaped unurt. We have seen the progress of the French revolution; we have seen its ephemeral governments built on the phantom, not the reality of liberty, and evanescent as dreams, though stained with blood and rapine, pass away. We have seen a mighty military despotism rise on their ruins, incorporating in one wide domain friends, allies, republics, principdoms, kingdoms, hierarchies—and we have seen this stupendous fabric crumble into dust.

What might not now have been our miserable condition, if the wisdom & firmness of Washington had not secured our peace and established our neutrality. If other counsels had then prevailed, instead now of boasting of our happy constitution, instead of enjoying our present freedom, instead of the immense empire which we govern, like many other states, we might have been erased from the list of nations.

It would be pleasing to dwell on the other acts of this great man's administration, but time will not permit;—volume would not do justice to them. For what did he neglect to do which could give stability to our Union, vigor to our government, permanence to our liberty, prosperity to our people, and safety to our empire? Nor ought praise to be withheld from those wise and virtuous Legislators, his firm coadjutors, who gave to him, through all those eventful scenes, their cordial and vigorous support. Nor from the citizens of our republic, who were ever found faithful and obedient to the government of their choice. One measure, however, likely to have

the most important and permanent effects on the character and safety of our nation, which was adopted during that period, I cannot pass by:—the commencement of that navy, so wisely nurtured and extended under President Adams*, which we have found so useful since—and the effulgence of whose glory has irradiated the most distant seas, and which will prove, in time to come, our proud, our safe and cheap defence against territorial aggression, and commercial injury and fraud. Here pardon me if I name one other measure then adopted, of no trivial consequence to the durability of our union, the convenience of our citizens, and to the safe and free administration of our national constitution in all its parts, legislative, executive, and judiciary; namely, the establishment of the permanent seat of our government in a district, subject to the exclusive controul and legislation of the Congress of the United States, and in a position salubrious, central, equally accessible to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west, and magnificent as the great empire of which it is the head. Here, under the watchful protection of its paternal government, may all the generous social virtues of our land concentrate themselves. Here may science and every useful art fix their abode. Here may justice, attended by mercy, establish her awful scales; and here, above all, may pure and undefiled religion erect her holy altars. So that to all future generations, the City of Washington shall remain not only the monument of our nation's gratitude to the founder of our liberty, but a perpetual memorial of his patriotism, his virtue, and his piety, and an ever-enduring pattern of all that is excellent, amiable, and benevolent in man. Thus, may "peace be always within her walls, and plenteousness within her palaces."

It was the happiness of Washington, in retiring from

*John Adams, one of the first promoters of resistance to the oppressions of the British government in Boston, and a member from Massachusetts of the first Congresses, of course of that which declared our Independence—afterwards our Minister at the Hague—where he was very useful to the public cause, by his negotiations with the United Provinces: and had the honor ~~of~~ in conjunction with Franklin and Jay, to conclude the treaty of peace with Great Britain, which established our Independence. He was then appointed the first Minister to the court of Great Britain, from which post retiring, he was called to fill the office of first Vice President of the United States for eight years, and afterwards succeeded General Washington in the Presidency. In all which stations he exhibited himself the wise statesman, the steady, virtuous, undeviating patriot and firm Magistrate. The first glory acquired by our navy was under his administration.

office, to leave his country under a free, wise, and energetic government, in full organization and operation; at peace with foreign nations and with the Indian tribes; prosperous at home, and respected abroad; and, to all future Presidents, his own great example for their imitation.

Here am I tempted—but my feeble pinions cannot soar to the lofty pinnacle of his greatness. Our shield in war, our guide and ornament in peace, his own great actions must proclaim his worth.

Not till this epoch were our dangers passed; not till then was our liberty secure and our empire confirmed—after twenty years of toil, of blood, of intestine agitation and discord, and foreign danger.

If during that period the fastidious and hypercritical politician finds any measures adopted to rescue our country from its degraded condition, not altogether such as he may approve, let his generosity impute them to the intrinsic difficulties of the times—not to the want of wisdom or virtue in the actors: let him be rather thankful for the good which they established and transmitted to us; let him not exact from erring mortals a perfection which belongs alone to Deity.

It is from this epoch we must date that unprecedented course of prosperity, which, in the short lapse of twenty two years, has raised our country to its present stupendous strength, grandeur, and importance, furnishing a phenomenon in human existence, the like of which cannot be found on the records of time.

It is due to the successors of Washington, that, through the most tempestuous scenes, when the governments of the civilized world were convulsed to their deepest foundations; when the ancient monuments of justice were overturned; when those sacred laws which aforesaid had stayed the devastations of war and bridled his fury were no longer respected; the praise is due to them, in times like these—their fellow-citizens, too, torn into acrimonious parties, and divided in opinion—that, with trivial interruptions and transient inconveniences, they preserved, for fourteen years, the peace of their country, and continued the current of its prosperity.

However our citizens may have been divided, however various may have been their opinions concerning other measures of the administration of our third President, there is one act of vital national importance, which must command the unqualified approbation of all—the prompt, the bloodless, the peaceable acquisition of Louisiana: an empire in itself, embracing the finest climates, the most fertile lands, and majestic rivers of the world, and affording a safe outlet to the ocean for the products

of the immense regions of the west. This act alone, if none other existed, would be sufficient to immortalize the name of Jefferson.

But when he retired, our internal agitations and external difficulties had not ceased. The two mighty belligerents of Europe, France and Britain, seem to have determined, by the multiplied wrongs committed on our commerce, on the pretext of retaliating each the injuries of his enemy, to force us from our neutrality. The war with Britain, which closed this state of things, is too recent to be forgotten by you. However the opinions of our people may have been divided as to the propriety of that war, declared by our rulers; or whether, in reality, it was necessary or unnecessary, avoidable or unavoidable, it having been the authorized and deliberate act of the representatives of the nation, it was the duty of all to submit and to obey.

Though by the late peace we gained an express declaration by Britain of none of the most important principles contended for by her, we have as yet been relieved from the application of them to our injury and annoyance, and soon shall be too powerful to fear any.

But it has not been without other consequences, in value more than equal to the cost and sacrifices which attended it.

It has, above all, demonstrated the fidelity of all descriptions of our people to their government. However divided, in the exercise of that precious privilege of freemen—the right of examining and judging of the conduct of their rulers, as to the policy of that war—they united heart and hand in bringing it to a speedy and honorable close. Party distinctions were instantly merged in the danger of our country. The only contest between individuals was, who should most faithfully serve it, who most valiantly fight its battles! All were found faithful; all were found brave.* To this cause, more than any other, do we owe the present happy extinction of long continued party animosities: and *blasted* be the tongue which shall attempt to excite again the ire of citizen against citizen, of brother against brother.

It has also had the most happy effect in destroying local jealousies and sectional antipathies, and in generating, in lieu thereof, an enlarged generous national feeling, not less important to the strength and character of our government than to the harmony and prosperity of our people.

* The Orator was sensible that there were a few exceptions; but they were so few, and of so little moment, that he wished them rather to be forgotten than remembered.

It also developed the resources and military character of our country. The most potent nation of the earth was foiled both on the land and on the water. Lakes Erie, Ontario, and Champlain, and the expanded ocean, attest the prowess of our navy; while Chippawa, Bridgewater, Fort Erie, Plattsburg, Baltimore, the Thames, and Orleans, will remain eternal monuments of the bravery of our army. We lost none of our country; but gained from the hostile Indians, the allies of our enemy, cessions of land more than sufficient to defray the expenses of the war. So that it ended without cost.

Thus President Madison had the happiness, in retiring from office, of leaving his country at peace abroad, united at home, with increased character, and irradiated with glory. In this state of things, our present Chief Magistrate succeeded to the Presidency: and we have experienced little interruption to the even and tranquil current of our affairs.

His administration, however, will be conspicuously distinguished in all future time, by the important treaty with Spain, recently concluded by him, which secures to our citizens indemnification for the spoliation committed on our commerce, under her authority or with her permission, the cession of East and West Florida, and the satisfactory establishment of the boundaries of Louisiana.

This treaty, when ratified by Spain, will settle all the important points heretofore in contestation between the United States and the governments of Europe: and will give an extent and arrondissement to our empire sufficient to satisfy the most grasping ambition, and to require ages of wise legislation to fill with improvement civilization, and liberty.

By this treaty, the United States will be happily relieved from all territorial collisions with the European powers, and the prospect of an interminable peace opens to our view. And thus, it may be the rare and happy fortune of President Monroe, at last, like Augustus Cæsar, to close the doors of the Temple of Janus.†

What an opportunity is now afforded for a fair experiment of our free and philanthropic institutions!

What an expansion may we not now give to the freedom and happiness of mankind, and to the pure and beneficent precepts of our meek, our holy, and evangelical faith!

Most weighty and responsible duties, therefore, devolve on our legislators from this period. We have al-

† The Temple of Janus was but twice shut from the time of Romulus to Augustus Cæsar, to wit, during Numa's peaccable reign and after the first Punic war.

ready an empire equal in extent to that of imperial Rome—but, like Rome, we have not waded through oceans of blood, we have not ravaged a world, we have not immolated countless millions of human victims, to obtain it. Ours is a peaceful and a bloodless conquest. Their art of government was war, their glory—blood. Our art of government is peace, our glory humanity.

Thus, possessing an empire so extensive, embracing the finest climates of the northern hemisphere, capable of producing every article necessary for the comfort, the convenience, and sustenance of man, we shall need little or no connection, even in commerce, with foreign countries, if we improve the vast resources of our own. Such improvement, and the commercial intercourse between the agricultural and manufacturing parts of it, would alone give all the necessary and most profitable employment to our pecuniary capital and to our navigation. And is it not worthy of consideration, whether the diminution of our intercourse with foreign nations, whose modes and notions of government, and whose manners are so different from our own, would not have the most salutary tendency in preserving untainted the industrious habits, and the pure and manly virtues of our citizens, and thereby perpetuating to the most remote future ages the happiness and freedom which we possess. Our present sufferings, from the too avid pursuit of foreign commerce, ought to be a warning to us. But this is a subject which belongs to those wise and virtuous men to whom our country has entrusted its destinies. Like the unsleeping vestal, they will watch over the sacred fire of our liberty. They will never suffer it to be extinguished. And, above all, will cherish, with unceasing care, the bland, the chaste, the innocent, temperate and uncloying blessings conferred by its beneficent warmth, in preference to wealth, to power, and to the evanescent glare of wild ambition's glory.—

“ Oh, yet happiest, if we seek no happier state,
 “ And know to know no more.”