

AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED AT PLAINFIELD, JULY 4, 1812.

BEFORE THE

Washington Benevolent Societies

OF

MONTPELIER, CALAIS, PLAINFIELD AND BARRE,

BEING THE

THIRTY-SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY

OF

American Independence.

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An Oration.

TO commemorate events which have been productive of great national benefits, has been a custom from the earliest period of the world. To do this in a manner suited to the character of the times, and the genius and habits of the people, seems to have been the study and design. Among the ancients, statues of brass, and columns of marble, were erected in honour of distinguished personages, exposed in some public place, to preserve the memory of their worth. Pyramids, being the symbols of immortality, were sometimes erected to perpetuate the memory of singular events, and sometimes, to transmit to posterity the glory and magnificence of Princes. Festivals were also frequent; such as days of Thanksgiving for delivery from wars, plagues, and national evils. The Romans had feasts in honour of their numerous deities; and others, to give thanks to the gods for benefits received, to implore their assistance, or to appease their wrath. Little history being written in those days, or at least published, one object of festivals was, to preserve the remembrance of things; and this in a way which answered in some respects the same purpose as that of reading, and of books. But since the art of Printing has been discovered, the means of education more diffused, and opportunities of acquiring it become less difficult, and their improvement more common, the memory of distinguished events is transmitted to posterity in the works of Historians, the songs of Poets, and the public speeches of Orators. Beside these, external shows, formal ceremonies, and public processions, still form among the moderns a mate-

rial part of the means established to commemorate important events and distinguished eras in their national prosperity and existence. In England and other European Monarchies, they celebrate with gaudy splendour, and magnificent parade, their coronations, installments, and consecrations. But we meet, Fellow Citizens, neither to celebrate, like the ancients, the romance of departed Heroes, nor the feasts of heathen Gods; not like the slaves of Royalty, to commemorate the building of Thrones, nor the coronation of Kings. We convene with grateful hearts, and with the animated joy of Independent Freemen, to Celebrate the achievements of our Fathers, and the nativity of Liberty. And what spectacle can be more magnificent than to behold a great people thus annually assembling to consecrate the anniversary of their sovereignty. On this occasion every patriotic heart, every American bosom, beat high with a just and noble pride. We still hear the illustrious Fathers of our country, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of their conduct, declare the United States "*are, and of right ought to be, Free and Independent.*" The numerous injuries, the multiplied abuses, the cruel oppression, the tyrannical usurpation, which, at length exhausted forbearance, and drove to resistance, present themselves afresh to our minds. We pass in review those great and extraordinary personages who then burst upon the world; who endowed with every virtue and every talent that could fit them for the arduous task in which they were engaged, appeared to be expressly commissioned by Heaven, to rule the storm of revolution. We remember how painful was the struggle, how terrible the conflict which obtained our triumph: We recollect to imagination all the distressing scenes and deplorable calamities of the War: We see our harbours filled with hostile fleets; our fields ravaged; our cities wrapt in flames; a numerous, veteran, and sanguinary enemy let loose upon us; our army thinned by battles, wasted by sickness, distracted by treachery and desertion, a prey to every species of privation, and reduced to the last misery next despair. Even then, however, this little army did not despair. Conscious of the holy cause for which they contended,

they exhibited a spectacle of patient endurance and invincible bravery, the wonder of an admiring universe. Driven from Long Island, from the heights of Harlem, from White Plains, pursued from post to post, even beyond the Delaware, they would often turn upon the insulting foe, and, mingling their blood with the melting lava of the cannon's mouth, foretell them of Trenton, of Germantown, and Monmouth. But, it is unnecessary to recount to you the many deeds of valour performed, or the unexampled hardships endured, by our brave countrymen, in struggling through this glorious contest.--- Some of you probably witnessed a part; many of you have heard them from your fathers; all of you have read them; for they are written on the splendid page of history, and stand there recorded to be handed down to generations yet unborn, for their admiration and instruction.

As the scenes of the revolution are familiar to the recollection of you all; as you all understand that it resulted in the establishment of our liberty and independence as a nation, it may not be unprofitable to devote the time assigned us on this day, to a brief notice of the principal events, which have transpired since the close of the revolutionary struggle, and to such reflections as the past and present condition of our country may suggest for our benefit and improvement.

At the conclusion of the contest, which had called into action the most splendid talents, and produced a display of the purest patriotism, it became the sedulous endeavour, as it was the chief desire, of all, to provide effectually for the permanent security of that liberty and independence the valour of our countrymen had so gloriously achieved. Observation and experience soon discovered the defective nature of the old articles of confederation, which had for some time held the several States together by a "rope of sand," and satisfactorily proved, that the system was by no means fitted to so important a purpose, and but little calculated to perpetuate the enjoyment of such invaluable blessings. All concurred in opinion, that the circumstances and condition of the country, and,

above all, the imperious necessity of the case, demanded the provision of some substitute, less objectionable in form, and better adapted in its nature and tendency to produce the intended end. A convention was therefore called, composed of the purest patriots and most eminent statesmen ; of men, who had not only distinguished themselves in the cause of freedom, and given the most unequivocal proof of love of country, but who, from their education, their experience, and means of information, were sages in council as well as heroes in combat. The great object was to form a system of government, which, while it should be equal to the exigences and defence of a great and powerful nation, should secure to each individual, and to every class of men, to the high and the low, the rich and the poor, their equal rights, together with the highest possible degree of consistent and rational liberty. With no party prejudices or selfish views to interrupt or distract their deliberations, and influenced by a spirit of mutual concession for the good of the whole, the proceedings of this venerable body, originating in the most disinterested patriotism, and dictated by a sacred regard to the interests and happiness of the people, resulted in the formation of a Constitution, which is emphatically the charter of our rights, and paladium of our liberties. By this Constitution, which partook of all the democratic principles, that would be consistent with our foreign relations, our commercial interests, the extent of our territory, necessary despatch, and means of defence, our government was made a Representative Republic. It was calculated, in an eminent degree, to meet the wishes and satisfy the desires of the great body of the people, who sought for nothing, in the formation of the constitution and the organization of the government under it, but the permanent and effectual security of their liberties, and the independence of their country. Private ambition and party prejudice were not then allowed to supercede merit, and engross offices to be exercised only for sordid emolument and personal aggrandizement. Political intrigues, and electioneering misrepresentations, had not contaminated the public sentiment, and perverted the public opinion ; and, in selecting men to fill the various offices

of government, the only inquiry was, "is the candidate honest, is he capable, is he faithful to the constitution?" The consequence was, what was natural and inevitable, that men of the same principles as those appointed to frame the constitution, were chosen to carry it into effect, and administer the government under it; and WASHINGTON, the friend and father of his country, in whom all hearts were then united, was, by the unanimous voice of his countrymen, called to preside in the first and most dignified office in their power to bestow.

At this period of political harmony and union, it was no reproach to be called a *Federalist*; a term, as a correct writer has significantly remarked, evidently derived from the constitution itself, and properly denoting an advocate and supporter of it. For, as the first compact was called articles of confederation, so, in pursuance of the same idea, was the constitution termed the *Federal Constitution*; and, of course, the successive friends and supporters of both were denominated *Federalists*. To have used the term *Republican* in contradistinction to that of *Federalist*, would then have been deemed a most egregious absurdity---since every thing important that is now denoted or intended by the name *Republican*, was then fully comprehended and clearly understood by the term *Federalist*. He, who honestly, and from pure motives, assumes the appellation of *Republican*, undoubtedly means to be understood, that he is a friend to the revolution, and solicitous to secure and perpetuate the liberty and independence of his country, by a faithful adherence to the legitimate principles of the *Federal Constitution*, as meant and intended by its framers. *Federalists* mean the same; for they were leaders in the revolution; were the framers of the Constitution; were first appointed to execute it and administer the government under it, and have uniformly professed and avowed the same principles. Yet, "strange, passing strange," these two odious terms, *Federalist* and *Republican*, have, in an enlightened age, divided an enlightened nation into two powerful parties, which, by unyielding conflict, and continual

endeavours to supplant and destroy each other, threaten the subversion of that constitution and government they both profess to support. It is impossible this should be assigned to any ordinary or common cause ; and, to those ignorant of the important events which have contributed to it, and of the incessant and indefatigable exertions used to produce and continue this division, it must be a matter of astonishment and wonder.

The Federal Government began to exist just at the birth of that direful revolution in France, which has drenched Europe in blood, and caused, even here, the most calamitous troubles. In the beginning it was burthened with a debt, exceeding Seventy Millions of Dollars, entailed upon it by the old confederacy, and contracted in the revolutionary war. It had of course to organize extensive systems of revenue for the payment of the interest accruing upon that debt, and to defray the ordinary expenses of government. It had to bring into operation all those complicated departments of *trade*, of *justice* and *police*, necessary in a government embracing such an immense territory and population, and rendered peculiarly difficult by the jarring interests of so many rival sovereignties. It was, moreover, encompassed with difficulties and dangers, to repel which required the most vigilant attention, the most rigorous efforts of an administration directed by the wisest and best of men. An Indian war ravaged the frontier ; and the strength, as well as the success of that savage enemy, alarmed and afflicted the nation. The treaty of peace of '83 with Great Britain had remained unexecuted on either side, and various causes of irritation and offence had brought the country to the brink of a second war with that power. On the other hand, Louis XVI. the late King of France, successively lost his power, his crown, and his life ; and the prevailing factions, which alternately rose and perished upon the ruins of his throne, strove, by every menace and every artifice, to force the United States into an active participation in their war, as it was then called, of universal liberty. In addition to the dangers arising from British power and French perfidy, the government found itself surrounded

with factious parties, and obstructed in all its operations by divided councils ; nor was it long before insurrection reared its rebellious front in our land, boldly set at defiance the laws, and menaced the very existence of the government. Yet, amidst all these conflicting elements of foreign intrigue, internal confusion, and open opposition, the principles and policy of WASHINGTON, at no period, suffered the government to sink with despondence, or to become the prey of traitorous machinations. The Indian war, which had so furiously raged, and was attended with such barbarous cruelties, was successfully terminated ; and treaties were formed with the savage tribes, by which their claims were adjusted, their rights rendered permanent, and the frontier settlements secured. The Algerine and other Barbary powers, who had committed piracies upon our extensive Mediterranean trade, were brought to discontinue their plundering warfare, and release the many Americans whom they held in the worst of bondage. Treaties of amity and commerce were formed with many of the European States ; one particularly with Great Britain, by which our disputes with that country were settled, indemnification made for spoliations on our commerce, and equal commercial privileges granted, which were productive of important advantages ; and also one with Spain, which finally established the boundary line between the territories of that power and the United States, and secured to us the before contested right to the river Mississippi, so important to the western country. Two rebellions, excited by foreigners and the enemies of the constitution and government, were quelled without the loss of any lives, though at the expense of some millions of dollars. The repeated attempts of the French to draw the United States into a war, and to create civil dissensions by alienating the people from their government, were happily frustrated ; their spoliations on our defenceless commerce finally repelled by manful resistance ; and their threats of tribute, of invasion, and partition, so insultingly made, effectually disconcerted. Many hundreds of necessary laws were enacted, which, embracing wide and various subjects of legislation, called for much time and much la-

hour to accomplish. The rays of science illumined the inmost recesses of our country, while the beams of useful knowledge spread among its obscurest inhabitants. The fine arts rose to a perfection scarcely excelled by ages of European refinement, and many branches of American manufacture seemed to rival foreign fabrics in extent and excellence. In every part of this vast country was to be witnessed the increase of comforts, of improvements, of wealth, of happiness; every where was to be seen industry rewarded with gain, and property secured by law. Our *neutrality* was maintained, our *peace* secured, *commerce* extended and protected, *agriculture* encouraged and improved, and *public faith* preserved. Thus, in the narrow compass of a dozen years, the principles and policy of Washington enabled the Federal government, environed, as it was, with so many adversaries, opposed by so many obstacles, and pressed by so many wants, to triumph over every difficulty, and elevate the American name and people to an altitude of glory and happiness, far surpassing what had ever been the felicity of any other nation.

In this state of things, and under circumstances so auspicious, did Mr. JEFFERSON enter upon the administration of our national affairs, who found not only the country thus prosperous and happy, but the government, as he declared in his inaugural speech, “in the full tide of successful experiment.” Here commenced a new era in our political concerns. An entire change, as it was supposed, was effected in the administration of the federal government, which, from its commencement had, in its measures and tendencies, protected us from the most threatening dangers, and procured for us the most substantial benefits. Mr. Jefferson had long been considered the head and leader of a party opposed to the general policy and principles of Washington, and, in some degree, as was suspected, devoted to the views of a foreign government.* A singular concurrence of circumstances produced

* As early as 1791, a paper was set up in Philadelphia and edited by a Clerk of Mr. Jefferson, while he himself

the rise, and aided the progress, of this party. It began to exist at the time Washington issued his proclamation of neutrality, which, although it rescued the nation from inevitable and ruinous war, although it was a second salvation to our country, was nevertheless denounced as a British measure, and as manifesting a settled hostility to France and to liberty. There were then many as ready to sacrifice the dearest interests of their country in a war for French freedom and French philosophy, as there are now many willing to prostrate our national honour, prosperity and independence, by making the United States the humble auxiliary of Bonaparte, in a war for conquest and the extension of French despotism. We had received from France, while a Monarchy, assistance in our revolutionary war; and now that she had become a sister Republic, struggling for her freedom against the coalesced powers of Europe, universal sympathy and interest were excited in her favour. The American people, feeling in their breasts the hallowed fire of freedom, and believing the French to be actuated by the same generous feelings, honestly, and with one accord, wished them success. In this temper we were not open to suspicion. It was impossible for us to imagine that what appeared to us to be a great and noble effort of more than twenty millions of people to become free, should be produced by any other than the most laudable desires of human nature. These were our feelings, when secret attempts were made to embroil us in a war with Great Britain, a nation with whom we had but just made peace, and with

was Secretary of State, in avowed opposition to the principles and policy of Washington's administration, which, through that source, was vilified by the grossest slanders and vilest misrepresentations. Mr. Jefferson also patronized Callender, and encouraged him in publishing the "Prospect before Us," a publication containing the most audacious libels upon Washington. Mr. Jefferson, who resided many years as a minister in France, and Mr. Madison, his successor, were both adopted French citizens by the National Convention.

whom we had then the most extensive commercial connections. Attempts were even made to enlist soldiers in our country, and to persuade our citizens to serve under the banners of France.* Inflammatory appeals were published to the people, while the most wicked and unprincipled endeavours were practising to separate them from their government, destroy their confidence in it, and thus raise to power men, who would be disposed to be more submissive and accommodating to her views. WASHINGTON, whose vigilance suffered nothing to pass unnoticed which affected his country, saw all this, and it excited his indignation. He informed the French Government, "that the Americans loved liberty; but it was not the liberty of deceiving others; it was not that liberty which sought to involve other nations in quarrels; and above all, it was not that liberty which, under the specious garb of civil freedom, sought to conquer and enslave the world." Accordingly, with his characteristic wisdom and firmness, he peremptorily refused to entertain any longer as a public ambassador, the man, who, while he was treated with respect and candour, was seeking to embroil this country in the dark politics, the endless, though unnecessary wars of ill-fated France. The idea of gratitude to her, Washington affirmed to be mistaken and preposterous. In his letter of the 16th of January, '97, to our minister at Paris, a copy of which he afterwards transmitted to Congress in a special message, he unfolds the whole truth respecting our obligations to France. Her object he proves to have been wholly selfish. That great man shews, that at the time the King of France joined the United States in the revolutionary war, our Independence had been, not only declared, but established; that his Majesty chose to consider the United States independent, "because

* *The French Minister, Genet, who arrived in this country in 1793, began fitting out privateers in our ports, and commissioning officers in the service of France, without the least ceremony, and even before he had been seen or accredited by our government. Washington forbade this, and requested his recall.*

his safety, the interest of his people, invariable policy, and, above all, the secret projects of the Court of London, imperiously laid him under the necessity." In the assistance she rendered us, France was guided exclusively by a view to her own interest. She saw in the revolution, or thought she saw, a fine opportunity for abridging the ascendent power of England by a separation of the colonies from her ; and, relying upon her superior dexterity in negotiating, she meditated the acquisition to herself of at least a moiety of the territory which now constitutes the United States. Accordingly, when the treaty of peace of '83, was upon the tapis, the most artful attempts were made by the French Court to wrest from the United States the fisheries, and to secure to France, besides the fisheries, all the territory east of the Mississippi, as far as the Allegany mountains. Congress, with more faith than sagacity, had passed a resolution binding our commissioners not to conclude a treaty of peace with England without the previous consent of France ; and France, adroitly availing herself of this error, carried on, unknown to our commissioners, a clandestine correspondence with the British Government, proposing, in fact, to that Government, to cheat the United States, by collusion, out of one half of her present dominions. This scheme, so infamous, and clearly demonstrating her selfish views in assisting us in our separation from England, was defeated by the vigilance, the discernment, and the firmness of our Commissioners, who, discovering the underplot, and manifesting to the French court a determination to dispense with the resolution of Congress, and conclude a peace with or without its consent, proceeded in the business, and soon accomplished the important object.* All this sufficiently shews that, however willing France had been to render us independent of Great Britain, her ancient enemy and rival, and there-

* See the letter of Jay and Adams, to the American Congress, explaining their motives, and justifying their proceedings, which, by a vote, was declared to be sufficiently satisfactory.

by to put an end to the predominant power of the latter, it had never been her intention that we should become independent of herself. In all her changes from monarchy to democracy, and through all shapes of civil government back to a military despotism, she has had but one object as it regarded the U. S. to render them the dependent and humble instrument of her purposes. Her conduct, towards us, therefore, whether covered over with flattering professions of friendship and fraternity, or aggravated by the domineering threats of a superior, has always been an insult upon our sovereignty, and hostile to our national peace, welfare and independence. Notwithstanding all this, the people, seemingly governed less by reason, than feeling, could not relinquish their attachments to France, or forget their prejudices against Great Britain; and Mr. Jefferson, and his party, adroitly availing themselves of these popular passions, were enabled to succeed in rendering the principles of *Washington* odious, and in engrossing to themselves all power in the several departments of government. Mr. Jefferson mounted the chair of state, and, departing from the policy of *Washington*, which had rendered our country prosperous and happy, he and his successor, pursued a system of measures that has reduced us to our present embarrassed and degraded condition.

This change in the administration, produced no immediate alteration in the prosperous state of our national affairs. There were, however, some measures not generally approved of, and which excited considerable agitation in the public mind. The repeal of the judiciary law, as it was called, was thought by many to be an unconstitutional attack upon the independence of the Judiciary, which, in all free governments, is the great pillar of liberty and security. The removal of the taxes from luxuries, such as loaf sugar, pleasure carriages, &c. and laying them, under the specious name of the Mediterranean Fund, on articles of more general and indispensable use, was considered an anti-republican measure, as tending to lessen the burthens of the rich, and increase those of the poorer class of community. The purchase of Louisiana, which added fif-

teen millions to the national debt, was deemed an improvident procedure, as the territory was worth little or nothing to us, and would probably subject us to an immense expense to maintain a standing army for its protection and security. The removal from office of honest and capable men, on account of a difference in political opinion, and the conferring upon one particular party all the appointments in the power of government to bestow, was thought to be repugnant to the nature and genius of our government, opposed to the republican principle of "equal rights and equal privileges," and little calculated to "restore harmony to social intercourse." Yet the country remained in peace, and continued to travel on in a prosperous course, until the adoption of the fatal restrictive measures upon our commercial intercourse with foreign nations, which at once paralyzed the arm of industry, and produced a sad reverse in our fortune, the effects of which, it is to be feared, will be felt for years to come.

It was at this time that Bonaparte projected his continental system, the great object of which was to destroy the manufacturing interest of Great Britain, and repress her commercial prosperity. He had already brought the continental powers of Europe to participate in his project, and by some unaccountable means soon induced the United States, in effect, to cooperate with them. The American ministers, who had been sent to England to negotiate a treaty, in lieu of the one which had already expired, and under which we had flourished in a degree unexampled in the history of nations, effected their object, and transmitted to the President of the United States one, which Mr. Munroe, then the acting minister, and now Secretary of State, declared might be accepted with honour, and consistent with our interest. Mr. Jefferson, however, without sufficiently weighing the consequences of a rejection, or designing to have no treaty with Great Britain, and to enter zealously into the continental system of warfare upon English commerce, was willing to hazard the peace of his country, by returning the treaty unratified, and, what was more

extraordinary, without even submitting it to the consideration of the Senate, the body provided by the constitution to give advice upon all such important subjects. From this time, the clouds of adversity seemed to thicken in the political horizon and threaten a storm. The French Decrees and British Orders in Council, measures not less opposed to the established laws of nations, than hostile to the acknowledged rights of neutrals, were carrying into rigid execution, and interrupting our lawful commerce. At this critical juncture, at this all important time, instead of pursuing the wise and manly policy of Washington, who considered the establishment of a navy, such as might be maintained without burthening the people, as essential and indispensable to our national respectability and security; instead of adopting measures worthy of a great nation, to protect our rights and redress our wrongs, the government resorted to acts more suited to the capacity of a quack physician, whose genius never wandered beyond the circumference of a pill-box and gallipot, than to the dignity of a deliberative assembly, legislating for the happiness and safety of their country. The first offspring of false theory and moonstruck philosophy, was the Non-importation Act, which was intended to apply exclusively to Great Britain, and which answered little or no purpose but to fetter our trade and embarrass our commerce. Next came the Embargo,

“ Daughter of chaos, and eternal night.”

This monster, conceived in secret, and brought forth in darkness, stretched its huge limbs over our land, and threatened at once to blast all our prospects, and deaden all our hopes. The professed object of this measure, so oppressive and ruinous in its effects, was, to preserve our seamen and property on the one hand, and on the other, to constrain those foreign nations, who had violated our neutral rights, to do us justice, from a fear of losing our intercourse. It is undoubtedly the purpose, as well as the duty of civil government, to protect its citizens in the peaceable possession and undisturbed enjoyment of all their rights. But when they are molested in the pro-

eution of their lawful employments on the ocean, the great highway of nations, where their rights are unquestionable, it is yielding a singular sort, a kind of negative protection, to exclude them entirely from the use of the ocean. A total privation, an absolute abandonment of rights, can never, by any rational construction, be understood as their protection. If the object of this act was, as pretended, to secure the vessels and property of our citizens from capture, why were its provisions urged beyond the strict line of necessity? Why were our honest and industrious farmers prevented from carrying their property by land to a market? Why was there an embargo laid upon the confines of Canada? Could British men of war run up and lie in wait on the northern boundary of this State, or British privateers hover upon the interior of New-York? If, on the other hand, the object was, to coerce into justice those foreign nations, of whose aggressions we complained, it was perhaps the most imbecile attempt, the most quixotic measure, recorded in the annals of legislation. In character and effect, it was precisely what France wanted, and what England cared nothing about. Bonaparte approved the measure, as aiding him in his designs upon Great Britain; and Great Britain could have no objections to a policy, that left her the exclusive possession of the ocean, and gave to her the monopoly of the commerce of the world. An Embargo being, in all its shapes, a formidable violation of the rights of the people, is never considered, even in the most urgent case, only as a necessary evil. The usages of nations shew, that it can never, with propriety, be resorted to, but in actual war, and imminent danger, and, in consideration of the violence of its operations, should never continue but for a short and limited time. The history of the world, perhaps, does not furnish an instance of an Embargo being laid, under any despotism, upon grounds so frivolous, upon pretences so deceptive. It would indeed seem astonishing, in this country, so proud, so boastful of its liberties, to see the whole property of the nation put under custody, placed in the gripe of ravenous custom-house officers, every man in it interdicted of his free passage to

market, and the very means of his subsistence placed under sequestration. Whatever may have been the effect of this measure upon foreign nations, we all know that it was peculiarly distressing to ourselves; so much so, that the incessant and universal murmurs and complaints of the people, soon compelled the government, with whom it was a darling favourite, reluctantly to relinquish it for, what was supposed to be, a less obnoxious substitute, but in reality a partial continuation of the same anti-commercial system, differently modified, but leading to the same end. A non-intercourse, or, more properly speaking, a non importation law, more enlarged in its objects and extensive in its operation than the first act of that name, succeeded the Embargo, and has since continued to hold our trade in fetters, and our commerce in bondage. It would indeed seem strange, that those who profess to be the friends of commerce, and the advocates of trade, should have thus for more than five years pertinaciously pursued a system which could have no other tendency but to produce the utter destruction of commerce, and, with it, the ruin of our country. But if our present rulers are not, in truth, as they profess to be, the friends of commerce, they are most assuredly not friends to their country; for commerce as well as agriculture is essential to our national prosperity. They are not naturally enemies, nor even rivals; they are friends, and ought to unite for the attainment of a great and common object. In this country, above all others, they require the mutual aid of each other. Agriculture supplies commerce with the articles of her exports, and with a ready market for her returns. Commerce, in her turn, incites the husbandman to labour beyond his wants, by administering to his enjoyments. Make commerce the only honourable pursuit, the farmer would desert his plough, and leave the most fertile and delightful country in the world to become again an uncultivated wilderness. Destroy commerce, the farmer would transform himself into a mere manufacturer of petty toys, or what is more probable, he would be actuated by not much nobler incentives than his course appetites, he would feel the last spark of cultivation ex-

pire within him, and revert to all the horror, all the barbarity, of savage life. We must either be a civilized people, and, by patronizing agriculture and commerce, flourish under their benign and invigorating auspices; or, by totally abandoning them, and, with them, all the arts and sciences, degenerate to a state of absolute barbarism, and, quitting all the honourable and useful pursuits which dignify mankind and render life desirable, seek only a daily subsistence, in the Indian fashion, from the rude practice of hunting and fishing. Instead of a free government, which provides laws for the security of person and property, and apportions the degree of punishment to the nature and magnitude of the crime, we might then submit to the controul of some Chief, whose will would be the law, and who would decree death as the universal punishment for all offences. Instead of sending our children to colleges and seminaries of learning to qualify them for the various professions in life, we might then educate them in the use of savage instruments of war, and instruct them in the most ingenious mode of inflicting torture upon a wretched victim. Instead of histories, and having our national events recorded on the polished page of the scholar, we might trust to the legendary tales of fathers, and the tradition of mothers. Instead of worshiping the living God, and listening to the precepts of christianity, which has brought immortality to light, we might adore the sun, the moon, or some unknown spirit, and believe in heathenish transmigration. Instead of assembling for public worship, we might assemble only to hold councils of war. Would such a state of society, if society it can be called, become the dignity of our natures? Can any one be willing to exchange all the arts of civilization for a rude state of barbarism? Is it not then astonishing that any one should seriously wish for the destruction either of agriculture or commerce, since the first is necessary to life, and the second to make life amiable? It is the spirit of party alone which can be guilty of such madness. Our manners, our habits, the local and geographical situation of our country, with fifteen hundred miles of seacoast, and numerous lakes and rivers for internal naviga-

tion, all declare us a commercial as well as an agricultural people. From commerce, united with agriculture, we have derived all our wealth. They have together furnished us with all the comforts as well as elegancies of life. Commerce has hitherto been the fruitful source whence we have drawn all our revenue; and so productive was it in this respect, that Mr. Jefferson, in his message of November, 1808, informed Congress, that on the first day of January following, after deducting the sum for reimbursing the eight per cent. stock, there would remain in the treasury of the United States a surplus sum of upwards of eight millions of dollars. Respecting the application of this money, he gravely remarked, "Shall it lie unproductive in the public vaults? Shall the revenue be reduced? Or shall it not rather be appropriated to the improvement of roads, canals, rivers, &c. under the powers which Congress may already possess;" and in case they did not then possess the power, he suggested that it be recommended to the several States so to amend the Constitution as that they might be authorized in some such way to dispose of the surplus cash. But alas! Mr. Jefferson has the happiness, and the people the sorrow to see the day when, by the suspension of commerce, and the operation of restrictive measures, not only the surplus eight millions is exhausted without troubling the States to alter the Constitution to effect the object, but the administration are compelled to resort to a loan of eleven millions of dollars to meet the ordinary expenses of government.

It is not with any pleasure or satisfaction that these things are alluded to. On this day, so often held as a national jubilee, we would gladly dwell only on the bright side of the picture. It is always invidious to speak of present times; some will accuse of partiality, others of malignity. It cannot certainly be the part of a patriot to increase the wide spreading dissensions, at present prevailing among our countrymen. Yet I should be unfaithful to you and to myself, I should grossly violate the duties you have this day assigned me, if I omitted to notice the calamities of the times, or failed to trace the causes of

our present misfortunes, that we may profit by experience, and learn wisdom from past events. It was said by a great man, with that felicity of thought and expression so peculiar to himself, that history is philosophy teaching by example. The few years our present government has existed, and the political changes and revolutions in our country, furnish valuable lessons of instruction. We know what we have been ; and, unless we are wilfully blind to our own condition, we cannot but see what our present standing is. It is not the part of wisdom to study concealment, or deceive ourselves by representing our situation in a more favourable light than the truth will allow. We should know our condition, and having known it, endeavour to avert the impending evils. Can we affect not to know that our flag, which but a few years since waved in every sea, now hangs mournfully half mast in our harbours ; that our ships which were wont to return laden with merchandize from all quarters of the world, now lie rotting in our ports ? Can we refrain from seeing that our country is sinking in poverty ; property going to decay, and universal ruin threatening all classes of the community ? Is it to be disguised that there is a general suspension of business, an unusual scarcity of money, and of course a total destitution of the means to pay debts ? Is not our treasury in a state of bankruptcy ? Are not *Loans, Direct Taxes, Stamp Duties, Excises*, and other oppressive measures, so obnoxious to the feelings and sentiments of our forefathers, the burthen which the people are hereafter to groan under ? Is not a standing army stationed in various parts of our country ; a standing army always more inclined to subvert than to support a republican government ? Are not Indian hostilities already commenced, and ravaging our frontiers ?* Is not the glory of the American name depart-

* By the following letter from the Secretary of War, to one of the committees in Congress, it clearly appears that among the blessed fruits of Nonimportation, may be ranked

ed, and our national character lost in abject submission to a foreign tyrant? Mr. Madison proclaims, that "the Berlin and Milan decrees have ceased to violate our neutral rights," while the Emperour Napoleon continues to sink, burn and destroy our ships, and declares that his "Berlin and Milan decrees are permanent and fundamental laws of his Empire." No longer ago than the twelfth of March last, the French minister of foreign affairs, in his communication upon the subject, declared the French decrees not only to be in force, but that they would continue in force until the repeal of the British Orders in Council. Yet it has been asserted in the Proclamation of the President, and echoed in the speeches of Governours, that these decrees have long since been repealed.* But

the depredations upon our defenceless citizens on the Indian frontiers :

“ WASHINGTON, Dec. 25, 1811.

“ Sir--In consequence of complaints made by the Indians, that they cannot receive the usual supplies of goods, by reason of the Nonimportation Act; and as goods adapted to their use are not to be purchased to any considerable amount within the United States, I am induced to solicit the attention of the honourable committee of which you are chairman, to the 15th section of the act of the 25th of April, 1808, and to respectfully submit for their consideration, whether it may not be expedient to authorize by law the introduction of Indian goods under a similar provision.

I have the honour to be, sir, with much respect, your obedient servant,

W. EUSTIS.

The articles wanted by the Secretary for the Indians were coarse cloths, blankets, calicoes, muskets, rifles, tomahawks, scalping knives, cutlery, lead, gunpowder, &c.

* See the President's proclamation of Nov. 2d. 1810, in which he declared the effectual revocation of the French decrees, and, predicated upon such revocation, caused the non-intercourse after the 2d of February following to be revived against Great Britain. See also the speeches of Gen. Cass

we are not such tame and credulous beings as to believe, though it should even be affirmed by our President, and repeated by our Governour, that fire will not burn, that water will not drown, that a continued system of restrictive measures

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and Gov. Galusha, in which the same declaration was repeated.

As to the fact, whether these decrees were revoked or not at the time of issuing the President's proclamation, it would seem almost incredible that there should be but one opinion. How is it possible to reconcile, in any degree of consistency, the continued practice of captures under these decrees with their *effectual revocation*? An *effectual revocation* necessarily supposes no such decrees to be in existence, or, at least, in operation. Yet, that the practice of capturing American vessels under those decrees has not been suspended by the French Government, but has been continued in full effect, is abundantly evident from the numerous affidavits made and published upon the subject, as well as from the great number of memorials to Congress, asserting and proving the fact. Not only have captures been made by the naval officers of France, under these decrees, but *condemnations* have actually followed in their prize courts. "It is enough," as remarked in the late excellent address of the minority in Congress to their constituents "to state only two cases which appear in the official reports. The American ship Julian was captured by a French privateer on the 4th of July, 1811, and on the 10th of September following, the vessel and cargo were condemned by the Council of Prizes at Paris for having violated these decrees. On the same day the Hercules, an American ship, was also condemned by the Imperial Court of Prizes for a similar reason. In addition to this evidence, Mr. Russels letter to the Secretary of State, dated May 8th, 1811, says, "it may not be improper to remark that no American vessel captured since the first of November, 1810, has yet been released."

"From this it is apparent, that the commanders of the national vessels, the privateersmen, and the judges of the prize courts, to which may be added also the custom house officers, who, as the instruments of carrying into effect the decrees, must have been made acquainted with the repeal, had it exist-

would not ruin our country, or that war is not the greatest and most dreadful calamity which can befall a nation. We have eyes to see, and ears to hear; we have understanding to know, and cannot be deceived into a belief to the contrary,

 ed, have been from first to last, ignorant of any revocation; and uniformly acted upon the principle of their existence. "If other evidence of the continued existence of these decrees were requisite, the acts of the French Government afford such as is full and explicit. Champagny, Duke of Cadore, minister of foreign relations, in his report to his Majesty the Emperor and King, dated Paris, Dec. 3d, 1810, speaking of the decrees of Berlin and Milan, says expressly, "As long as England shall persist in her Orders in Council, your Majesty will persist in your Decrees." And in the address delivered by his imperial majesty, Napoleon, to the Council of Commerce, on the 31st of March, 1811, he thus declares: "The decrees of Berlin and Milan are the fundamental laws of my Empire. For the neutral navigation I consider the flag as an extension of territory. The power, which suffers its flag to be violated, cannot be considered as neutral. The fate of the American commerce will soon be decided. I will favour it if the United States conform themselves to these decrees. In a contrary case, their vessels will be driven from my Empire." And as late as the 10th of March, 1812, in a report of the French minister of foreign relations, communicated to the Conservative Senate, it is declared, "that as long as the British Orders in Council are not revoked, and the principles of the treaty of Utrecht, in relation to neutrals put in force, the decrees of Berlin and Milan ought to subsist."

A very extraordinary document promulgated in France no earlier than May last, has recently been published in England and this country, purporting to be a decree signed by the Emperor Napoleon, and bearing date as far back as April 28th, 1811, two months after the Nonimportation law had been revived in its operation against Great Britain; in which decree the Emperor declares that, "Being informed of the law of the 2d of March, 1811, by which the Congress of the United States has decreed the exemption of the provisions of the act of Nonintercourse, &c. And considering that the said law is an act of resistance to the arbitrary pretensions advanced by the Brit-

that *War, Embargo, Stamp taxes, Loans, Excises, Land taxes and Standing Armies*, are not to be preferred by an intelligent people to *Commerce, Free trade, Agriculture, Peace, Prosperity, National happiness, and National respectability*.

But however disastrous may be our present condition, however alarming our future prospects, we have yet some cause

ish orders in council, and a formal refusal to sanction a system hostile to the independence of neutral powers, and of their flags : We have decreed and do decree, that the Berlin and Milan decrees are definitely, from the first of November last, (1810,) no longer in force as regards American vessels."

If this decree is to be considered as the act revoking the Berlin and Milan Decrees, it is at least sufficiently manifest that these decrees were not *effectually revoked* at the time the President issued his proclamation of Nov. 1810, declaring their repeal and reviving the nonintercourse against England. For if they were then *effectually revoked*, why the necessity of issuing a *revoking* decree, bearing date *six months after their pretended repeal* ? The President's proclamation and renewal of the nonintercourse against Great Britain were predicated upon the previous *effectual revocation*, as declared by the President, of the French decrees ; and yet it is found that the Emperor's repealing decree, which is dated six months after, is specially predicated upon the revival, for two months before, of the nonintercourse law against Great Britain. But what is more extraordinary, if this last decree was in fact issued at the time it bears date, why was it not immediately promulgated ? And why were captures afterwards suffered to be made under the Berlin and Milan decrees so repealed ? The British Government have long been calling upon our Government for some authentic evidence of the repeal of the decrees, and have repeatedly declared, in the strongest assurance, that when such evidence should be produced the British orders in council would immediately cease to operate. Why then, if our Government was apprised of this repealing decree, as it is called, did it delay a moment to communicate the information to the British Government, that one great cause of the difficulties between the two countries might be removed, and the United States saved from the calamities of war, and

on this day for rejoicing. We can rejoice that our independence as a nation is not yet, as we hope, prostrated at the feet of a foreign despot ; that we still live under a republican form of government ; that the ninety days Embargo, which filled our country with gloom and consternation, and diffused over it apprehensions of universal bankruptcy and ruin, on this day expires. Yet amidst these few causes of exultation and rejoicing, we have abundant reason to mourn for the miseries which await us. An uninterrupted course of restrictive measures, which for more than five years have been impoverishing our country, and enfeebling its energies, is to be changed only for a state

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their citizens from the loss of property to an incalculable amount ?

Whether this decree was written at the time it bears date, or not until May, 1812, and antedated at the suggestion of our minister, Mr. Barlow, remains a secret. But it is evident it was not written, or if written, it was not issued, until Bonaparte had been assured that war would be declared by the United States against Great Britain. Now when the Berlin and Milan decrees cannot operate upon our neutral rights, as in the present state of actual war no American vessels can sail to or from an English port, or be spoken by an English ship without being captured, these decrees, having produced their effect, and being no longer of use, are most graciously repealed.

“ How wonderful is the faculty of the “ supereminent Napoleon” in deluding the understandings of men ! He has convinced the American government and a great portion of American citizens, that his decrees, issued in 1806, were produced by, and are the legitimate consequence of, the Orders in Council, which were not in existence until the year afterwards, in 1807 ; and he has, by fair means or by fowl, induced the President to issue a proclamation in November, and Congress to pass a law in March, both of which are exclusively founded, as alledged, on the previous repeal of these identical decrees, which, at least, was never effected till the April following, and then expressly predicated upon the law of Congress passed two months before.”

of war, the calamities of which we cannot calculate, and the duration of which we cannot foresee.*

A misty vapour has long obscured the radiance of American glory. We have long seen a speck of war rising in the horizon ; and that speck has long boded a tempest. Already the breeze blows roughly over our faces ; it grows into the gale ; the gale will swell into the storm, and the storm burst into a hurricane that will scatter misery and desolation over our land.

----- " *Amid the heavens
Falsely serene, deep in a cloudy speck
Compressed, the mighty tempest brooding dwells.
Fiery and foul, the small prognostic hangs
Aloft.*" -----

* It is important to inquire why war was declared at a time when there was such an immense amount of American property at sea, or in foreign ports, exposed to capture? Was there any necessity that the declaration should be made at that particular period ; at a period when we had not even a company of troops upon the frontiers to afford them protection? Is it not, in the history of nations, an unprecedented singularity, to make a formal declaration of war under circumstances like these ; especially against a nation possessing a territory, bordering upon ours, garrisoned with regular troops, and filled with hords of savages, whom it was in the power of the enemy to "let slip" upon our exposed frontiers, and scatter terror and dismay, massacre and ruin among the defenceless inhabitants? A wise government would have delayed the declaration of war, until the nation was in due preparation for defence, and commencement of hostilities ; and would at least have so far regarded the interests of their constituents, as to give sufficient time for the safe return home of the immensely valuable property at sea, or in foreign ports, exposed to capture. Correct information has been given that on the 7th of June there was no less than 150 sail of American vessels at one island in the *West-Indies* ; and upwards of sixty arrived in *Liverpool* in May last. The numbers in *Lisbon*, *Cadix*, &c. are great, and of immense value. By the declaration of war, which was

War, of all evils which afflict nations, is the greatest. It brings in its train, calamities, distresses, and losses, for which it is impossible for any length of peace adequately to compensate. Yet it seems to be looked upon by some of our countrymen with the most sullen indifference. They appear to be the sport of the wildest opinions, and the fiercest of passions. Led by the most extravagant and infuriated spirit, they seem to long for nothing but blood and plunder, and sigh only for wars and massacres. They act as if they were restless and uneasy until they had introduced into our hitherto peaceful country, all the evils and miseries of unhappy Europe; until they had renewed the same scenes here, which have been so barbarously acted there. The spirit of democracy has so sublimated and enlightened their notions, "that they can survey the agitations of the world with the same indifference as if they did not live in it; as if they occupied, as mere spectators, a safe position in some distant star, and beheld revolutions sometimes brightening the disk of this planet with their fires, and at others dimming it with their vapours. They can contemplate, unmoved, the whirlwind, lifting the hills from their base, and mixing their ruins with the clouds. They can see the foundations of society gaping in fissures, as when an earthquake struggles from the centre." Such men, indeed, are superior to humanity, if not to the love of country. They are indifferent to the sacrifices of liberty as well as order, of blood as well as treasure. A British war, a Spanish war, an Indian war, have no horrors for them. But it never can be the disposition of the majority of a free people to hurry their country into the mad excesses of war, and thereby entail upon themselves and posterity a load of taxes which will press with intolerable weight even upon distant generations. God in his mercy grant it may never be here, as in wretched Europe, where the ragged peasantry, half employed, less than half paid, were ever ready to listen to the enchanting eloquence of a recruit-

 made before they had time to return, they became all exposed to capture.

ing sergeant, and where war has ever been the trade first in credit, and least of all in rivalry with any other.

We are not in a condition to indulge the spirit of conquest. Territorial aggrandizement can never be our object, without a sacrifice of national prosperity and happiness. We already see England groaning under a national debt of more than twelve hundred millions, occasioned by her incessant wars. The people of France are in a still more abject condition, with more than half their male population converted into soldiers, and trained the mercenary slaves of a tyrant. All history shews that the spirit of war and conquest has changed the form of government, and eventually established a despotism, in every republic in which it has been indulged. But, as a great man says, “if every grave-stone of a departed republic bore a lesson of wisdom and warning, there are some people who would shut their eyes rather than read it.”

As to *defensive* war, the country is always able and ready to wage it. If we were invaded by an enemy, that enemy would be promptly repelled by a spontaneous and universal effort of the people. But a war of conquest, a foreign war, is neither suited to our interests, nor compatible with the nature and genius of our government. The people will never be willing to put their dearest rights at hazard to gratify the malice of a few, or to preserve Congressional honour, or Congressional consistency. With whatever indignant sensibility we may view the long continued and unexampled aggressions of the belligerents of Europe upon our neutral rights, yet, in our present unprepared and defenceless situation, with no competent naval force, which Washington thought necessary for our protection, to afford us effectual redress, we cannot but deprecate war as a measure which, however justifiable from the accumulated wrongs we have sustained, is not only opposed to the great interests of the nation, but will expose the country to the worst of all possible evils, without promising any successful advantage.

But what we have most to dread is, that the present war will chain us in a fatal alliance with France, and render us the humble instruments of aiding Bonaparte, who now tyrannizes over the continent of Europe, at length to tyrannize over the world. We cannot contend against his enemy, without becoming his friend. We in effect fight his battles, and assist him in his ambitious projects. And can it be the desire of freemen, who love liberty, to see the human race in chains? Before the French revolution, Europe had many free republics. Alas! they are no more. France, proclaiming war against Kings and Princes, has waged it against commonwealths. Switzerland, Holland, Geneva, Venice, Lucca, Genoa, are gone, and the wretched Batavian, Helvetian, and Italian Republics, though never more than mere spectres, have at length been swallowed up in the great sepulchre of republics. "After many convulsions, we behold Bonaparte in the undisturbed possession of France, whose vast extent, whose immense populousness, whose warlike spirit, and arrogance in victory, invest her with the means, as well as the claim, like old Rome, to parcel out kingdoms, and sit in judgment upon nations. Rome availed herself of the divisions of the Grecian republics to subjugate them all. Affecting a zeal for their liberty, she offered her alliance; and the allies of Rome, like those of France, became her slaves. The Greeks joyfully aided Rome to conquer Macedonia, and Phillip, the Macedonian King, was employed against Antiochus, the Syrian monarch. Egypt was too base to make any resistance, and abjectly submitted to tribute." Thus every independent republic, and powerful prince, fell a sacrifice to Rome. Like France, she seldom had more than one enemy to fight at once; they fell in succession, and their servitude was concealed, though it was embittered by the title of allies. France actually possesses a greater and more decisive military superiority over the continental nations of Europe, than the old Romans did over the forces of Antiochus, Mithridates, and Jugurtha; and, especially, over the Carthagenians, Greeks and Macedonians. Nothing is wanting to the solid establishment of a new uni-

versal empire by France, that shall spread as far, last as long, and press as heavily on the necks of the abject nations, as that of Rome, but the possession of power upon sea equal to what she already has upon land. She has already more than half achieved her purpose ; the struggles of liberty are over in Europe. Spain and Portugal are breathing out a painful existence ; and the continental nations are now quietly sleeping in their chains. If she should succeed in conquering Great Britain, and obtain possession of the British navy, these chains would be adamant, which no human force could break. French tyranny, like the great dragon, would have wings, and the remotest regions of the civilized world would be near enough to catch pestilence from his breath. Would the United States be safe ? When France is master of both land and sea, will distance preserve us ? With fifteen hundred ships of war, distance would be nothing to Bonaparte. However brave may be our countrymen, we shall have much anxiety for our safety, when the fatal time shall arrive, that we become the only object for Bonaparte to direct this immense force against. As an eminent Orator has declared in a voice of warning to his country, we have seen Austria, in vain oppose three hundred thousand veterans to his progress ; we have seen Russia repelled in the pitched battle of Austerlitz ; we have seen Prussia, with its armies complete in number and discipline, stand still, not daring to stir, and waiting to acknowledge him conqueror ; we have seen half a million of English volunteers parading the coasts of Sussex, of Essex, and of Kent, and yet trusting only to the vigilance of the British navy to hinder the French from crossing the channel.

But Bonaparte has said, and it is possible some may affect to believe, that France is satisfied with her ample dominion, that, weary and exhausted by war, she seeks only to establish the more glorious universal empire of the arts, and when she is no longer embarrassed in her beneficent designs by an obstinate and jealous antagonist, the world will then begin to enjoy peace without a disturber of its blessings. Is this however, the nature of ambition ? Is it an appetite that is choak-

ed and cloyed, or made ravenous by its gluttony? A creation only once in six days would not be made fast enough to keep pace with the growth of its desires. The whole world is not wide enough for this giant to stretch his limbs in. Ambition contented with its limits! Have we seen the ocean so full that it would not drink up another river? Inquire of the winds, whether the last storm has crippled their speed that they will never blow again. Ask of the pestilence, whether, weary of havoc, its iron heart relucts to tread once more its circle of destruction. Yet six months after France shall conquer Great Britain and get possession of her navy, that ocean will swell beyond the Alleghany ridge, that tempest will scatter blight and mildew over all our plains, that pestilence would cramp every heart with terrou and spot every face with contagion. We should see the temple of our liberty in ashes or in sackcloth, and if we did not loathe life, it would be because we could endure to drag it on in servitude and disgrace.

Can we view then with complacency a measure, which threatens to entangle us in an alliance with France, and to render us the active instruments of aiding Bonaparte in the subjugation of the world. We are not yet so lost to the love of liberty and freedom; we are not yet so enamoured with Emperours and Kings, as to wish to exchange our republican government, where the people are the sovereigns, for a military despotism, where the people are slaves. The American people still know how to value their privileges; all power is in their hands, and they will claim the right to exercise it. They will quietly submit to the measures of government, however oppressive or ruinous, and resort only to constitutional means for redress. Forcible opposition to the laws will never be countenanced or encouraged by good citizens; much less will they become active agents in such an undertaking. If the nature and tendency of the laws are prejudicial to the interests of the people, they have the peaceable, the effectual remedy in their own hands. When their elections come a-

bout, they have only to change the men, in order to effect a change of measures. This they will do, when the welfare of the nation shall require it ; for it is to be hoped that the people in this country are not yet so wedded to any set of men, not yet so chained down in their attachments to party, that they will not examine the measures of government with candour, test them by reason, and when they are right, speak with approbation, but, when they are wrong, be distinct in their censure. Such conduct constitutes the perfection of human wisdom. It will preserve to us our invaluable rights and privileges ; it will learn us to subdue our passions, and to act from correct reason rather than blind prejudice ; to regard the substance more than the name, measures more than men. It will teach us to profit by the examples history affords us, and beware of the rocks and shoals on which all former republics have been shipwrecked. It will lead us to steer a middle course, avoiding anarchy and licentiousness on the one hand, which inevitably lead to despotism, and the smallest, the least encroachment on our constitutional rights, on the other. In short, it will enable us, by cultivating the arts of peace and cherishing the social virtues, to perpetuate our republican government, and become a singular instance in the history of nations, of a people handing down in regular succession to the latest posterity, the liberty and independence of their country.

Here, perhaps, I ought to stop ; but the character they sustain, the principles they profess, the alarming state of the times, demand a particular address to the Brethren of the **WASHINGTON BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.**

The United States form this day, my Brethren, one of the most interesting objects that ever the world beheld. There exists no other Republic. Holland, once so great and so free, has drank to the very dregs the cup of despotic cruelty. The mountains of Switzerland have bowed their tops to an usurper, and her vallies no more resound with the glad songs of Liberty and Tell. Venice and Genoa have been swallowed

up in the wide gulph of French conquest, and all remains of Italian freedom have been annihilated by the butchering daggers of a remorseless soldiery. On the map of the universe now stands America alone, the only solitary Republic, the favoured residence of liberty. How long she will remain so, depends upon the virtue and patriotism of her citizens. We are at present surrounded with evils, and encompassed with dangers, which threaten the existence of all we hold dear. Our fate, it is true, is not foretold by signs and wonders; the earthquakes have not declared it in explicit language; comets indeed have not glared in the form of types, and printed it legibly in the sky; but our warning is as distinct, and almost as awful, as if it were announced in thunder by the concussion of all the elements. Our country has only to trust to the mercy of God, and the patriotic endeavours of her citizens, to avert the calamities which hang suspended over us. We can no longer look for safety to those Heroes and Sages, who once led us, by their united valour and wisdom, through the difficulties and dangers of an arduous conflict. The silent but destroying sweep of time has laid the greater number in the dust. If we had our Washington to direct and guide us,

*“ though perils did
Abound, as thick as thought could make 'em, and
Appear in forms more horrid, ”*

we should not despair. But the light of his god-like soul, and the calm but ever steady lamp of his experience, shine no more in our land. In the wise, though inscrutable, dispensations of Providence, he has past away, leaving us no hope of ever again beholding his like. Next to the freedom he achieved, and the government he so preeminently contributed to establish, Washington, who was emphatically born for his country, and whose principles we profess to revere, was himself its most invaluable treasure. Like a rock secure in its strength amidst the fury and wild uproar of a troubled ocean, he stood unmoved by all the evils, dangers, and misfortunes attendant on civil or military life. Though nature had staggered in convulsions, and even tumbled in wide spreading ru-

ing around him, nothing could shake the firmness of his steady mind. He was not only a Soldier and Statesman, of the first order and rank, who had saved his country and secured her liberties, but he was still greater, and shone with a serener though less brilliant lustre, as a Christian, who patronized her religion, and improved her morals. But—he is gone. He died in the full maturity of his fame, and has left behind him an imperishable reputation. Yet, to use the language of an elegant scholar, “what has the country he saved done to manifest its gratitude. Not a stone tells the stranger where the hero is laid. No proud column declares *that his country is grateful*. The stranger who, in days to come, shall visit our shore, will exclaim, show me the statue of your Washington, that I may contemplate the majestic form that encompassed his mighty soul; that I may gaze upon those features once lighted with every virtue, and learn to love virtue as I behold them. Alas! there is no such statue. Lead me then, American, to the tomb your country has provided for her deliverer; to the everlasting monument she has erected to his fame. Alas! his country has not given him a tomb; she has erected no monument to his fame. His grave is in the bosom of *his own soil*, and the cedar that was watered by his hand, is all that rests upon it.”

Whence, my Brethren, is this cold neglect? Is it envy, jealousy, or ingratitude? Or is it that, in the great struggle for power and place, every thing else is forgotten; every noble, generous, and national sentiment disregarded or despised? It is true, when the government was composed of the friends of Washington, and the advocates of his principles, a sum of money was appropriated to erect a monument which should perpetuate his memory and declare his country's gratitude. But times changed, and men changed with them. Republican economy could by no means spare 50,000 Dollars, to do suitable honours to the friend, the benefactor, the saviour of his country; yet, strange to tell, but a few years afterwards, it could willingly spare the same sum to reward

the services of a Spy and Traitor. By this a monument has been erected, which will long remain to perpetuate, at least, the depravity of the times. The truth is, there are many in our country, who neither love the character, nor reverence the principles of Washington. Yet they will pretend to venerate his name, and for the same reason that vice is compelled reluctantly to pay homage to virtue. The principles he professed and practiced, have long been departed from, and strange doctrines introduced in their stead. It is no wonder then, that "unusual dissensions and calamities are prevailing among us." But the present state of things cannot long remain stationary. We must open our eyes to our folly and correct our errors, or necessarily advance on to a state the most deplorable in the condition of a nation.

When a country like ours has been brought to the very verge of destruction, its sudden fate can be arrested only by an union of honest men of all parties. And, at most times, if proper means are used, the honest of all parties will endeavour to obtain correct information, and coalesce to save their country and themselves from ruin. Under the existing circumstances of our country, and perilous as the times are, what more proper than to associate ourselves for the laudable purpose of subduing the unhappy dissensions which are prevailing among us, and producing, in the principles of Washington, an union of honest men of whatever political parties. Our beloved Washington, whose memory we will never forget, in a letter to Mr. Jefferson says, "I am accused of being a party man; but I am no party man; my object is to reconcile all parties." So the object of our Society, which is founded upon his principles, is not to build up a party, but to break down all parties; to inculcate American sentiment; to diffuse correct information; to awaken a spirit of candid inquiry; to induce us to regard measures more than men; to destroy the odious influence of party names; to abolish the invidious and unfounded distinction between the words "*Federalist*" and "*Republican*." I say, unfounded distinction;

for Mr. Jefferson, whom our adversaries will not refuse to receive as authority, declares in his inaugural speech, "We are all brethren of the same principle; we are all Federalists, all Republicans." And again, "Every difference of opinion is not a difference in principle." In pursuance of this idea, our Society, so far as it is political, was established; intended to realize in practice, what was probably with Mr. Jefferson a mere speculative opinion. Our object is to revive the times, and introduce into fashion, the principles of Washington, that our country may again be prosperous and happy, and its name respected among the nations of the earth. We profess to be firmly attached to the Constitution of the United States, and pledge ourselves to preserve it inviolate against all inroads which may have a tendency to change its republican nature and form, whether of monarchy, of aristocracy, of democracy, or any species of despotism, and endeavour to have it administered, in its true spirit and meaning, upon the pure principles of our illustrious Washington.* We are also bound to divest ourselves of all partiality to foreign nations, when it shall interfere with the interests of the United States; in

* There have been a few, for whom we would willingly have charity, who, as it is believed, through a mistaken apprehension of the principles and design of the *Washington Benevolent Society*, have endeavoured to impress the public with a belief, that the members of this Society are hostile to our present form of government. They seem to intimate that, although we avow our attachment to the Constitution of the United States, yet we are opposed to its principles; and this they infer from the strangest of all reasons, because we pledge ourselves to preserve it inviolate against the *inroads* of Monarchy, of Aristocracy, of *Democracy*, &c. And why not preserve our Republican Constitution inviolate against the *inroads* of *Democracy*? Is it not the duty of every citizen to support the Constitution and preserve it inviolate against *all inroads*? And why not against the *inroads* of Democracy? Has Democracy such charms that the people are willing to have it make *inroads* upon the Constitution and finally destroy it? Are they so enamoured, so infatuated, as to be

other words, to be Americans in word, in deed, and in truth. We are to study to preserve our republican rights and privileges, and to aid and assist each other in our several callings, when it shall not interfere with our duty to others or our own interests. We are to be kind to the poor, and benevolent to all; peaceable citizens, and obedient to the laws. We are to love our country, and devote our time and our talents to render her prosperous and happy.

Such being, my Brethren, the principles on which our Society is established, let us care not for the revilings of persecutors, or the backslidings of apostates. With a conscious rectitude of heart, like the primitive Christians, we will not heed the reproaches of adversaries, nor forsake the assembling ourselves together to edify and improve each other. We have but a little time to continue our abode here, and GOD only knows how soon we are to leave this for "another, and," as we all

.....
 willing to sacrifice our *Republican Constitution*, and waste away their strength in the embraces of this Delilah? But what is the legitimate meaning of democracy? Does it designate a form of government like that of the United States, which is a representative Republic? By no means. It describes a state of society where the powers of government are exercised *immediately* by the people in their own persons, and not *mediately* through the agency of representatives. Ancient Athens, where the people all meet in one body for the purpose of making laws, was a Democracy. But can the people of the United States, covering as they do an immense territory, wish to exchange their present representative Republic for a Democracy, which would render it necessary for them to assemble, from immense distances, in one assembly, in tumultuous commotion, to decide upon questions of war or peace, and to pass all necessary laws? But the greater objection raised against the Society is, that they not only pledge themselves to preserve the Constitution inviolate against the *inroads* of monarchy, of aristocracy, of democracy, &c. but will endeavour to have it administered upon the pure principles of Washington. It is the principles of Washington that they dislike.

hope, "a better world." Our pilgrimage here is short ; we must soon surrender our places to those that will come after us. Why not then act our several parts well while upon the stage of life ; conform in all things to the principles of our Society ; contribute to the wants and relieve the distresses of each other ; and instead of exciting and aggravating political or religious quarrels, endeavour to quell party animosity, destroy the unhappy dissensions which are prevailing among us, and strive to live in peace and friendship. Let us study the character, listen to the precepts, and imitate the example of our beloved WASHINGTON, in whom all the republican virtues were concentrated. Let our private and public life, as far as in our power, be conformed in honesty and purity to his. Let us cherish the Constitution of our Country, as we would the vital juices of our existence ; let us cling to it while there is life in it, and even longer than there is hope. Let us manifest christian meekness by being always open to conviction and ready to receive the truth, but let us never forget Christian determination in a cause we know to be not wrong, and can lay our hands upon our hearts and swear to be right. At elections, with an undeviating, unshaken resolution, let us give our suffrages for characters we know to be honest and capable, regardless of the clamours of the noisy partizan, who lives upon office as vermin vegetate in corruption. An inflexible perseverance in such conduct, so virtuous and so patriotic, will yet preserve to us and our posterity our hard-earned liberties, and, I trust in the living GOD, end in our eternal happiness and our sountry's glory.