AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED AT

OGDENSBURGH, NEW-YORK,

ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY 1827,

AT THE

CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY

OF

American Independence.

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ORATION.

FELLOW-CITIZENS:

It has been the custom of all nations to celebrate the periodical return of the happy epochs of their history, with demonstrations of joy and triumph. The spirit of patriotism is refreshed when the inhabitants of a common country, leaving their homes and occupations, and laying aside all causes of difference, all distinctions of sect or party, unite in recalling together the moments of their country's glory. With similar feelings we hail the return of this proud day; a day which raised this country from a state of colonial subjection and oppression, to the rank of an independent state, destined to hold an important station among the powers of the earth; and with hearts warmed with patriotic ardour, and minds deeply impressed with the greatness of the occasion, we meet as members of one family, to congratulate each other on this auspicious event, to look back on the circumstances attending it, and to consecrate anew in our hearts those principles of civil liberty to which it owed its birth.

The actors in this eventful drama have left this mortal scene: another generation has succeeded; but their actions, and the motives and principles of their conduct, are engraven by the pen of history, on monuments more durable than brass or marble. Impartial posterity will not hesitate to do ample justice to the uprightness of their cause, to the purity of their intentions, to assert with them, that it was an urgent necessity that constrained them to separate from the parent state; that a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evincing a design to reduce them under an absolute despotism: it was their right, as it was their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future safety.

Let me, my friends and fellow-citizens, awaken in your minds the recollection of a few facts in the history of your country, to illustrate this remark.

Three hundred years since, this extensive western continent, now covered with populous states, advancing with rapid march to

a comparison with the ancient world, in all the comforts and enjoyments with which art and science crown the exertions of man, was first disclosed to the astonished eyes of the rest of the globe. The excitement which this event gave to the mind of man, was felt in every direction on the continent of Europe. To its inhabitants, cramped within a small part of the habitable earth, oppressed by the domination of ancient systems, which held in subjection the intellect of a great part of society, the opening of a new world presented a boundless theatre for the efforts of ambition and enterprise, with objects of pursuit suitable to the desires of all.

The influence of this great event materially contributed to the revival of letters in Europe, which was succeeded by a general advancement in the arts and sciences, and a developement of the great principles of civil liberty, which the ponderous appendages of the feudal system, and the darkness of superstition had hid from the view. The effect of the great struggle which ensued between the rights of man and ancient abuses, was no where more visible than in the land of your ancestors. A fermentation commenced there, which for more than half a century, set at war the people and the throne. The civil and religious rights of mankind were maintained with inflexible ardour; and authority, unwilling to slacken its reins, a convulsion followed which brought a monarch to the block. It was at an early period of these civil troubles, that a number of families in England, sorely oppressed by the denial of those religious privileges which they valued dearer than life, and desirous to withdraw from that scene of contention, which the tyranny set over them was gradually covering with darker and darker shades, retired to Holland; a country at that time the foremost in the defence of the Protestant liberties of Europe, and the asylum of the oppressed of all nations, there to remain while the storm of persecution lasted. Several years they resided in that country; but despairing at length of any change at home favourable to religious toleration, they came to the solemn resolution to cross the wide ocean to the newly discovered world, to establish there, in the depths of its forests, a foundation for their civil and religious liberties, far beyond any human control. They accordingly returned to England to prepare for the enterprise; and having fitted out a vessel, embarked from Plymouth on the 6th September, 1620. Such an undertaking to those who resolved on it, must have been of the most appalling nature. The improvements in the science of navigation

and ship building, render a voyage across the ocean now of slight moment ; but vessels at that period were greatly inferior in comfort and speed to those of the present day. The ocean was then but rarely crossed ; by none but the boldest and most resolute ; men, who, with souls cased in adamant, launched forth upon it, to engage in scenes of distant enterprise in other portions of the new world. Valiant soldiers and hardy seamen alone were seen upon its broad waters. Commerce had not then begun to send forth even the man of ordinary business, the merchant to traverse it. But who composed the little band of pilgrims, who for the protection of their rights and liberties ventured on the perilous voyage ? Not alone men in the prime of life, with constitutions hardened to fatigue, and minds cnured to struggle with difficulty, but mothers and their children, clinging to their husbands and fathers, composed two-thirds of the whole company, which amounted to 101 souls. They left the comforts of a world grown old in civilization and improvement ; they bid farewell to their native land, now glancing upon them to revive in their memory the fond recollection of the scenes of their childhood and riper age, gloomy as they had been rendered by the oppressions from which they fled, still delightful to dwell upon ; not as of their former departure for a short and temporary period, but to build themselves up a country in a distant hemisphere, which was to be their home and habitation for ever.

The voyage of these pilgrims, says the historian, was a boisterous passage of more than two months. Twice they returned, from the leakiness of the small ship in which they embarked, which they were obliged finally to abandon. Their fears and anxieties during the various perils of the voyage, the sickness with which many of them must have been oppressed, unaccustomed to the sea, and of the most delicate sex and feeble infancy, may be partially conceived; but it is scarcely possible for us duly to measure the gloom of their sensations, at contemplating under these circumstances the prospect before them. When from the deck of their little vessel, they looked forward to behold the place of their last refuge and asylum looming above the horizon, it was not to them a promised land flowing with milk and honey, but a land of thorns and briars. The whole continent of America, except the small settlement in Virginia, made a few years previously by Capt. Smith, near 1000 miles distant, was still an entire wilderness, overgrown with forests vegetating in rank luxuriance, and inhabited only by wild animals or barbarous tribes of men, who, from the frightful narratives constantly brought home

by voyagers to the new world of the cruelty of its inhabitants, must have been viewed with intense dread and alarm. The settlement in Virginia, from the many abortive attempts made to effect it, the entire destruction of one colony by famine and the inroads of the savages, and the severe distresses those which succeeded it endured, so far from being a subject of encouragement, could only have tended more fully to damp their spirits.

They arrived on the bleak and barren coast of this inhospitable wilderness, in the most inclement season of the year, on the 25th December, in a district which now forms part of the state of Massachusetts. Yet, under these most cheerless circumstances, they a few weeks after, in a country covered with snow and ice, commenced the laying out of a town and the erection of houses, and formed their able-bodied men into a military company to defend themselves against the savages. They agreed upon a number of laws for their civil and military government, and named the place of their settlement "Plymouth," in honour of the port from which they had sailed.

Such was the first colony formed in New England. These were the earliest struggles of your ancestors, to establish in the new world, a foundation for their civil and religious liberties.

The heroic fortitude, undaunted resolution, and persevering energy which distinguished their conduct, are unparalleled in the history of the world. The thirst of power, the love of money, or the ardour of curiosity, have led men to endure every form of danger and distress; to traverse land and water on distant enterprises, to dive into the depths of mines, to scale lofty mountains, to scorch under the line, or winter amid polar ice; but history does not present an instance of such self-devotion for principle alone, as was exemplified in the conduct of the first settlers of New England. That spirit of ardent piety, of reliance on the protection of that Providence, for the worship of whom they had encountered the perils they endured, could alone have supported them throughout. To the surprise of these colonists, the news carried back to England of their settlement soon spread about, and its successful progress led others to join them, equally anxious to escape from civil and religious oppression. The continued troubles in that country accelerated emigration. Three other colonies were soon formed around them; Massachusetts Bay, Hartford, and New Haven. Other parts of the United States were founded on the same principles of civil and religious liberty. I have spoken particularly of the first settlement of

New England, because that part of the early history of the American colonies, is necessarily of more interest to you. In course of time, these various settlements grew up into large and flourishing colonies, containing after the lapse of a century and a half, three millions of inhabitants.

And now, fellow-citizens, in regard to the rights and wrongs of these colonies, in the struggle which in future times was to separate them from the land from which they sprung, we are presented on the pages of history with this remarkable fact; that from the first location made by any of the subjects of Great Britain on the continent throughout the successive stages of colonization, all their settlements, with a single exception, were effected solely by individual enterprise. Except in the state of Georgia, whose settlement was of very modern date, the crown of England granted in no case a single shilling to fit out an enterprise, to build ships, or provide resources for it. And not only were the first settlements made without her aid, but in the subsequent growth of these colonies, throughout all their dangers and difficulties, it was in no solitary instance extended to them. After clearing the wilderness, and planting towns and villages, which might have promised the colonists some hope of comfort, their quiet was constantly molested, their lives and property endangered by the native savages, who hung upon their settlements with the burning brand in one hand, and the tomahawk in the other. The Indian wars into which they were led, were of frequent occurrence, and attended with heavy expenses, which these exiles from their native land, founders amidst accumulated hardships of a new state, were obliged to endure without the slighest assistance from the mother country. And yet, in all the wars of Great Britain, though arising from causes in which they had no concern, they were incessantly involved, and were forced to wage them at their own expense. In some of these wars, the colonies were made the theatre of contention, from the mutual desire of the European powers to seize each other's possessions in America, in which they suffered more than any other part of the British dominions; yet in the arrangements for the peace which followed, they were not in the slightest manner suffered to have a voice.

The utter indifference which the colonists experienced from Great Britain, was exchanged in half a century for a manifestation of feelings towards them more flattering to their pride, but not more liberal or kind. Their increasing growth and flourishing condition, and more than all, the commercial spirit which began to arise among them, attracted the notice solely, because it alarmed

the mercantile jealousy of the mother country. "The fisheries, shipping, and foreign West India trade of the colonies had scarcely become perceptible, before the British merchants caught and sounded the alarm; and as soon as the colonists, in the progress of wealth and population, undertook to manufacture for their own consumption a few articles of the first necessity, such as hats and paper, a clamour was raised by the manufacturers in England, and the power of the British government was exerted to remove the cause of the complaint. The increase of emigration even became a cause of alarm, and measures were early taken to prevent it."

In a short time these feelings received an entire developement.—Her mercantile jealousy, desirous to monopolize the trade of her colonies, led to the acts of navigation of 1651 and 1660, which obliged them to export all their productions to her own markets in her own vessels—acts which fully accomplished her desires—converting them into mere instruments for her aggrandizement, and which have in consequence been suffered to remain with their oppressive weight on the colonies in her possession.

The conduct of Great Britain to her North American possessions, in thus cramping their industry and checking their trade, it can scarcely be believed was quietly borne by colonists who had but lately fled from oppression at home. It invaded the whole course of their sentiments—struck a blow at the fundamental principles of their new policy. Although from the circumstances of their emigration, they felt themselves in some manner connected with the mother country, they never from the moment of their first settlement entertained any other idea, but that they were so far an independent state, that none but their own legislatures had a right to pass any laws affecting themselves; invariably denying the power of the King and Parliament to interfere with their internal policy. They proceeded to treat with the natives, to erect towns and villages, and to cultivate the lands without the slightest reference to Great Britain. We have seen that no assistance of any kind was afforded to them by the mother country; but it is not less true, that the colonial records do not show a single instance in which the founders of this new state would consent to apply to her for aid. They also considered themselves fully entitled to establish what form of civil polity they pleased, and in a short time founded governments in all the colonies, on the principle of popular representation. The historians of the colonies, both British and American, relate abundant facts in proof of this statement.

On their first landing at Plymouth, the colonists proceeded to

elect their own Governor, and who was for some years after annually elected by the people, although the colony was established under a Royal Patent. Fourteen years after, a House of Deputies arose in Massachusetts, by the mere force of popular sentiment, without any authority from the government of Great Britain. In 1635, when a rumor reached the colonies that it was contemplated in England to unite them under a general government, the Magistrates and Clergy of Plymouth declared, that "if such a government was sent, the colony ought not to accept it, but *defend* her lawful possessions."

In 1643, the four New England colonies, without applying to the government of Great Britain for approbation, united into a confederacy for mutual offence and defence, called the United Colonies of New England; which on its own authority, levied imposts, raised military forces, and made treaties with the Indians, and with the colonies belonging to other European nations. In 1648, this confederacy sent to Canada, a proposal that there should be perpetual peace between the colonies, *even though the mother country was at war with France.*

In 1652, Massachusetts established of its own authority a mint, and issued silver coin, on one side of which was marked that year, as "the era of Independence."* On the reverse a tree, the usual symbol of Liberty. For thirty years afterwards it continued to issue silver coin, and on every piece was impressed *that date*, and not the year in which it was struck.

Having experienced great distress during the civil wars in England, from the general interruption of commerce; on the ascendancy of the republican party, some of their friends in the mother country wrote to the Governor and Council of Massachusetts, advising them to apply to parliament for aid, assuring them of success, &c. They took the subject into consideration, and returned an answer in these simple but expressive terms—"We decline the motion, on the ground that if we should put ourselves under the protection of parliament, we should be subject to all such laws as they should make; or at least such as they should impose on us."

In 1692, Massachusetts passed an express law, solemnly denying the competency of Parliament to impose any tax upon them, without the consent of their Legislature.

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* These are the words of the historians.

The same spirit of independence existed in the Southern Colony established in Virginia. Fourteen years after it was founded, a House of Burgesses came into existence, though neither the King nor Council had given any powers or directions for it. During the troubles in England, Virginia, who favoured the royal authority, resisted the squadron sent over by Cromwell to subdue it, and submitted at length only on the following terms: 1. That the people of Virginia shall be subject to the Commonwealth of England, not as a conquered country, but as a country submitting by *her own voluntary act*, and shall enjoy the same privileges and freedom as the free people of England. 2. That they shall have a free trade as the people of England to *all* places and with all nations. 3. That they shall be free from all taxes, customs and impositions whatsoever, and none shall be imposed on them *without the consent of their General Assembly*.

By the terms of this capitulation, Virginia appears to have been fully awake to the effects of the navigation acts upon her trade. Massachusetts was early alive to the subject, and resisted the enforcement of them, as long as resistance was effectual. The officer sent from England to collect the customs at Boston, was recalled upon his representation that he was in danger of being punished with death, by virtue of an ancient law, as a subverter of the constitution. When taxed with disobedience, the General Court did not hesitate to allege that the acts of navigation were an invasion of the rights and privileges of the subjects of his majesty in that colony—*they being not represented in Parliament**.

We thus perceive that the doctrine of Independence, which was formally announced to the world by the colonists on the 4th of July, 1776, was not the sudden offspring of the peculiar events of that period, but had existed in their minds from the first plantation of

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* In the sketch I have given of the pertinacity with which the colonies resisted the dominion of Parliament over them, I have traced no new ground.—Writers of the first reputation, English and American, have dwelt upon it, and furnished abundant testimonies on the subject. Doctor Ramsay, whose colonial history is remarkable for its moderate and philosophical tone, asserts that there was always a large party in New-England who considered that they had a *natural right* to independence. It was in view of this fact, that Lord Mansfield, in 1776, expressed himself before Parliament in these words—"The bad consequences of planting Northern Colonies were early predicted.

their settlements, and manifested in every mode short of a total rejection of the dominion of Great Britain. They brought the *germ* of it with them when they left the shores of the mother country—nurtured and watered it with affectionate and devoted attachment, during their progress from infancy to maturity. Their feebleness long rendered resistance to the claims of the parent state hopeless; but the nursling plant was to "grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength." The period would at length arrive when it would be suffered to expand in the open air—to strike deep roots in the earth—to afford, under its wide spreading branches, protection and shade, and to raise its towering top for the admiration of mankind.

In invariably asserting their right to legislate for themselves, and resisting the authority of the British Parliament over them, the conduct of the colonists will stand for ever justified on the pages of history.

The colonial system of modern times, by which the interest of the parent country is the paramount object, to which that of the colonies is secondary and subservient—a system that converts them into mere satellites to revolve round her Imperial Orb, to add increased splendour and magnificence to her political system—is not less an absurdity in the eye of reason than contrary to the uniform previous practice of the world.

When some of the inhabitants of a state, from the overgrowth of its population, or from causes of dissatisfaction, choose to migrate and settle on the unappropriated parts of the earth *at their own charge*, it is in the order of nature that they are to form distinct and independent communities. They will naturally maintain intercourse with the ancient state; and if, in the feebleness of their infancy, they require protection, and prefer to ask it of the mother country, they are in justice bound to afford an equivalent for this

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Devanant, in the last century, foresaw that whenever America found herself of sufficient strength to contend with the mother country, she would endeavour to form herself into a separate and independent state. This has been the constant object of New-England almost from her earliest infancy."

The facts I have stated I have taken immediately from "Holmes' American Annals," and Walsh's Appeal from the Judgments of Great Britain," principally from the last, where many other testimonies are collected on the subject, placed in an irresistible point of view.

assistance. But allegiance and protection are reciprocal; where the latter is not given, the former cannot be rightfully asked. The colonies, when grown to maturity, and able to take care of themselves, founded and fostered as they were by their own labour and industry, have a natural right to be their own rulers, and to disclaim dependence on any extraneous power whatever. On this principle, the colonies, in the early ages of the world went forth to people the earth. When an ancient state spread around it, its scions, each in its turn, became a distinct and separate community. In the account given in holy scripture of the migration of the first families from the stock of Abraham, we no where find they paid tribute or acknowledged dependence on the patriarchal stock. If perpetual allegiance to the parent state is agreeable to the designs of Providence, in what manner can we account for the division of the world, as at present, into so many various and independent communities? The colonies of ancient Greece were formed on the same principles, and their early history bears a very striking resemblance to that of the colonies of North America.

"They were undertaken (says a distinguished writer) by private individuals, with no authority from the government, and as they were generally directed towards distant and transmarine settlements, they retained but a slight connection with their original countries. The parent state, indeed, considered the colony as a child at all times entitled to great favour and assistance, and owing, in return, much gratitude and respect; but, moreover, considered it as an emancipated child over whom no direct authority or jurisdiction was claimed. The colony settled its own form of government—elected its own magistrates—and made peace or war with its neighbours as an independent state, which had no occasion to wait for the approbation or consent of the parent city. The colonists indeed remembered the land of their fathers with filial affection and respect; they retained a predilection for its customs and laws, as well as its religion and language. In war, they generally followed the fortunes of the metropolis, as *allies upon equal terms;* but as they were perfectly independent, as they received no protection from her, and often equalled her in resources, they *always refused* to come forward as auxiliaries when unfair terms were proposed. Thus the Sicilian colonies refused to admit an Athenian army into their territories for the purpose of resting on an expedition; and in the Persian war, the Republic of Syracuse, when entreated by the Lacedemonians to aid the common cause, refused, unless their Chief Magistrate was

intrusted with the command of the united forces of the Commonwealth. During the dissentions between the different states of Greece, Corinth attempted to exact from one of her own colonies the usual mark of filial attachment—its aid to her cause.—The colonists resisted. She endeavoured to obtain it by force. They appealed to Athens, and formed instead, an alliance with that Republic."

The modern doctrine of the implicit allegiance of a colony to the mother country is the creature of mere arbitrary assumption.—On the discovery of America, the ecclesiastical power of Rome first asserted a claim to the whole continent, as the property of the Church, of which it was the head. Though populated by extensive nations, their right to their native soil was deemed a nullity; and, by a singular course of reasoning, the head of the Christian Church construed his office to civilize and convert the heathen, as conveying the right to violate their property. This pretension was too monopolizing to be long regarded by the powers of Europe, who felt a strong desire to share in the tempting spoils of the new world, and sought for some ground on which they also might found a claim to portions of its territory. A tacit understanding soon arose among them that each nation should possess an exclusive right to that part which had been first visited by its ships, on which principle their adverse claims were afterwards settled. A principle, however, not less absurd than the doctrine assumed by the authorities of Rome.

As Providence designed the earth for the *use* of all mankind, the actual appropriation and occupation of hitherto vacant parts, in fulfilling its designs, alone gives a title to property in the soil.—All nations possess an equal right to spread their superabundant population over the unsettled parts of the earth, and to acquire a first claim to it by actual possession. If the mere fact of first discovery is sufficient to establish a title to a country, an adventurous commercial nation might have been enabled to assert a claim to the whole of the new hemisphere, without setting foot upon it, to the exclusion of all other powers. But the American continent was not an *un*-inhabited country. It was peopled by various nations who may have been there from the earliest ages. They were in general in the first stages of society, but had made some advances in improvement; they cultivated some of their native productions, and made their own fabrics for clothing and domestic uses. They were barbarous in their manners; but equally so were the ancient

Gauls, Celts, Saxons, and Britons on the other continent, from whom most of the present nations of Enrope derive as well their origin, as their title to the countries they possess. In some parts of America, as in Mexico and Peru, they were a civilized people. They lived in houses of stone; had edifices of magnificent structure, roads, canals, and bridges of ingenious workmanship; and possessed costly articles made from the precious metals with which their country abounded. Did the mere discovery of these nations give to any European power a right to divest them of their territorial possessions? Visionary, however, as the claim was, there was none, at first, to question it; for all the states of Europe were equally interested in maintaining it. When, in after times, the rise and progress of the European colonies began to form a topic of history, the writers of Spain and Portugal, sensible of the futility of the ground these states assumed, adopted a new basis on which to build their claim to their possessions in the New World. The first expeditions to South America and Mexico, planned by individuals, under grants from the Spanish crown, were all of a military nature; and the territory entered upon was wrested from its possessors by force of arms. The right to the country by conquest—admitted by the previous custom of the world as a valid ground of territorial acquisition—was then uniformly laid down as the basis on which the claim of the sovereigns of Spain and Portugal to their American possessions, rested.

In the settlement of North America, the crown of Great Britian obtained a right to the soil neither by conquest, nor by purchase from the natives. She invariably rested her claim solely on the fact of her being the first discoverer. In no instance, indeed, even took formal possession of it by the erection of forts, or other modes of actual occupation. The rightful owners in North America, at the commencement, were Carver, and his little band, who settled on the rock of Plymouth; Smith, and his associates, on James' River; William Penn, and his followers, on the Delaware; and those other individuals in other places, who established, at their own expense, settlements on the Continent, after having purchased of the natives the soil on which they located. Slender, however, as was the claim of Great Britain to North America, she soon began to exercise ownership over it by dividing it into two provinces, and issuing patents to individuals and companies for portions of it. The colonization under these patents gave her the colour of sovereignty over the settlements, but the colonists appear to have considered it

only as nominal, exhibiting, as we have seen, in all their actions, that they felt virtually independent.

To return to a history of the colonies: the last encroachment on their rights and liberties to which we have referred, was the assumption of a right by Parliament to control their trade, by the enactment of the navigation laws of 1651 and 1660. This monopolizing step, which secured to Great Britain the benefit of all the industry of her colonies, appeared to be the utmost limit to which she would venture to extend her power; and in this state of commercial subjection their relations continued for a long time without any change.

The colonies were destined, however, in course of time to witness an attempt at a still further exercise of dominion over them—an attempt that finally burst the ties that bound them to the parent state. Though the resources of their country had been made subservient to it; though they had cheerfully contributed aid to carry on the foreign wars in which they were involved by it—no contribution in the form of a direct tax had yet been drawn from them by the mother country, without the consent of their legislatures.—Great Britain having closed the war of '63 with honour and glory—a youthful monarch risen to the throne, inspiring the brightest hopes of a triumphant reign; in the fullness of her prosperity; in the intoxication of her pride—formed the rash project of raising a revenue from the colonies, by intrenching on a principle which they regarded as the life blood of their liberties. A proposal having been made by the ministry to Parliament in 1765, to raise an additional military force, which was ill received, as imposing a grievous burden on the people at the close of an expensive though glorious war; the ministry silenced the murmers of opposition, by intimating the plan of raising the necessary supplies by a tax on the colonies. In pursuance of which, a bill was brought in and passed, laying a tax on stamps used in the foreign settlements of Great Britain.

On the arrival of intelligence of this act in America, the colonists were thrown into a state of intense excitement. The idea of being subjected to the legislation of Parliament, where they were not represented, they had resisted from the infancy of their settlement—and would in no shape, and under no circumstances, tolerate for a moment. It was the hideous form of Tyranny itself stalking across the Atlantic to destroy, with its pestilential breath, all that they held dear and sacred. They were resolved to strangle

the monster, the moment it touched their shores. The indignation roused by this act would probably at that time have produced the Revolution, had the ministry attempted to force it upon the people. They judged it prudent to repeal it; but repealed it only in form. Bent on maintaining the supremacy of Parliament, whatever might be the result, they connected with the repeal a declaratory act, asserting its right to bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever—a measure that served only to keep the minds of the people of America fully awake to the further exercise of the right. Various measures were afterwards adopted to subdue their independent spirit. It was at the commencement of this scheme of Parliament, to bind the colonies like captives to the triumphal car of the mother country, by controlling them by a foreign legislature without their consent, that the friends of civil liberty in England, struck with the gross injustice of the measure, opposed the head-long career of the ministry with a display of eloquence, not excelled in the most classic periods of Greece and Rome. But the ministry were driven on by a blind infatuation. No argument could convince—no eloquence could persuade them. A few years after, they again attempted to carry their plans into execution in the colonies. They indulged the vain idea, that by disguising the tax, under the form of a commercial duty, it would meet with less resistance, and in 1775 passed the memorable act imposing a duty on tea imported into the colonies. The revolution may be said to have commenced, when information of this act reached America. The minds of the people that had been irritated and smarting under the declaratory act, would admit of no parley or accommodation respecting the measure now announced. The officers of the customs sent over to receive the duty were seized—the first vessel that brought tea into their ports boarded, and its cargo thrown into the sea. Associations were formed throughout the country not to use hereafter the contaminated article. A desperate conflict was now preparing between the colonies and the mother country. To subdue their spirit, Great Britain resorted to the employment of military force. The period had now arrived when the colonists were obliged to decide between implicit submission to the will of Great Britain, or determined resistance to her arms. The serious alternative presented to them they fully weighed. They knew that her extensive fleets and armies, victorious in every quarter of the globe, might be employed for their subjugation. But the feeling that animated the hearts of the people of America re-

sponded, that it was better to die freemen, than to live slaves. "Blandishments," said a distinguished patriot, "will not fascinate us, nor will threats of a halter intimidate us; for under God we are determined that whensoever, wheresoever, or howsoever, we shall be called to make our exit from the world, we will die Freemen." The contest in which they were to be engaged, they knew was unequal. Their raw undisciplined troops taken from the plough, with inexperienced officers and no military establishments, were to array themselves against the veteran soldiers of Europe, who to a knowledge of the science and discipline of war and a long course of service, had arrived, flushed with the laurels they had acquired in the war lately closed between England and France; but their love of liberty, and indignation against their oppressors, supplied the want of tactics. They felt that though their first effort might be unsuccessful; from their numbers, they might return and return to the encounter, till their invaders were driven from their soil. The battles of Lexington and Bunker Hill astonished Great Britain. They astonished the world. In America, they cheered the spirit of the timid, confirmed the valour of the ardent. An universal sound of "resistance—resistance," vibrated from New-Hampshire to Georgia. A concert of action was agreed upon, and a general Congress of deputies from the colonies assembled at Philadelphia. A determined resolution to oppose, at every hazard, the assumption of Great Britain, was the leading sentiment of the patriots of the day.

This assemblage of citizens, in whose hands the destinies of the colonies were placed, were men who to an ardent patriotism united exalted talents, enlightened minds, and a high degree of wisdom and prudence. They were not restless, factious and disorganizing spirits, panting for a revolution "to ride on the whirlwind and direct the storm;" they were pure and virtuous patriots, discarding all selfish ends, intent only on the good of their country, and marching to their object with calm and deliberate reflection. They considered that they had met on an occasion of great national calamity. Dear as were the rights of their country, and resolved as they were to maintain them, they were willing still to use every effort to effect a reconciliation with the mother country, on terms honourable to their own. They left the door of peace open until the hope of it was entirely extinguished, by the fixed determination of the ministry of Great Britain, not to listen to accommodation on any condition short of an absolute recognition of the supremacy of Parliament.

Again and again, after the drama was opened, did Congress, feeling still the force of those ancient ties with the mother country, which had entwined themselves in all the pursuits of life, and the intercourse of society, before the final rupture, appeal to Great Britain. They addressed the Parliament sometimes in a tone of remonstrance; sometimes in a style of earnest solicitation. They addressed the people of England, entreating them to use their intercessions to arrest the mad career of the government. They finally addressed a mild and respectful petition to the King himself, who they indulged the hope was above the influence of those blind passions which were hurrying on a ministry and Parliament to the loss of the brightest jewel in his crown. The petition was presented on the first September, 1775, by two gentlemen, selected for the purpose from their elevated standing in this country. Three days after they were informed in these laconic terms, that "no answer would be given to the petition." This cold and haughty rejection of the appeal of Congress to the head of the empire, whom they had addressed in the last resort, contributed more fully to fan the flame of discontent throughout the colonies; to unite them in the firm resolution to maintain their liberties at every hazard, and placed before them no other resource than to renounce for ever all political connection with Great Britain; to consider themselves no longer as colonies struggling against a mother country, but as independent States, defending their liberties against a foreign aggressor. Accordingly, on the 4th of July 1776, the blow was struck, and the colonies were declared Independant States, absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown. Momentous Declaration! The harbinger to these states of a stream of overflowing prosperity—the day-spring of the fairest prospects which it has been the destiny of any nation to witness. The independence declared, was however yet to be maintained. With equal resolution, with unremitting energy, while the sky occasionally lowered with fearful omens over their heads, the patriot soldiers of America met the armies of England again and again, and after a seven years' conflict, triumphed—most gloriously triumphed;—a triumph not of arms alone, but of principle; the victory of reason and justice, over the unbending arrogance of power. The war at an end, a new era was about to commence. The sun of independence that rose above the horizon, mid dark revolving clouds, now shoots its radiant beams above them, bright and piercing, along the extended plains of America; illuminates its vallies and gilds its mountain tops; its happy

citizens walk forth to enjoy the cheerful and renovated aspect of their country, to breathe the fresh air of liberty, and scent its fragrance in every passing breeze.

Scarce had the sword been sheathed, than the new empire arisen in the western world rolled on with an astonishing impetus in the career of glory and aggrandizement.

Fellow-citizens, let us take a passing glance at the great changes effected in this country, since the close of its struggles for independence. Its population has increased in a ratio unparalleled in the history of the world. Vast portions of the country, then an unbroken wilderness, have been cleared and cultivated—and filled with flourishing towns and villages. The tide of emigration, like an overpowering flood, breaking down the mounds which restrained it, has rushed forth, westward, northward, and southward. Not a portion of the country that has not felt the stirring spirit of enterprise and improvement brought into action; and wherever the wilderness has been reclaimed, it has not remained for a length of time as in other countries, affording only means to gratify the simple wants of early society—but it has been immediately converted as if by a magical transformation, into the possession of the comforts and even the luxuries of a high state of civilization: while roads and canals, in magnitude and importance, equalling the most expensiv- works of the kind in Europe, have connected the whole by ties of the closest intimacy.

Science has shed its benign radiance over the country. Elementary education is universal. Seminaries for the higher branches have arisen around the land, even in the most recently settled regions. Its literary character is respected in Europe, and its productions of genius are sought for and read. In the arts, some of the most useful mechanical contrivances emanate from the inventive spirit of your countrymen. By successfully applying steam to navigation, this infant country has afforded a greater benefit to mankind than any one of the most improved nations of Europe, in the same period: a benefit the ultimate consequences of which, when enjoyed by all parts of the globe, it is difficult fully to estimate.

The ocean has been equally a scene on which the energy and talent of your countrymen have been elicited. In thirty years after these states had closed their struggle with Great Britain, during which they possessed not even the rudiments of a navy to defend their shores, we find them summoning their former antagonist to battle on her favored element, and triumphing in the contest.

Fellow-citizens, when you look abroad at the extent of your prosperity, you have reason to render your devout homage to a kind Providence, for the choice gifts he has poured upon you. You are in possession of a country extending through the most temperate climates, but approaching so far to a southern and nothern latitude as to afford you the advantages of both: and you have been permitted for forty years, with scarce an interruption, to give full scope to your enterprise and industry, in whatever pursuit your inclination or genius might lead you—and to avail yourselves fully of the abundant and varied resources of your country. Look at other portions of the world: cast your eyes on the continent of Asia—see millions of your fellow creatures there—a large portion of the whole population—dependent on the scanty supplies which an ill cultivated country affords for an overgrown population; their minds debased by the most humiliating superstition and idolatry. View benighted Africa, overrun by rude and ignorant tribes of savages, engaged in constant wars of mutual destruction—and selling each other to men of the other hemisphere. Turn your eyes next to Europe—civilized Enrope. See this favored portion of the old world, with all its advancement in refinement and knowledge, almost perpetually scourged by the calamities of war. Peace is there only a breathing time, to sharpen anew the weapons of destruction. For twenty years it was convulsed to the centre, by internal disturbances: a million of lives were destroyed by the sword. Famine, fire, and desolation walked in the train of war. Cities wrapt in flames, and universal distress from the interruption of commerce, were visible throughout that continent. During that whole period, except the short interval of the years 1812 and '13, when you were called to a temporary contention with Great Britain, you have known war only by its echoes across the Atlantic, or by the slight agitation which the heaving of the troubled waters in the old world has made along your shores.

In what manner has your independence as a nation, produced this happy state of things? Certainly two circumstances connected with it were efficient agents. Your trade confined to the ports of the mother country, now became a trade with the world. Your commercial spirit visible in your colonial state, but restrained within prescribed limits by her jealous scrutiny, had now an unlimited range. Every market was open to you. Your enterprising seamen frequently circumnavigated the globe in their distant voyages. This unbounded commerce gave a stimulus to agriculture,

and general industry. The territory of the old states was not sufficient to supply its demands; you entered your forests and extended the dominion of man over the wilderness.

The separation which your independence accomplished for you from the theatre of European politics, was another favorable circumstance arising from it. You were no longer drawn to follow a mother country in all her foreign wars, in which you had no concern, to be merely the prey of European powers, contending who should be your masters, and obliging you to pay for the expense of their struggles. Separated by a wide ocean from Europe, you became after the independence as little connected from necessity with it, as with the continent of Asia; and it became your cardinal policy not to enter voluntarily into its wars, but to avoid all entangling alliances with any of its contending powers. With this principle for his polar star, your immortal WASHINGTON, who had conducted your political bark safely through the perils of the revolution, at the helm of state guided it in equal security through the tempestuous billows which agitated Europe at the commencement of your existence as a nation.

These two great advantages, an unrestrained commerce and a separation from the conflicts of Europe, have been the efficient agents of your prosperous growth since the revolution. But efficient not of themselves: made so by the spirit of freedom, that spirit which led your ancestors to leave their native country to found a new empire over the Atlantic, and which repressed but not subdued during your colonial state, resumed at the revolution its full and vigorous exercise. It is this spirit, calling into action on the extended sphere, then opening on the view all the latent talent of your country, by securing to each individual the entire benefit of the powers intellectual, moral, or physical, with which nature has endowed him, that has created such an universal fermentation—such an emulous activity in all the pursuits of life, bursting forth like a living spring of fresh and wholesome water, to clothe with new and vivid verdure the fields over which it spreads.

That "government derives all its just powers from the consent of the governed," is a principle which your ancestors invariably cherished as the corner-stone of their liberties; in accordance with which, they very early established in the colonies, legislatures elected by the people.

It was the invasion of this cardinal principle that produced the revolution. It was not the amount of supplies required from them

by Great Britain—they had heretofore spent heavy sums in her wars to support her glory and reputation—but it was the determination, avowed and persevered in, to bind them without their consent; to impose laws on them by a parliament in which they were not represented; that roused that spirit which could neither be broken nor hushed to repose! Admit the principle: Hold them subject to a legislature in which they had no voice—in which laws the most oppressive to them might be passed without their knowledge, was in effect, in the words of the declaration, "reducing them under absolute despotism," establishing a government over them in which the will of the governing power was the sole motive for the law. Independence released the colonies from this odious oppression; but it would still have afforded little consolation to the people of America, if the principle of popular representation had not been fully recognised in the revolution, as applicable also to their internal government. Had it resulted merely in the exchange of the dominion of the king of England for an independent government in which the people had no share—had a military leader usurped authority and trampled on your rights, another revolution would not long after have followed your separation from Great Britain. The principles of civil liberty were too thoroughly seated in the minds of the people, to be forgotten in their future political arrangements. The Declaration of Independence laid the basis of the superstructure, in the sentiments it announced;—"We hold these truths," says this sacred instrument, "to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Equal, not in endowments—but equal in their right to have the full benefit of their endowments, however differing in kind or degree:—equally entitled to the perfect enjoyment of their life, their liberty, and that share of happiness which the faculties they possess enable them to obtain. On these broad truths, clear and pure as the light of day, the system of government subsequently established over this country, recognised as a fundamental principle, the good of the people as its object—the will of the people as its origin. A fabric of civil liberty was erected, in which the voice of the people is more distinctly acknowledged, than in any form of government hitherto seen on the face of the globe. The improvements made in modern times from the progress of knowledge and refinement, in limiting the sway of arbitrary governments by introducing the people to a share of political power, have given but the

mere shadow of liberty compared with the spectacle this country exhibits. In the governments of Europe, the voice of the people in elections is almost entirely counteracted by the influence of the crown, or a powerful aristocracy. The elective franchise is there a privilege—requiring various qualifications; is confined within narrow limits, and even within those limits its rightful exercise is impeded by the prevalence of corruption. Even in Great Britain, in whose constitution is embodied more of this principle than in that of any other European nation, a large portion of the members of parliament, nominally elected by the people, are virtually appointed by the ministry. A few decayed villages, where scarce an inhabitant is seen, send more members than all the great commercial towns *united*. The property-qualification excludes large classes: the religious tests a still greater number.

Look next on the boasted states of ancient Rome and Greece. These were Republics; but how faintly did they understand those expanded principles of civil liberty unfolded in the declaration of your independence.

In Rome, the inhabitants were divided into two great classes, the Patrician and Plebeian, the former of whom, composed of the most opulent, were alone entitled to the high offices of the state. The whole history of that country exhibits a continued struggle on the part of the people at large, to share with the Patricians the powers of government.

Greece, with all the forms of Freedom, was but an ingeniously contrived aristocracy, to place the many under subjection to the few. Those who held the rank of citizens, and were entitled to vote, were but a small minority of the commnuity. The mass of the people, comprehending all those who attend to agriculture and performed the rest of the labour of the country, were in a state of domestic servitude, and wholly excluded from any share in the government.

How different the character of Freedom here! It is a vital principle passing through all the veins and arteries of the body politic, to their minutest ramifications, infusing that glow of health, that animated, blooming aspect which our country exhibits. The sovereignty resides here absolute in the people, and in all the people; pervades and vivifies the entire community. It is literally a self-government. Such a government was deemed in former times the dream of fanciful theorists; or at least as practicable only in a very small community, with few objects at home for legislation, and en-

gaged in no foreign relations. Extended further, it was conceived it would necessarily fall to pieces, from the turbulence of lawless passions and the artifices of designing men; that intestine broils would incessantly agitate the state till the uproar of confusion would be stilled by the mandate of a successful demagogue, rising to power on the ruins of freedom.

How wonderfully are the speculations of men in their closets falsified! Here is seen a Republic of twelve millions of inhabitants, spreading over a territory of great extent, actuated by a spirit of active, restless enterprise, and engaged in intercourse with all parts of the earth; and yet in no part of the world exists a country where more general tranquillity and order prevail. When has occurred any tumultuous assemblage of its people?—When have riots arisen, and the houses of eminent citizens been attacked for their political principles?—When have mechanics conspired, in a disorderly manner, against their employers for an increase of wages? When has it become necessary to call out a military force to suppress any disturbance?—When have any of our public rulers been assassinated on entering the halls of legislation?

These things have been witnessed in other countries, the most modern, even in time of peace.

Fellow-citizens, the fabric of civil liberty you have raised is the admiration of the world. No event, since the discovery of the American Continent, has produced more extensive effects than the foundation of this Republic. The light of liberty has beamed across the Atlantic. The successful example you exhibit of a free government, has taught men in every country to reflect more on the rights of the people; and the principle of popular representation is every where gaining ground. The spark you struck out at the revolution, has kindled a flame over this western hemisphere. Your brethren in South America, long oppressed by the rigorous system of their mother country, and by their own superstition, ignorance, and prejudice, have been taught by your example to throw off their shackles; and nearly on the whole of that continent, republican governments have been established after the model of yours, not only embodying the spirit, but even copying the forms of your constitutions.

Long may the happy government you possess endure. May generation after generation enjoy its blessings, and see its benign influence extend farther among mankind. But amid the cheering prospect before us, desponding minds are found who view the long

endurance of this Republic with but a trembling hope. The structure appears too magnificent to last. The very love and admiration it excites, create a fear that it may not be permanent. At one moment apprehensions exist that the general government, accumulating power, will gradually absorb the states in one consolidated government. At another period, the chain that binds the states appears too slender to withstand the shock of collisions, which it is feared will arise from their mutual jealousy of each other's ascendency. It is not my intention to examine what foundation there exists for these apprehensions. The occasion will not allow; but suffer me to advert for a moment, to the means of preventing these evils—of perpetuating the liberties of your country. These means fellow-citizens, lie in your own hands—in the faithful exercise of the elective franchise. You are the actual rulers of the country. The officers of government are but delegates of your power, chosen by your voice. Directly or indirectly, all authority flows from you; from the chief Magistrate of the Union, to the lowest officer in a state. On you, therefore, rests the responsibility of having the stations in your government filled by real friends to their country, and its free institutions, not in word, but in very deed; men of upright and honorable views, scorning to sacrifice the interests of their country to their sinister ends. If such men are chosen by you to seats in the national or state legislatures, you need fear no encroachments from the former—no disunion among the latter. You may sometimes be deceived by appearances; but the frequency of elections enables you to redress the evil, if the remedy is not too long delayed. When the streams of authority that flow from your hands become corrupt, they may be purified by new draughts from the fountain of power. The elective franchise is the palladium placed in your hands to preserve the liberties of your country. Duly estimate, then, the importance of the trust. Let it be considered a sacred charge, and exercised with deliberate, serious reflection. Examine thoroughly the fitness, in rectitude of purpose as well as intelligence and experience of candidates, presented for your choice, and confide your powers to none but those who are in all these respects worthy of your confidence—and the Republic is safe!

Trust not too much to loud and vehement professions of extreme regard for you. Let not the poison of flattery seduce you from your duty. Power, in whatever form, is destined to be the object of adulation. Where sovereignty resides in one individual, the monarch is surrounded by crowds of sycophants, endeavoring to en-

twine themselves, by all the arts of insidious cunning, in his affections—to riot in the sunshine of his favor. In like manner, when political authority emanates from the people, they are liable to become objects of the same arts. If in the former case, monarchs have been told that their government is founded on divine right, not on the will of, or responsible to their subjects, the echo of this phrase is heard, when the people are told that they are infallible; that their voice is the voice of God. Listen not to the songs of these charmers. You are but men, though you may be worshiped as deities by those, who, gratified in their wishes, would seize the first moment to trample on your liberties. The real danger of our government consists in this, that constituted as you are, the source of power, you are, from the imperfection of human nature, liable to be blinded by designing politicians, enemies to their country. Think, fellow-citizens, when you proceed to deposit your ballots, of the labor and pains your ancestors have taken to establish the free institutions of your country, through all the stages of their colonial growth, and through all the struggles of the revolution. Reflect on the example your country has set to mankind, and that the eyes of the world are upon you. Here is now tried the greatest political experiment man has ever witnessed. The cause of civil liberty is in your hands. You are to decide the all-important question whether man is capable of self-government. Guard then with devoted, with scrupulous attention, the honest and faithful exercise of the elective franchise.

If in your day the Republic expires, history will designate you as men who had lost in the excess of their prosperity, that elevation of sentiment, that firmness of purpose, that pure love of freedom which so conspicuously shone in the conduct of your fathers. It will not point out for the peculiar attention of posterity, that a great commercial nation once arose in a short period, on the western shores of the Atlantic, emulating in all the improvements of civilized life, the nations of the old world; it will not state that you extended your empire over a vast territory; it will not select, as topics to dwell upon, your advances in the arts, your inventions, or your public works: but it will relate, in a tone of deep lamentation, that here the fabric of Freedom was founded by the undaunted spirit of a band of freemen, who fled from the oppressions of the old world, on the broad basis of the sovereignty of the people; that it was cemented by the blood of patriots animated by the same spirit, through a long and arduous conflict; that it rose amid the taunts and incre-

dulity of the abettors of ancient systems to a height of magnificence visible far and wide—becoming a beacon for the hopes of the oppressed in every region, and raising man in his own moral estimation, by proving him neither too wicked nor too weak to govern himself; but that in the midst of the gaze of an admiring world, the edifice suddenly crumbled to pieces from the degeneracy of the offspring of its founders; and like a splendid illusion—like the bright, but 'baseless fabric of a vision'—it melted into empty air, and left not a trace behind.