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ORATION,

DELIVERED IN THE PRESBYTERIAN MEETING-HOUSE,

ON SATURDAY THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1807.

AT THE REQUEST OF THE

WASHINGTON SOCIETY,

OF ALEXANDRIA,

BY

JOHN HANSON THOMAS, Esq.

OF FREDERICK-TOWN MARYLAND.



TO WHICH IS ADDED

AN APPENDIX,

*Giving a short Account of the Society.*



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# O R A T I O N.



**AMIDST** every observance of this birth-day of our Republic, some indulgence may no doubt be reasonably accorded to the ebullitions of national pride and national enthusiasm. In every genuine and zealous display of these emotions, even when they sometimes appear for an instant to “o’erstep the modesty of nature,” we are still gratified to discern the symptoms of a healthful pulse, the traces of remaining vigor and purity and animation in the body politic. It were indeed “devoutly to be wished” that whenever and in whatever parts of this land the day may be honored, we might always behold a certain evidence and pledge of patriotic feeling—of that feeling which in truth “passeth all show”—which does not merely *seem* but really *is*—which still rears its loyal crest, undismayed by the storms of adversity, unbroken by the wastes of time, unpolluted by the taint of foreign excitement, unaffected to disguise the influence or the fury of sinister passions.

But whatever degree of license may be tolerated elsewhere, however others may be permitted in “the full flow of soul” to forego somewhat of the sober dignity of American citizenship, upon an occasion like this it will not behoove this assemblage to content itself with the mere effusions of a vulgar and clamorous mirth, with the glare of a transient parade, and still less perhaps with the “lenten entertainment” of an inconsiderate unmeaning declamation. Enrolled under the

most venerated of all names, devoted to the best and noblest of all purposes, I am aware at least that there is a more serious responsibility imposed by the very nature and character of that institution—in deference to whose authority self-distrust has been made to sacrifice its own scruples—and under the sanction of whose appointment and presence it would now hope to avoid reproach, since it has not sought to excite notice, and does not here presume on any pretensions to favor.

In entering upon the performance of this task, it cannot be deemed necessary, after such frequent and labored recital, to unfold to view all that train of motives, circumstances, accidents and achievements which combined to give our country a rank among the nations of the earth, and established the Anniversary in whose solemnities we now officiate. To pursue the same hackney'd path which has been so often explored before, would not only indeed be doing violence to inclination, but would be wandering far from the scope and tenor of the design now proposed. Already "'tis like a tale thrice-told"—and the attempt would be equally unprofitable, irksome and injudicious in me to detain you with "a beggarly account" of chronicles yet fresh in the recollection of the old, familiar in the lessons of the young. At least all ages and all classes that take a further interest in the enquiry, may now resort for intelligence to a perspicuous and ample registry of authentic materials in a national work, bearing the stamp of the distinguished statesman and sage, whose lot it has just been to weave a new and unfading wreath for his own brow, as the historian of the Immortal Man—"first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his country."

There was a period perhaps—"So hallow'd and so gracious was the time"—when this was only to be hailed as a proud Jubilee in our political Calendar, set apart for the rites of festivity and thanksgiving—when on all sides the welkin roared with naught but the shouts of joy and the acclamations of triumph. Nor

will it be murmured, with a querulous and unfarrantable disgust, but what, in reviewing the general course of their career, the people of these states are still well entitled to approve and felicitate themselves, and above all that they are ineffably bound in gratitude to the Supreme Arbiter of the universe, unless by the perverseness of ingratitude they should have been alienated and doomed to become outcasts from his bounty. But while the recurrence of this season may even yet bring with it a rational gladness, it is high time perhaps, and especially in the present "awful crisis of all human affairs," that we should learn to mingle more of the warnings of reflection with the strains of pleasure—that we should not forever boast in vain memorials of the *past*—but rather seriously examine the *present* with a scrupulous justice—that we may be the better prepared and guided in our calculations of the *future*.

At this point in the plan thus prescribed to myself, such as it was already completed and arranged for delivery, instead of reviving the details of an inveterate grudge, or being at all disposed to gratify its antipathies, I had preferred and had actually prepared to open with this protest: That after having solemnly declared we should henceforth hold all the world alike—"enemies in war—in peace friends,"—and having victoriously maintained this stand, and redressed every evil, the practice would now seem neither generous, nor politic, nor consistent, of annually exhibiting anew all those scenes of civil strife, which have vanished with the lapse of thirty years, and recounting over "the same dull nauseous tale," only varied perhaps by the different embellishments, appendages and aggravations of fiction.—It was also added, and so meant to be pronounced, that, if the object be merely to exercise expertness in the illusions of stage-effect, we should turn to some other sport less wanton and mischievous than that, of rivetting mean and pernicious prejudices—sharpening a malevolent sense of wrongs never expected to occur again—and stirring up the feuds of old resentment,

which mutual interest should bury in oblivion. Such was the tone of conciliation, which it was wished to diffuse, and in which it was intended to proceed: So suddenly and sadly is the wish marred and interrupted, that it could not now be even mentioned with propriety, except to account for any apparent want of method occasioned by this reverse, and to instance how precarious and unstable are all our fond ideas, when the state, in which they might have been not unworthily couched but a few days ago, is contrasted with that which it is now rendered expedient and indispensable to adopt. The "deed of dreadful note," which has just been perpetrated under the authority of the British flag, like an electric pang, has astounded every amicable feeling; and, yet thought-sick and horror-struck as we are at this flash of strange and enormous tyranny, it leaves us for a while, if not without the power of utterance, at least without the faculty of description. Were it even possible to brook the insulting pretension under which this act was committed, there appears in the manner of its commission a base and savage obduracy, which nothing can excuse or palliate, which must for ever stigmatize those by whom it was done, or by whom it shall be countenanced, and which in the American bosom must produce one universal groan of abhorrence, grief and indignation. It may be now too late to ask, wherefore has this thing been done, or how have the doers of it been emboldened to this shameless and detestable outrage, without some fear of forfeiting a most exemplary atonement? Or is it come to this—and are we really then left in so ignominious a plight, so degraded, dismantled, disabled and defenceless, that not only the trade of our citizens may be despoiled and frustrated at the lawless pleasure of every marauder—but that, within sight of our own coasts, our very seamen, in our own ships, acting under the special orders of our own government, may be assailed and brutally murdered with impunity? and when every heart beats high, and every voice calls aloud for re-

dress, "the slow unmoving finger of scorn," shall dare to point to us, from the other side of the Atlantic, as a people, whose magazines of war are filled with words; whose weapons, and fortresses, and great paladium of strength by sea and by land, is but an evanescent gust of proclamations, and pamphlets, and harangues, and resolves? If we would answer this derision, and repel the contumely, let it be done with one accord by hearty and efficient exertions to retrieve all past mistakes and mishaps—let every littleness hie back to its covert, and popular infatuation be radically and thoroughly rectified—and let us model and fix our own destiny on a broad, an immutable, and elevated scale, not evermore bent on the whimsical toys of experiment, nor confined to the veering bubbles of contingency. The deep and deplorable injury which has thus recently been inflicted, and hurled too whence it was unlooked for and unprovoked, furnishes a commonplace text from which there are comments more pungent than palatable, which rush unbidden and unceasing to every reasonable mind, that sees what our condition now is, both internal and external; that recollects what it was, and is moreover willing to compute what, by this time, it might and probably would have been, in regular progression. The hint so far is not unfair, nor is it unnatural; and, if to upbraid were to reclaim, it might be well heightened into a rebuke the most cogent and irresistible: But, as it would be grating at such an instant to appear here in "the questionable shape" of a caviller, it may be proper to pause in this train of thought, and to resume those contemplations which were originally sketched, not under this occasional incitement, but with a general view to the stated purposes of this meeting.

In reverting back to the struggles of the Revolution, to the rights which it secured, to the prowess, the ability, the genius and the virtues which it called forth, more than enough has already been given to the vaults and scoffs of exultation. A less pleasing, but a much

more important duty remains, to look around and ascertain how we are likely to improve by the bright examples of worth, to profit by the wholesome counsels of experience, and to preserve the blessings which we all profess so highly to estimate. After being thus led to glance at a few leading qualities, and slightly comparing our origin with our progress, the infancy of empire with its ripening manhood, it may serve in some measure to repress the heedlessness of self-sufficiency, and it must not be deemed offensive, if the question intrudes, whether we are growing better, wiser or stronger, as we are becoming older, more numerous and extensive.

The fashion of so commemorating this epoch as if it were the saturnalian riot of slaves just loosed from bondage, is neither honorable to ourselves nor respectful to our ancestry. It is also a gross and injurious libel so to confound our cause, as if it had forever bound us in a natural sympathy towards all the traitorous, the disaffected, the profligate and the paricides of every clime, that under different pretexts have infested the repose of the earth, abjured allegiance to heaven, and dishonored and outraged humanity. It would be a monstrous and a fatal mistake to act upon, as if the founders of our confederation, either in thoughts, in deeds, or in words, bore any resemblance to the foul fiends of that new anarchy, which like

—————“ *Hell itself breathes out  
“ Contagion to the world.”*

Neither in the colonial system itself, checked and modified as it was wont to be, which once prevailed in this continent—nor in the reluctant, the temperate and measured resistance to the abuses and encroachments of that system—nor in the consequent and necessary assumption of self-government—do we descry any traits of a desperate vassalage, which, instigated by the subtle wizards of mischief, and goaded in phrenzy,—

—————“*From curb'd licence plucks*  
 “*The muzzle of restraint,*”————

runs forthwith wild and headlong

—————“*To commit*  
 “*The oldest sins the newest kind of ways,*”

and, after a frightful range of havock and devastation, exhausts and loses itself, is eventually tamed and subdued, and content to crouch under the iron rod of a military usurper.

It was not in “the lust of innovation;” it was not in the pursuit of any “airy schemes or idle speculations” of a new-fangled sophistry, that this nation engaged in its memorable contest with the mother-country. With regard to that country and her great dependencies, it has been indeed urged on a later occasion, with much more eloquence than accuracy, “that poor old England had no Cordelia among all her daughters—Gonerill denied her hundred knights—and Regan turned her to the rude pelting of the pitiless storm.” But were it worth while to pursue the allusion to dramatic plot, it might be replied, with an unusual coincidence throughout, that in her youngest hope England would not have been left without her Cordelia, had not the overweening rashness of misrule denounced, rejected and severed this child of her age, and by a palpable effect of this unnatural dissention driven us completely into the bonds of a French alliance. It was not, however, until complaints, petitions, addresses, memorials and remonstrances, and all other means to avoid the last alternative, had been tried, and tried in vain, that a separation was finally effected. It was not in the sorcery of any abstract theories, or chimerical reform; it was not in the turmoil of any inordinate conceits of aggrandizement on our part—but it was in the defence of claims well defined by plain and practical limits, in the support of birth-rights well



understood and ever guarded as a precious inheritance by the descendants from a land of freedom, that an unwilling appeal was at last made to arms, and the prize of conquest was the accomplishment of Independence.

There is no feature then, it cannot be too often repeated, either in the beginning, the conduct, or the issue of that proceeding, which can in any wise be tortured into a precedent for any of the fearful changes that have since perplexed the moral order, and rent the very foundations of civilized society. In substance and in form, in the *objects* and the *means* of success, and the immediate *uses* which success produced, it yet stands as a case upon its own merits, essentially variant and happily distinguishable in its own peculiar attributes. It ought never to be so falsely plead or ignorantly misconceived, as to seduce our judgments, nor "ought extenuate" in favor of the crimes and follies of a recent date—in favor of all those hateful consequences which have continued to flow, in rapid and multiform series, like devouring lava from the jaws of that compound mass of guilt—that portentous and convulsive shock of disorders in the political frame of the old world—that volcanick eruption, whose fires are still unsated and unquenched, scattering around the vapors and blaze of "pestilence and war," and shedding abroad the gleams of a baleful light—visible above and athwart the confines of our own horizon,

*"Like the meteors of a troubled Heaven."*

When we refer to the *uses*, the *objects* and the *means* of the American resistance, we perceive at once abundant marks of its distinctive character; and there is also presented a copious theme of self-examination, provided we are not afraid to "commune with our own hearts," in estimating the temper and aspect of the times now before us. We shall find in those annals the most impressive and salutary precepts of political rectitude, provided we dare pause for a moment

*“ In the devious paths where wanton fancy leads,”*

and listen to the lectures and reproofs of a sober reality.

It was not to the *uses* of rapine and of fraud that our forefathers converted the boon which they had attained by their probity and their valor. Their province was, not to change, but to save—not to confound, but to regulate—not to usurp, but to restore. Having passed their minority, they no longer remained under the tutelage of the parent state; but they did not therefore deny the control of conscience and of reason, or consider themselves absolved from the supremacy of the law, moral and divine. Having removed whatever of evil existed, they were still more anxious to retain the good; and, with the least possible indulgence of alteration, they were careful to preserve inviolate all their municipal institutions, the entire body of their jurisprudence, the rules and precedents of justice, the duties and obligations of public fidelity, and the whole stock of manners, habits and sentiments, which had descended from “the olden time.” They did not seize upon freedom, as

————— *“ A flambeau with zeal to destroy,”*

but they rather cherished a genial and steady flame, lighted at the altars of Faith, imparting the glow of Honor and the radiance of Truth.

In the *objects* which were avowed from the commencement, there was nothing of ruthless confusion or fantastic novelty. It was not a tempest in which “all the fountains of the great deep were broken up,” to efface every vestige of the ancient regimen; nor was it a wild Utopian voyage in quest of untried bliss, the visions of hypothesis, and all

*“ Such stuff as dreams are made of.”*

Having indeed been pressed into the quarrel, and compelled, as it seemed, to venture on that “sea of

trouble," rather than abandon forever the safeguard of every free and liberal privilege, our men of might and of council found themselves hurried on by the current of events, and the view from the helm became gradually enlarged, until fate committed us at last to the broad expanse of sovereign and independent power. But though this ensued from the storm, the original objects of contention were confined to a few great land marks of immunity, obvious and simple in themselves, but so highly venerable and momentous, that they can never be lost sight of without admitting the dominion of despotism, and over which it is to be hoped that no "extravagant and erring fiend" will ever be suffered to pass, however specious or plausible his disguise, without incurring a prompt and indignant chastisement.—It is not my purpose at this time to dwell and comment on the inherent franchise of self-legislation in the levying of imposts, which it was maintained the Colonists had brought hither along with the representative principle: But I do intend a very special and apposite allusion to those other cardinal principles of security of person and property, which were then deemed so deeply staked in an impartial administration of permanent and independent and dignified tribunals of justice, and in the efficacy of the old paramount remedial chartered writ of Habeas Corpus. In the document which is so often appealed to on this day, it may be well to recollect, that among the enumeration of grievances and oppressions, endured "under a prince whose character was said to be thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant," it is particularly and emphatically stated, that "he had made judges dependent on his will alone for the tenure of their offices—had combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution and unacknowledged by our laws, giving his assent for transporting us beyond seas to be tried for pretended offences—and had affected to render the military independent of, and superior to the civil power." Such being the recorded

language of that era, if a time should ever come when the patriotism of '76 is much talked of, but apparently little understood or imitated, when the spirit of liberty shall appear strong in words, but proportionably weak in deeds and perverted in practice, when this people, for instance, shall be seen passive and hoodwinked, and willing to endure from a juggling cabal or the strutting pageant of "a little brief authority," what they once would not tolerate from a powerful monarch—should such a crisis of apathy befall us, which Heaven avert, it will then be no flatterer's part to recur, with an earnest and pointed omen, to those elemental objects for which this good old league was first united, and with all appliances to rally, to warn and exhort the public mind by "the ghosts of departed principles."

If we are next questioned about the *means* by which our league was conducted to its end, it should be high matter of pride to reflect how totally unlike and opposite they were to all the steps of that atrocious conspiracy against "the poor world's peace," which has since written and proclaimed in letters of blood and fire, that the end justifies the means. The history of our war is not defiled with massacre and proscription and plunder, with horrid and obscene abominations, with systematic perfidy or infuriate sacrilege. The means here used were innocent and reasonable as the objects; nothing was left to the caprice, the fury, the insolence or the wantonness of tumult; and all was finally accomplished by the soundness, the moderation, the vigor and enterprize of what was then fondly believed to be the national character of America. If the objects thus attained are to be perpetuated, it can only be by preserving, or, if impaired, by regaining all the resources of that character; or else your independence itself, no longer nourished by the virtues which gave it birth, but wasting with the poison of vice, even if not strangled or led captive by foreign aggression, will have soon run its race, and become as

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“ *A morning dream,  
That flits aerial from the spreading eye.*”

If the maxim be true, that incidental events cannot make a nation *little*, while the *principles* remain that made it *great*, we must be strangely incurious, and unmindful of the appropriate meditations of this day, if we can suffer it entirely to pass off, without some casual notice, of what were the sentiments and manners of our fundamental polity, and how far they have lost or retained their influence. We must be perversely impatient if we can not even attend for an instant to a remembrance of those principles of *religious awe*, of purity of *honor*, and *union of public spirit*, by which the authors of our political establishment proved themselves through a long and arduous conflict, and to which they adhered as the fountain of all hope and their “salient living spring of generous and manly action.”

Well knowing that piety towards heaven is the surest bond of union and duty among men, and that under every popular form where power is lodged with the many, as the best security against their own excesses, they ought in an eminent degree to be impressed with all the restraints of a future accountability, the actors of our revolution were studious to cherish a sense of that holy worship, founded in the revealed will of the God of their forefathers, and transmitted through the wisdom and experience of ages, to strengthen and ennoble man's nature, to guide and enlighten his ignorance, to fit him with fortitude for the trials of life, and to console and support him with steadfastness amidst all the calamities, the treachery and disappointments of this earthly probation.

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“ *Soft and sweet  
As looks of charity, or voice of lambs  
That bleat upon the mountain, are the words  
Of Christian meekness, mission all divine,  
The law of love sole maxime.*”

Holding fast their allegiance to that law, neither lukewarm nor seduced amidst all the vicissitudes of their revolutionary fortune, our countrymen sought to invoke the giver of every good and perfect gift, and they labored as it were to consecrate the foundations of the commonwealth by the tributes of sacredness and the offices of public adoration and reverential homage.—At that time there was no “bad eminence” of a profane and spurious philosophy, which would affect to judge the ways and limit the operations of Providence by its own limsy and corrupted rules; which would relieve the multitude from superstition by consigning them a bewildered prey to their own passions and all the impostures and fanaticism of sceptical humour, and which would introduce the millenium of a perfect equality by reducing us to worse than the chaos of feudal discord and Gothic barbarism. It was not a time of prevailing depravity, in which relaxed and distempered morals resort to “the flattering unction” of doubt and disbelief—in which Infidelity with all his murky brood is perched on high, and “vice impatiently drinks in and applauds his hoarse and boding voice, while like a raven, he sits croaking universal death, despair and annihilation to the human kind.” It was rather a glorious opportunity, when the citizen buckled on the armour of righteousness that he might fight the battles of his country, when the politician was yet zealous to avow his trust in the precepts of inspired writ, when the same discipline animated every rank, and prepared them for every heroic sacrifice, by instilling the devotion of *honor*, and all the disinterestedness of *Public Spirit*.

Under the temperament of those ascendant and propitious principles every defect was supplied, all dangers were hazarded and difficulties overcome, and though the band of confederacy was itself but a rope of sand, yet the sinews of that system appeared strong in every part, and they seemed to move by the impulse of a single mind. It was thus that both leaders and followers co-operated heart and hand together; it

was thus that they settled and effectuated their plan, and commanded the respect of the world ; and it may not be omitted, that it was thus by evincing their own determined energy at an eventful moment they engaged the alliance of the virtuous and ill-fated Louis.— Nor can I here forbear to remark that, had the resolution of our ancestors been reserved for later and still severer trials, were they even now exposed to the last of the rebellious and miscreant successors of that hapless prince, it is not to be believed they would have stood trembling and tributary at the nod of the

*“ Bloody, remorseless, treacherous, kindless villain,”*

who, while he sits reeking on the violated throne of the Bourbons, aims by his plots and his myrmidons to ransack and subjugate the universe.

A nation which has thus once signally profited, and indeed been brought into life, by the early avail of correct and high-minded principles, ought of all others to be most watchful of its own integrity, and ever solicitous to arrest the progress of decay. It ought seriously to understand, what has been so often illustrated, that there may be an age when the genius of liberty has as fatal an enemy to encounter in the corruption of manners and sentiments, as it formerly encountered in the tyrants of the time. It ought to be anxiously apprized of all these perils, which chiefly beset its vital spirit of religion, of honor, and of union ; and even a “ youthful censor” ought not to be disdained while he points to some of the most predominant symptoms of alarm.

The effects of a prodigal and premature growth, the gigantic strides of luxury and opulence with all their refinements and desires, and the introduction of all those fashionable modes and arts which, by concealing the grossness of vice, serve to recommend her to a readier access, when veiled in the habiliments of delicacy—all these have been repeatedly traced, lamented and reprovèd.—Their tendency no doubt is to weaken

every sacred and noble tie, by inducing a sordid, an arrogant and voluptuous effeminacy, which has been commonly noted as a characteristic feature of commercial rankness. But it is no less certain, however opposite the extremes may appear, that the same people may be at once profusely *effeminate* and basely *illiberal*; and, in a region too, vast and extended as this is, inhabited by such motley descriptions, where the scheme of government itself may perhaps partake in a sort of instinctive thriftiness with the great mass of interior population, whose supreme good lies in increasing their stores, it may be reasonably feared, lest the canker of *strenuousness* on the one hand should blend its evil with the flood of *extravagancy* on the other to corrode and undermine all the strong holds of national security and happiness. There is a possible, mixture in the disposition of states, as well as of individuals, which combines the worst properties of the most yielding, idle and dissolute waste with those of a selfish, mean and deceitful saving; and, as if good could ever result as a medium from such a combination of the vilest ingredients, it not unfrequently happens, that a delusive nostrum, composed of the dregs of all sorts of errors, not less despicable but much less innocent than the ordinary quackeries of life, will seek with the brazen front of every pretender to pass itself off as the specific of a true political *economy*. Unless we are the favored people, unlike the rest of the earth, who at different periods have all had their "false teachers" of different kinds and degrees, it is not impossible we may be one day destined to witness the agency of such a counterfeit; and in that case, if we would know how to detect its mockeries, to distinguish the *true economy* from the *false*, it may be useful now to bear in mind, that the *true economy* does not consist in petty and temporizing expedients, but in the comprehensive arrangements of a well-appointed and well-ordered revenue; that it does not consist in the mere escape of expence by demolishing or stining the bulwarks of nati-



onal protection and glory, but in their provident care and timely employment; that it vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up to evaporate in the fumes of profession, but is always prepared and ready for every exigence; that it is not prone to squander in eccentric projects and cumbersome speculations that treasure, which should go to enrich, to decorate and fortify the domain, which should reward and call forth merit with munificence, which should patronize and encourage the improvements of science, and the culture of knowledge, not flippant, meretricious and superficial, but solid, chastened and durable; and lastly that *true æconomy* never falters in timorous calculation, when its funds are to be disbursed in vindicating the rights, in guarding the fame, and asserting the interests of the empire. Whenever self alone shall be admitted as our ruling passion at home, so that perchance an occasional compromise with exaction from abroad may even come to be preferred as cheaper and safer than the price and risk of defence; whenever we shall be seen, instead of avenging, to invite habitual insult and pillage by a tame and abject endurance; whenever such shall become the odious badges of our supine and degenerate lot;—should there be any war-worn veteran left, who once lavished his service to maintain the inflexible and free-born tenets of his country, and thus contributed in the battles of yore to foster for her name a hopeful, a gallant and goodly reputation, he may then indeed indignantly ejaculate and bitterly bewail this debasement:

“ *All our long avarice of honor lost,  
 “ Heap’d up in youth, and hoarded up for age.  
 “ Has honor’s fountain then suck’d back the stream?  
 “ He has, and hooting boys may dry-shod pass,  
 “ And gather pebbles on the naked ford.”*

Among the leading causes of apprehension, which this subject inspires, it would be recreant to overlook, how widely we have been led to depart from the proud

and vigilant tenaciousness of the earlier and most exalted republics, in that notable facility of our laws, by whose equivocal help though our numbers may be multiplied with wonderful accumulation, it is equally manifest that the root of our iniquities may be made to deepen and spread its branches, and be assisted to shoot forth with a much more quickened and luxuriant increase. There is no doubt a very considerable body not only of wealth, but of worth, and industry and talents, and all gentle and estimable qualities, natives of another soil, transplanted and incorporated in this community, that need no commendation and are above all censure. Nor was it surprizing that, with a territory almost boundless, and an appetite since displayed for enlarging it without measure, with a population so dispersed and restless, and in the puny state of our arts and manufactures, it should have formed part of the original policy to attract the tide of emigration to these shores, with no very fastidious concern or sagacious foresight, about the quarter from whence it might flow—or the sweepings and feculence of infamy that might sometimes possibly float with it. But between the proper rights of hospitality, equitably and beneficially exchanged, and the precipitate indiscriminate grant of every other right of indigenious descent, even to the very prostitution of every civil prerogative, there is or there ever ought to be a marked and manifold difference. At any rate it used to be so considered, and this was no paradox some twenty years ago, when the public were admonished with just and prophetic hints on this troublesome topic, *and it is yet so written in the book*, by the same hand, in whose grasp are this day held the tutelage and superintendance of the commonweal. What it would then have been within the pale of that high authority to believe, it can be now no heresy to suggest after such an interval, when the most woe-ful proofs have been magnified, and a daily memento presses on us, that must serve to demonstrate, to strengthen and rec ll the opinion soberly home to our

**bosoms.** It may therefore not be unpardonable now to insist, that our relish of social order, our affections, taste, intelligence and habits, and the unity of a common interest are not liable to be much condensed, enhanced, or purified by the infectious and overwhelming influx, the intrusive and aspiring swell, of all the scurf, the dross and refuse, the fopperies the madness and crime, the fugitives the disturbers and malecontents, the plague and guilt of Europe. It is not by such an accession worse by far than the noxious gift of Pandora, that we shall ever be taught to exhibit to the world any remnant of that singleness of heart, which actuated and united the public spirit in “the reverend simplicity of ancients times.”

This pest of a foreign leaven is most to be deprecated, where its infusion may be apt to communicate a too potent and incessant acrimony to those intestine rivalships, which though they sometimes serve as an antidote to lethargy, have more frequently proved the bane of every excellence, and worked the untimely catastrophe of freedom. Under such aggravated distractions to which every free people are more or less predisposed in proportion as they are free, should they happen at the same time to be of a sensual, a timid and mercenary cast, the most easy and immediate advantage is then to be taken of their divided and exasperated weakness by any invading or intriguing usurper, who may fancy that the prize is “worth the winning.” —But if, with a character yet ardent, robust and alert, they are flushed with these violent disagreements, it is then observed that the immediate death blow is not so usually given from *without*, but that the rancor of parties *within*, through whose maze lurks the scorpion of ambition, rising at last into fierce and cruel broils, “lets slip the dogs of civil war” and liberty, like sin, is torn to the core and devoured by her own offspring.—Even however should this tragic termination be delayed or avoided, it is still apparent that in the meantime the well being of every dominion must be materially

and infinitely prejudiced by this rage of contending factions, in which, with all the fluctuations of blind chance, perhaps the better half of the capacity, the skill, the science, the courage, the capital substance, the moral virtue, the honor and public spirit of the whole may be shut out from employment by the vindictiveness and monopoly of the triumphant part, and the high behests, the rewards and offices of state withheld or conferred according to the changeable politics of the day. If other communities have split on this rock, and we would not mingle our fate with theirs, and prematurely leave it to history like an antiquarian, to "pick our constitution's fragments from the sand" we should be thoughtful in time not to brave the hurricane of factious commotion, to which we may be exposed in so many quaters of this complex structure of government, and through the immense space which it sways surcharged with such innumerable temptations to conflict. Moved as our political machinery is by so many nice and intricate springs, revolving as it does on its axis with a double set of wheels, the general compact and the state sovereignties, it is very conceivable what loss and derangement may be produced, if by any artful or bungling contrivance they should be made to clash or run counter; and hence it may be inferred how much must hereafter depend, in the bustles of an emergency, on the dispassionate and well-affected judgment, the cool collected wisdom, and the undivided practised abilities of all the master spirits that dwell under this mighty fabric, among whom there are yet a surviving few that assisted at its formation, in order to keep the head and the several co-ordinate spheres active, and upright, and true to their proper functions—

——— " *My soul akes*

" *To know when two authorities are up,*

" *Neither supreme, how soon confusion*

" *May enter 'twixt the gap of both, and take*

" *The one by t'other."*

It would be an invidious and wearisome discourse to expatiate on all the possible hazards, the quicksands and the pitfalls of ruin, that border in our way, and which are most perilous because they are unheeded or unseen.—If we would pass on respected and prospering, we should neither reel in idleness nor wander into forbidden fields, neither sink faint-hearted, nor be allured into the entanglements of obliquity. If we would show ourselves worthy of being saved, we must invoke the same celestial auspices that smiled on our dawning rise; we must not be forever running after new guides, and setting up strange idols; neither ought we to suppress an honest emulation, “that unbought grace of life and cheap defence of nations,” by requiting desert with disgust, and neglecting the trophies of departed goodness. Next to the great first source of all good, there is an ingenuous debt of honor due to the chosen instruments of his favor, which does not grow obsolete like other claims, but is to be spontaneously acknowledged, and can never be depreciated except by an insensible and scandalous breach of the basis of all credit.—Their disregard or indifference to this obligation has indeed generally announced and sometimes hastened the downfall, and it has in every age been the opprobrium of republics, until it is now repeated, almost with the triteness and currency of a proverb:

*“An habitation giddy and unsure*

*“Hath he that buildeth on the vulgar heart.”*

It is to be presumed that the American republic means to render herself a signal exception to this remark, and therefore that the present seeming pause in her offerings of gratitude to that august dead, whose deeds exceed all speech, is but the forerunner of extraordinary preparations—Else it were much to be marvelled that, while we have enjoyed the continuance of an abundant peace, and are even called upon to de

wise new modes of expending a superfluous treasure, no pittance has yet been allotted to the memory of the chief of chiefs, who lived but to save, to bless and glorify the land. Eight long years of vexatious war constituted but a portion of those transcendent toils, in which all the faculties of his soul were strained and dedicated to the common welfare with a magnanimity that defies all parallel. The same term has nearly elapsed since WASHINGTON glided to the tomb, and yet no marble has risen to tell that he is not forgotten. There is neither "storied urn" nor "animated bust;" and the traveller, who should seek to view what gorgeous and emblematic pillars America has erected to the mourned and illustrious guardian, the benefactor and father of her political existence, to whom she owes that she is reputed abroad, might be tempted to enquire, what hostile irruption or "fierce earth-shaking power" has been busy among us to destroy all the towering columns, the statues and armorial ornaments, the escutcheons and ensigns, the mausoleums and monumental works of national renown—But though the national will has hitherto awarded "nor stone nor brass nor parchment," and the enquirer sickens at this crying sin, if he should happen to direct his footsteps and repair to this assembly, he will find that all traces of gratitude have not yet fled, but that they are here most vivid and indelible, where the living hero was most seen and intimately known. His eulogy is not now a subject for the feeble voice that addresses you; since it would rather be a flight

———"for a muse of fire, that would ascend  
"The highest Heaven of invention,"

to emblazon those exploits, which are inscribed on the pinnacles of Fame with the pens of adamant. If there is, however, no other public device to commemorate his greatness, this Society at least may be permitted to show forth that love and veneration, equally mindful

in life and in death, which are engraved in the tablets of the breast. On this spot there are likewise those who know best how to "mourn the man," such as he could be, gentle and generous as well as lofty and pre-eminent; and, while his sainted spirit was yet on earth, they could have vouched as familiar witnesses, and might have said of him—

*"He is gracious, if he be observed"—*

*"He hath a tear for pity, and a hand*

*"Open as day for melting charity."*

Arrayed before us, as part of this day's exhibition, we survey the tender and promising blossoms of his bounty, sheltered from the nipping frosts of indigence, and snatched like wild flowers from the open waste, nurtured and imbued by the hand of care from a fund which is perennial, benign, well placed and well designed. While it is our distinction to join in replenishing this stream of his benevolence, may it also be our endeavor to breathe the freshness of all his virtues. May their lustre never be tarnished by the blasting milderews of malignity, nor wither in the rust of our forgetfulness. Let us treasure up the accents of his farewell legacy, and enshrine that manual he has left as an oracle of counsel.—Let us cleave to the principles he has sanctified, and so exemplify our creed, that we may be entitled to wear the badge of Washington, and as followers of his standard, may vie together in harmonious concert.




## A P P E N D I X.



**T**HE merits of the foregoing ORATION, have been thought sufficient to give it a claim to exemption from the oblivious fate too certainly attending News-paper publications, whatever may be their pretensions to longevity. In thus presenting it to the public, our chief, but ample reward will be drawn from the consideration—that we have been instrumental in preserving a valuable specimen of political discernment, displayed in all the drapery of elegant and luminous composition.

AVAILING ourselves of the occasion we have been induced to annex—certain Articles of the Association—at whose particular instance the ORATION was delivered, together with a short account of the progress of the Institution; with a view to promote the laudable objects, which for seven years appear to have engaged the exertions of the “WASHINGTON SOCIETY of ALEXANDRIA.”





# CONSTITUTION

## OF THE

# WASHINGTON SOCIETY.

*INSTITUTED THE 28th OF JANUARY, 1800.*

“OUR country having lost a citizen in the late illustrious **GEORGE WASHINGTON**, the able, successful, and heroic leader of our armies during the revolutionary war, which gave us Independence; the late wise, moderate and pacific President of the United States, whose unsullied virtue, wisdom and magnanimity, in discharging the duties of his public functions, whose rectitude and benevolence in his station of a man and citizen, were at once an elevated example, and the source of unequalled benefits to the community: we deem it not only a tribute justly due to his memory, but the important and useful means of giving a lasting impression, and exciting a generous emulation of exalted merit, to adopt a plan the best calculated to preserve in our minds, and in those of our fellow-citizens, an animated recollection of those virtues which so eminently contributed to his glory.

“As human nature derives from its peculiar capacity for social institution, all its greatness, and many of its most exalted qualities; as every effort of individual man, unaided by social co-operation, is comparatively weak and inefficient of the greatest moral and political ends, so particular objects of beneficence have been ever found to be advanced with most energy and effect, by subordinate associations of men, pursuing sincerely in concert, the attainment of their purpose.

“To the end therefore that we may in the most becoming and effectual manner commemorate the virtues and the glorious actions of that much lamented citizen, and that we may aid and perpetuate certain charities which his humane and munificent mind delighted to exercise, we do voluntarily associate ourselves under the appellation hereafter mentioned, and do adopt the following articles for our constitutional regulation, and to an honorable observance of which we do acknowledge ourselves to be pledged.

“THIS Society shall be unlimited as to the number of its members, and shall hereafter be known and called by the name of “THE WASHINGTON SOCIETY OF ALEXANDRIA.”

“THE twenty-second of February, shall be considered and observed as an Anniversary by this Society; and on this day, in each year, an oration shall be delivered by a Member of the Society, to be chosen by ballot at the preceding Anniversary.

“EVERY Member upon his admission into, and subscription to this Association, shall pay *Four Dollars* for the establishment of an immediate fund; and shall moreover, contribute *One Dollar* at the expiration of every three months thereafter. A sum not less than *Two Hundred Dollars* shall be annually appropriated to the support of the WASHINGTON FREE SCHOOL, in the manner deemed most expedient by the committee hereafter mentioned: PROVIDED ALWAYS, That if any Member upon his admission shall pay in advance *Thirty Dollars*, he shall be thereafter exonerated from all the contributions required by this constitution.”

It is necessary to state that several years before the death of General *Washington*, he made a donation of *One Thousand Pounds*, to the Trustees of the *Alexandria Academy*, paying the interest annually during his life, and after his decease the principal was placed in the hands of the Trustees. The object of this donation was the education of poor children. The money was vested in productive stock, and the interest has been expended annually in the way intended. *The Washington Society*, whose purpose it was to further the views of this illustrious benefactor, have since their organization, contributed a like sum, *annually*, which, together with some aid derived from the CORPORATION OF ALEXANDRIA, has paid for the Tuition of FORTY CHILDREN of *Poor Parents*.

THE Society whose number at its commencement did not exceed SIXTY OR SEVENTY PERSONS, has been progressively enlarging, and at this time consists of nearly TWO HUNDRED MEMBERS, several of whom reside in distant parts of the UNITED STATES.