ORATION.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Franklin Society.

We have assembled to indulge those feelings of pleasure pride, which the associations of the day are so well calculated to arouse in the bosom of every American. We come to render a voluntary tribute to the memory of Benjamin Franklin, the patriot, the philosopher and statesman,—the man whose signal efforts in the cause of liberty and science, have secured to his name a glorious immortality, and to his memory an abiding place in the hearts of his countrymen. To dwell upon the prominent acts of his long and eventful life, would be but a rehearsal of facts, with which every one, in the hearing of my voice, is already acquainted. Let us therefore, on the present occasion, contemplate the influence which he exercised over the destinies of the land, in which it was his fortune to be born. The history of our republic is emphatically the colalogy of Franklin; its glory and greatness speak his laudest and happiest commendation.

Now that the embittered strife of our revolutionary struggle have subsided, and history, like a bright beam, dispelling the mist of prejudice and party feeling, throws its clear light on the actions of our illustrious predecessors, let us calmly investigate their characters, and imbibe those principles of virtue, morality, extended patriotism and enlarged benevolence, which so remarkably distinguished them.

The specter, raised on the summit of glory, hovers yet around, and is the abode of the wretched that
wars along its sides, while in safety from above, he listens to the thunders that roll beneath his feet;—so may we, from the eminence to which "noble deeds and daring high" have exalted us, fully appreciate the grandeur and sublimity of that contest, which has won for us independence and prosperity, and in the attainment of which, he, of whom we now speak, bore so conspicuous a part. Looking back to those times of gloom and despondency, when the patriot's bosom grew warm with hope, or cold with fearful anticipations,—when the billow of fate seemed ready to roll over a shattered bark and shipwrecked crew, we cannot but love the memory of those who piloted her safely, amid the waves which lashed in fury against her sides. In contrasting the feebleness of our infant country, with the mighty energies which now distinguish her mature years, we are almost led to believe, that fiction, rather than truth, has lent its aid to the historian's pen, and that prompt to think as we would wish, we are led astray by the delusive beauties of a creative imagination. But happily there are many and memorable facts in the world's history, which arrayed in the simple elegance of truth, attract our wonder and admiration, while they place our glory beyond the reach of cavil or dispute. American liberty, like the light of day, sheds its genial influence o'er every clime—its beams are now gilding, in bright colors, the darkened firmament of nations, dazzling the affrighted gaze of power, and lighting up the dungeon's solitude. It whispers consolation to the bowed spirit of fettered man, as a voice from on high, bidding him live and hope for happier times. Its rapid march is without a parallel in the annals of the world. But little more than half a century, and the day which sealed our emancipation from British thraldom, this noble event by any great or glorious event, now it is welcomed in its coming, by the spontaneous burst of feeling issuing from hill and valley, and ascending heaven's high dome, in loud and universal chorus. On its annual return, the veteran soldiers, mingling in social harmony around the festive board, forget the infirmities of age, as they swell the anthems of their country's praise. The rapt soul of him who gazes upon the firmament of heaven, studded with stars immeasurable and bright, feels a rising impulse to be associated and to claim kindred with them; he sees in them a beauty and a mystery, shadowing forth the divine power, and telling of things that are to endure, in immortal and undiminished radiance, when earth and earthborn greatness shall be buried in oblivion. So does the American, who reads the recorded triumphs of his noble ancestry, feel his bosom glow with the inspiration of former times, and walking abroad in the fulness of freedom, with a prouder step and a happier heart, he remembers, that their glories are his own. His mind is cheered by the consoling thought, that when other nations, tamed in spirit, fettered and subjugated, shall have sighed a last farewell to all their greatness, his own country shall still be the seat of liberty and learning—the ark of safety, where wretched man may hide in peaceful security, until the storm has passed, and the deluge has subsided.

The distinguished individuals, to whose wisdom and fortitude we are indebted for the singular privileges which we enjoy, have long been gathered to their homes on high; yet the beneficial influence of their lives is still felt, and acknowledged with gratitude. From the silence of the grave they speak to us in a voice too distinct to be unheard, too plain to be misunderstood. They teach a lesson not to be forgotten, of the influence which self-forbearance, dignity of soul and purity of thought, must
always exercise over the happiness of mankind. Patient
ture that many of our ancestors received by birth.
Poverty, the common curse of genius, threw around them
its cold and icy fetters, its chilling embrace, like a Lap-
land frost, seemed struggling to repress their energies,
and tame their ardent and generous aspirations. But
the palmiest days of Greece or Rome, whose bold de-
which the deserts that would enslave them. With the
*hallowed name of Congress,* what glorious associations

A disposition to tyrannize over the colonies had been
manifested by the British Parliament, and the ties of
union were weakened by successive indications of an un-
kind spirit. Prayer after prayer for a redress of griev-
ces, finds no other reception than a haughty and con-
temptuous silence, or but adds another link to the long
chain of cruelty and unjust oppression. The hard earned
pittance of the honest peasant is snatched by the rapacious
hand of power, from his weeping wife and helpless off-
spring, to defray the expenses of an ambitious policy, or
increase the pomp and splendor of royalty. Beneath the
accumulation of ills, from which there appeared no hope
of release, a longer forbearance would have been reces-
and degrading. Soon are heard the mutterings of an in-
dignant people—every bosom is electric with patriotism—
every arm is nerv'd for the approaching struggle. The
Rubicon had been passed, and the avenging angel was
at hand. The bugle's voice rings through the land, and
summons peals from mountain top to mountain.
With hearts all

the fathers of our land are met in grave deliberation on
the condition of affairs. A sight long unseen, now presents
itself—a Congress of freemen, untrammelled by the will
of a master, and speaking the voice of a people, whose
watch-words are, *victory or martyrdom.* A body worthy
of a master, and speaking the voice of a people, whose
watch-words are, *victory or martyrdom.* A body worthy
the forces that would enslave them. With the
*hallowed name of Congress,* what glorious associations
throne upon the memory!

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* * * * * * "With the sound arise
Like Samuel's shade to Saul's monarchical eyes,
The prophets of young freedom, summoned far
From climes of Washington and Bolivar.
Henry, the forest-born Demosthenes,
Whose thunder shook the Philip of the seas,
And stoic Franklin's energetic shade,
Robed in the lightnings which his hand allay'd."

A crisis, big with the fate of empires had arrived. To
America there was but one alternative, submission, or re-
sistance, and she could no longer hesitate; but had there
been a doubt still resting on the minds of any, the noble
and dignified deportment of their Minister in the British
House of Commons, joined with the bold and eloquent
appeals of their leaders at home, would have determined
them to hazard all, in maintenance of their rights. Too
long already had man slumbered in dreamy forgetfulness of his privileges and immunities—too long had the
standard of power waved in quiet grandeur over the lost
liberties of nations. A blind adherence to whatever had
been sanctioned by antiquity, an implicit obedience to the
superstition of the times, or the high beheld of regal au-
tority, had for ages repressed the energies, and stilled the
voices of the liberal and enlightened. A "waveless
calm, the slumber of the dead," seemed to rest like a death.
shroud over all; or should one more noble than the rest, boldly presume to speak the generous feelings of his heart, he at once became the prey of harpies, more fiend-like in spirit than "devils damned." The thunders of authority are heaved at his head, and the ignominy of the scaffold is the only reward of his devotion. The talented, the virtuous must fall before this tiger ferocity, whose thirst for blood increases with every new victim which it makes. The march of power was known and felt by the wide spread desolation which followed in its footsteps. The blood of many a patriot, whose intelligence and virtue were his only crimes, stain, with lasting infamy, the iron sceptre of an armed and cruel despotism. The smiles and patronage of those who ruled were as prolific of corruption as the Delta of the Nile, but the unfortunate objects of their hatred were left, as blasted monuments of their withering touch, fatal to life, as the lightnings of heaven. Wretched Ireland, land of genius, chivalry and song, how often have thy green fields been deluged with the blood of thy patriot sons! how often has the delusive beam of hope, like a meteor ray, flashed across thy midnight sky, then sunk again in darkness! The eloquence of thy orators, the plaintive appeals of thy fair daughters abated not the wrath of the merciless oppressor, but—

* * *

"Where his frown of hatred darkly fell,
Hope withering fled—and mercy sighed farewell."

But shall the murky cloud of a gloomy despotism continue still to darken the political firmament of nations? Thank God, the time had come, when a mighty revolution in the condition of man, was to begin. The agitation of the billows had reached our distant shore, and the newly discovered world, hitherto overlooked in the mists of Europe, "sprang forth a Pallas armed, and ready for the combat. In the sky of America is seen the light of liberty beaming in mild glory, like the star of Bethlhem, on an astonished world, the ministering guide to forlorn and wretched millions. Tyrants, whose will had so long been regarded by their subjects as the voice of God, gazed on it in fearful wonder, and conscious that their deeds of darkness must soon be penetrated by its searching rays, banded themselves in unholy alliance against our bold innovation, on forms consolidated by the corruption of centuries. They saw as by intuition, and with that rapid vision which fear lends to guilt, that their destiny was sealed—that a knowledge of the privileges here enjoyed, and the principles here established, would inevitably bring about the political regeneration of man. Hence, every calumny which malignity could invent, every crime and folly which a hireling press could circulate, was hurled against our national character. In their vain attempts to impede our progress, they would arrogate to themselves the province of the omniscient, and penetrating the veil of futurity, announce with exultation our awful doom. Our solemn declaration that we would no longer acknowledge the supremacy of any power on earth, seemed to them but the impotent raving of an infuriate mob, who would have their little day of passion, then sink again into the calm of former despotism. Our attempt to establish a free government on the ruins of misuse and tyranny, appeared but the rise of another Venice or Génée, whose premature fall would cast an additional blot on the dishonored escutcheon of freedom. Such dismal and disheartening prophecies might have tamed the ardour, and unnerved the resolution of the pampered minions of luxury; but men, whose free-born spirits had been "nursed deep in the unpumed forest, mid the roar of cataracts," denied the outpourings of their wrath, and gathered strength in weakness, hope in des
spair. There is indeed a self-sustaining power, with which virtue arms its votaries, defying the glare of military show, the temptations of vice, the fearful conflict of passions, which no dangers can intimidate, no obstacles impede; calm amid every trial, immutable amid all the vicissitudes of fortune. Oh! happiest era in the march of time, how fully commensurate was the result of our struggle, with the mighty efforts made in its behalf! How entirely have we thrown into general odium and ridicule, the divine right of kings, so long the shield of error, the cloak of crime! The prosperity of our whole country, the institutions of learning with which she is adorned, the happiness of all classes of society, prove the capacity of man for self-government. Every star that gilds the folds of our widespread banner, beams back a refutation on the enemies of liberty. The morning sun that daily lights to life a race of freemen, marks in living characters our glory, which now enlightens even the dark minds of those, whose predictions would have discouraged our infant efforts, and covered with shame our illustrious progenitors.

Contemplating the course of events, since America assumed her separate stand among the nations of the earth, we find a spirit of change pervading every clime; and happily too, there is abroad a disposition to inquire into those forms of government, which for many centuries had been deemed too sacred for human investigation. Truth and justice, the commissioned legates of heaven, have traversed the world, gradually acquiring a bloodless victory over the false precepts of bigotry, and the bloody maxims of ill-gotten power. The example of America has not been lost upon the people of other countries, but is daily impressing the useful lesson, that a government great and overshadowing, can long withstand the assaults of a nation determined upon achieving its liberties. The successful operation of our government awakened the enthusiasm of the gallant French; but unfortunately, their passions assumed the mastery over their judgments, and set them adrift upon the wide ocean of revolution, without prudence to restrain their mis-directed zeal. But their failure, then, has by no means diminished their thirst for republican governments. Events constantly occurring manifest the unsettled state of public opinion, and Louis Philippe, though but an elected monarch, sits uneasily on his throne. The same noble spirit which animated the illustrious Lafayette, is yet alive in the bosoms of many, and though it may sleep for a time, will one day flame forth and light their journey to the land of promise. Happier times have likewise fallen to the lot of Ireland, so long contending in unequal struggle for her privileges as a nation. The Catholics have achieved their emancipation, and a large class, formerly deprived of all participation in the affairs of government, are now enjoying the elective franchise; and may we not with reason hope, that the odious principle of an established church will soon be destroyed, and that freedom of conscience which is here enjoyed, be claimed by the world? Then the harp, which has so long hung upon the willow in mournful silence, will breathe again the melody of song, and be attuned to liberty's loftiest strains. But a few years since, and the tumult of battle was heard in a neighboring territory, the flag of independence floats in the breeze, the cry, "to arms," is sounded by every tongue, and the gallant sons of Texas fly to the rescue. Victory crowned their efforts, and drove back the minions of power in fearful consternation. Texas now stands in proud distinction from her ancient mistress, and the voice of free-
dom wooded on the heights of Bunker, is echoed from the banks of the Colorado. Indeed, the age is distinguished by an improvement in every art which can adorn, in every way which can benefit society. Governments are nobly contending with one another for pre-emience in literature—the mind is no longer restrained by unnecessary and restrictive legislation, but permitted freely to revel in the enjoyment of its glorious privileges. Education is dispensing its blessings to high and low, to rich and poor,—like the atmosphere which we breathe, it is now denied to none, and the consequence must be, the final emancipation of all mankind from the yoke of oppression. "The lily and the bramble may grow together in social proximity, but knowledge and slavery delight in separation." They are in nature so distinct, so entirely opposite, that a union between them is impracticable. Where ignorance predominates, tyranny may walk in the majesty of its strength; but let the kindly influence of knowledge be felt, and the dungeon of the mind is illuminated, its fetters are unloosed, and man is ready to battle for his rights. To restrain, in some mode or other, the right of personal opinion, seems to have been the aim and policy of all governments, from the first institution of society, down to the formation of the American republic. For many centuries no one dare publish sentiments not in accordance with the wishes of those in authority;—hence the hopeless slavery of the mind—the death of genius, which mark the character of the middle ages. But that gloomy era has given place to a new and brighter order in the condition of affairs, which is now illuminating the world with a flood of light. So careful were our illustrious ancestors of the freedom of speech, and the liberty of the press, that they have thrown around them the protection of a written law. Your Bill of Rights—the magna charter of the Old Dominion, has expressly provided against any infringement on these invaluable blessings, by declaring that the freedom of the press is one of the great bulwarks of liberty, and cannot be restrained but by despotic governments. So long as this important engine remains untrammeled, we have little to fear from ambition or intrigue. The acts of our public agent are at once subjected to the supervision and scrutiny of the constituent body, and if he abuse his trust, their honest indignation soon hurls him from power, back to the common level whence he sprang. Not less important is the privilege guaranteed to every one to worship God in his own way. Here every citizen enjoys the absolute and unrestrained exercise of his religious opinions, free from the control or intervention of human authority. The infallibility of man, in matters of religion, finds no credence with us, but in place of that union between church and state, which has stained with the blood of its victims, "the altars of Moloch and Jehovah," we have the pure spirit of genuine christianity. It is the adoration of the heart towards God, the religion which enforces moral obligations, inculcating peace and charity and good will towards man, the religion which will bring about the dawn of the millennium, blessing the world, alleviating sorrow, and rewarded by the gratulation of conscience on earth, and the blessed hope of an immortality in Heaven. From the home of their infancy, endeared by all the ties with which civilized life connects us with our fellow beings, our fathers were forced to fly, trusting to find in the wilds of the new world, a release from a cruel and oppressive bigotry. Long tossed upon the bosom of the deep, the sport of wind and wave, a famished crew at length approached, worn out in spirit, emaciated by hunger and suffering, with no hope but their faith, no refuge
mament of the new world. Whilst, however, we would commemorate their deeds and sing their praises, let us not content ourselves with merely remembering their virtues, without an effort to imitate them. The mighty founders of our government are no longer amongst us to enlighten by their wisdom, or to direct us by their advice. But if the inhabitants of Heaven are cognizant of the affairs of mortals, may we not trust that their spirits are still hovering anxiously around, as the guardian angels of our young republic. As it is the duty of every good citizen “not to despair of the republic,” so likewise it is his duty to keep a sleepless vigil on the ramparts of liberty, and view with cautious eye every enemy that would batter down its walls. There is much in the situation of our country, calculated to arouse the fears of the patriot, much that requires all the energies of his mind, all the virtues of his heart, to detect and to amend. Our sky is no longer spread in cloudless beauty, but dimmed by many a dark spot, perhaps the herald of an approaching storm. The lawless spirit of mobocratic misrule has found its way into our land, violating the most sacred rights of property, and substituting the dominion of force for that of right. A miserable class of deluded fanatics at the North, who, like Erostratus, would immolate their country to minister to their own ambitious schemes, are daily sending into our borders the incentives to servile rebellion, and lighting the torch of civil discord. Our people now gravely debate the policy of a dismemberment of the union,—that union cemented by the best blood of our heroes, the abundant spring of all our blessings—the source of our pride and our defence—the basis on which the lovers of freedom have founded all their hopes of future glory and distinction. It is impos-
sible for your gentlemen, to look with indifference upon
the scenes acting around you. Reflect a moment on the
change, which a few months must bring about in your
situation. A little time, and your sojourn in this goodly
city will be at an end. The ties which for many months
have bound you together as a band of brothers, will
be severed by circumstances, against which it is impos-
sible to provide. But a little while, and many of you
will have taken a last farewell look at the venerable build-
ing in whose time-honored walls you have received the
instruction and friendly advice of revered preceptors,
going forth into the untried world, where each is to be
come the architect of his own future fortunes. Bear with me,
then, whilst I lay before you some of the duties, which as
citizens of a great republic, will be required at your
hands. The institutions which have descended to you
from your ancestors, the peculiar privileges which you
enjoy, are the dear purchase of their blood, toil, and long
suffering. The success or failure of their experiment
on self-government, depends materially on the intelli-
gence and virtue of the rising generation. The history
of every nation impresses on the mind the great influ-
ence of moral causes. You have many bright exam-
ple in the history of your own country, by which to
regulate your conduct. Let the principles on which
your government is founded, be the object of your daily
examination and study. Cultivate a generous and ex-
panded love of country, a warm attachment to the union
and a sincere respect for your Constitution, both state
and federal. Defend them from all infractions, from what
ever source they may come, however specious the dis-
guise they may assume. Let but one rent, however insig-
nificant, be made in the mantle which protects your rights
and soon it will be torn asunder, the sport and mockery
of every passing gale.

Look, therefore, to the past and gather some of conclu-
sion for the future—learning from the folly of
others; then will you be useful, as men, honorable as
citizens,—then will your native state again assume her
pride pre-eminence, and rear her flag in full and free de-
ference, worthy the motto, "sic semper tyrannis." You
have every thing that can address itself to a virtuous mind,
to stimulate you in your efforts after fame and distinction.
And, if it be ever the fortune of any of you to fill the
high places of honor and trust, remember, I entreat you,
the noble disinterestedness, the singular devotion to prin-
ciple, the untiring zeal in the service of the people, which
animated the bosom of the illustrious Franklin. Though
nurtured amid all the temptations to which poverty is
liable, yet was he ever a stranger to vice. Like Hannibal,
he swore eternal enmity to tyranny, and to die a freeman
was ever more honorable in his sight than to live the
slave of power. His history is a recital of those prac-
tical virtues, which made him the ornament of his age,
the benefactor of his country—which raised him from
the humblest station of life, dissipated the gloom which
enveloped the morning of his existence, and finally placed
him on the pinnacle of fame. With talents of the highest
grade, he happily combined an industry which overcame
every obstacle, and triumphed over every difficulty—an
invincible steadiness of purpose, which enabled him to
tread the narrow line of rectitude, nor turn from the path
of duty at the Syren song of pleasure. Many names
have come down to us from antiquity, eulogized by the
historian, yet ask that faithful chronicler of events, the
basis of their glory, and it but tells of men who have
led their victorious legions over prostrate and defenceless nations, whose cries for mercy are only answered by the cannon's reiterated death-peat. Napoleon Bonaparte will perhaps stand first on the page of military glory, yet his deeds may be the feelings of after ages, as they read the history of this prodigy of the world, stained with every crime that can pollute the character of man, and then contemplate the mild, peaceful and useful career, which marked the philosopher of America. The one, after having swept, like the desolating tempest, over the fairest provinces of Europe, became the unwilling hermit of the ocean,—the powerless inhabitant of a desert isle, with but few to minister to his wants, or cheer him in that dark hour, which sealed his mortal destiny. The other, having lived to see the happy consummation of all his hopes, and in the midst of a people whose affections blessed his latest moments, gently sinks to sleep, supported by the thoughts that hallow the couch where virtue dies. Liberty and science mourn his departure, and weep over the resting place of their darling child. The votaries of freedom in every clime are robbed in the sable garb of grief, as the sad intelligence of his death spreads from pole to pole. Amid the deafening roar of battle, and the raging storms of political strife, the solemn announcement is heard, and lo! the jarring elements are hushed—and men forget their enmities, as they assemble to pay the tribute of homage to the noblest of his kind. Like the sun that shines in fadeless glory, on the rise or downfall of nations, marking with unaltered line the various mutations that convulse the lower world, so shall the glory of Franklin's name outlive the wreck of dynasties, and beam with unquenchable radiance, amid all the storms of fate. Philosophy, in her onward march of perfection, looks back with gratitude to the impulse which it found in his creative intellect. The morning of freedom that dawned so happily on the world, is indebted for its lustre to his memorable deeds. And oh! my country, should the fabric of thy greatness be reared unto the very Heavens, the self-sacrificing devotion of Franklin, in thy time of need, will ever be regarded as both its pedestal, and its crowning.