

ceptance of this system. I feel myself lost in the contemplation of its magnitude. By adopting this system, we shall probably lay a foundation for erecting temples of liberty in every part of the earth. It has been thought by many, that on the success of the struggle America has made for freedom will depend the exertions of the brave and enlightened of other nations. The advantages resulting from this system will not be confined to the United States, but will draw from Europe many worthy characters, who pant for the enjoyment of freedom. It will induce princes, in order to preserve their subjects, to restore to them a portion of that liberty of which they have for many ages been deprived. It will be subservient to the great designs of Providence with regard to this globe—the multiplication of mankind, their improvement in knowledge, and their advancement in happiness.

Oration Delivered on the Fourth of July 1788, at the Procession Formed at Philadelphia to Celebrate the Adoption of the Constitution of the United States.

My friends and fellow citizens,
Your candid and generous indulgence I may well bespeak, for many reasons I shall mention but one. While I express it, I feel it in all its force. My abilities are unequal—abilities far superiour to mine would be unequal—to the occasion on which I have the honour of being called to address you.

A people free and enlightened, establishing and ratifying a system of government, which they have previously considered, examined, and approved! This is the spectacle, which we are assembled to celebrate; and it is the most dignified one that has yet appeared on our globe. Numerous and splendid have been the triumphs of conquerors. But from what causes have they originated?—Of what consequences have they been productive? They have generally begun in ambition: they have generally ended in tyranny. But nothing tyrannical can participate of dignity: and to freedom's cry, Sesostris¹ himself appears contemptible, even when he treads on the necks of kings.

The senators of Rome, seated on their curule chairs, and surrounded with all their official lustre, were an object much more respectable: and we view, without displeasure, the admiration of those untutored savages, who considered them as so many gods upon earth. But who were those senators? They were only a part of a society: they were vested only with inferior powers.

¹ Likely refers to Sesostris I, pharaoh of Egypt from 1971 to 1926 B.C.

What is the object exhibited to our contemplation? A whole people exercising its first and greatest power—performing an act of sovereignty, original and unlimited!

The scene before us is unexampled as well as magnificent. The greatest part of governments have been the deformed offspring of force and fear. With these we deign not comparison. But there have been others which have formed bold pretensions to higher regard. You have heard of Sparta, of Athens, and of Rome; you have heard of their admired constitutions, and of their high-prized freedom. In fancied right of these, they conceived themselves to be elevated above the rest of the human race, whom they marked with the degrading title of barbarians. But did they, in all their pomp and pride of liberty, ever furnish, to the astonished world, an exhibition similar to that which we now contemplate? Were their constitutions framed by those, who were appointed for that purpose, by the people? After they were framed, were they submitted to the consideration of the people? Had the people an opportunity of expressing their sentiments concerning them? Were they to stand or fall by the people's approving or rejecting vote? To all these questions, attentive and impartial history obliges us to answer in the negative. The people were either unfit to be trusted, or their lawgivers were too ambitious to trust them.

The far-famed establishment of Lycurgus² was introduced by deception and fraud. Under the specious pretence of consulting the oracle concerning his laws, he prevailed on the Spartans to make a temporary experiment of them during his absence, and to swear that they would suffer no alteration of them till his return. Taking a disingenuous advantage of their scrupulous regard for their oaths, he prevented his return by a voluntary death, and, in this manner, endeavoured to secure a proud immortality to his system.

Even Solon³—the mild and moderating Solon—far from considering himself as employed only to *propose* such regulations as he should think

2. Said to have lived around 800 B.C., Lycurgus was the ancient lawgiver of Sparta. He instituted the reforms that would become the trademarks of Sparta, including the creation of a senate, the separation of the military from the common man, and the strict regimentation of youth.

3. Solon (c. 638–558 B.C.) was one of the seven wise men of ancient Greece. He instituted laws and political institutions that led Athens to great prosperity.

best calculated for promoting the happiness of the commonwealth, made and promulgated his laws with all the haughty airs of absolute power. On more occasions than one, we find him boasting, with much selfcomplacency, of his extreme forbearance and condescension, because he did not establish a despotism in his own favour, and because he did not reduce his equals to the humiliating condition of his slaves.

Did Numa⁴ submit his institutions to the good sense and free investigation of Rome? They were received in precious communications from the goddess Egeria,⁵ with whose presence and regard he was supremely favoured; and they were imposed on the easy faith of the citizens, as the dictates of an inspiration that was divine.

Such, my fellow citizens, was the origin of the most splendid establishments that have been hitherto known; and such were the arts, to which they owed their introduction and success.

What a flattering contrast arises from a retrospect of the scenes which we now commemorate! Delegates were appointed to deliberate and propose. They met and performed their delegated trust. The result of their deliberations was laid before the people. It was discussed and scrutinized in the fullest, freest, and severest manner—by speaking, by writing, and by printing—by individuals and by public bodies—by its friends and by its enemies. What was the issue? Most favourable and most glorious to the system. In state after state, at time after time, it was ratified—in some states unanimously—on the whole, by a large and very respectable majority.

It would be improper now to examine its qualities. A decent respect for those who have accepted it, will lead us to presume that it is worthy of their acceptance. The deliberate ratifications, which have taken place, at once recommend the system, and the people by whom it has been ratified.

But why, methinks I hear some one say—why is so much exultation displayed in celebrating this event? We are prepared to give the reasons of our joy. We rejoice, because, under this constitution, we hope to see just government, and to enjoy the blessings that walk in its train.

4. Numa Pompilius was a legendary king of Rome and successor of Romulus. Roman ceremonial law and religious rites are ascribed to him. He died in 673 B.C.

5. Egeria was Numa Pompilius's wife, a goddess of childbirth, wisdom, and prophecy. She taught Numa Pompilius how to be a wise and just king.

Let us begin with Peace—the mild and modest harbinger of felicity! How seldom does the amiable wanderer choose, for her permanent residence, the habitations of men! In their systems, she sees too many arrangements, civil and ecclesiastical, inconsistent with the calmness and benignity of her temper. In the old world, how many millions of men do we behold, unprofitable to society, burthensome to industry, the props of establishments that deserve not to be supported, the causes of distrust in the times of peace, and the instruments of destruction in the times of war? Why are they not employed in cultivating useful arts, and in forwarding publick improvements? Let us indulge the pleasing expectation, that such will be the operation of government in the United States. Why may we not hope, that, disentangled from the intrigues and jealousies of European politicks, and unmolested with the alarm and solicitude to which these intrigues and jealousies give birth, our counsels will be directed to the encouragement, and our strength will be exerted in the cultivation, of all the arts of peace?

Of these, the first is agriculture. This is true in all countries: in the United States, its truth is of peculiar importance. The subsistence of man, the materials of manufactures, the articles of commerce—all spring originally from the soil. On agriculture, therefore, the wealth of nations is founded. Whether we consult the observations that reason will suggest, or attend to the information that history will give, we shall, in each case, be satisfied of the influence of government, good or bad, upon the state of agriculture. In a government, whose maxims are those of oppression, property is insecure. It is given, it is taken away, by caprice. Where there is no security for property, there is no encouragement for industry. Without industry, the richer the soil, the more it abounds with weeds. The evidence of history warrants the truth of these general remarks. Attend to Greece; and compare her agriculture in ancient and in modern times. Then, smiling harvests bore testimony to the bountiful boons of liberty. Now, the very earth languishes under oppression. View the Campania of Rome. How melancholy the prospect! Whichever way you turn your afflicted eyes, scenes of desolation crowd before them. Waste and barrenness appear around you in all their hideous forms. What is the reason? With double tyranny the land is cursed. Open the classick page: you trace, in chaste description, the beautiful reverse of every thing you have seen. Whence

proceeds the difference? When that description was made, the force of liberty pervaded the soil.

But is agriculture the only art, which feels the influence of government? Over manufactures and commerce its power is equally prevalent. There the same causes operate—and there they produce the same effects. The industrious village, the busy city, the crowded port—all these are the gifts of liberty; and without a good government, liberty cannot exist.

These are advantages, but these are not all the advantages, that result from a system of good government.—Agriculture, manufactures, and commerce will ensure to us plenty, convenience, and elegance. But is there not something still wanting to finish the man? Are internal virtues and accomplishments less estimable, or less attracting than external arts and ornaments? Is the operation of government less powerful upon the former than upon the latter? By no means. Upon this as upon a preceding topic, reason and history will concur in their information and advice. In a serene mind, the sciences and the virtues love to dwell. But can the mind of a man be serene, when the property, liberty, subsistence of himself, and of those for whom he feels more than he feels for himself, depend on a tyrant's nod. If the dispirited subject of oppression can, with difficulty, exert his enfeebled faculties, so far as to provide, on the incessant demands of nature, food just enough to lengthen out his wretched existence, can it be expected that, in such a state, he will experience those fine and vigorous movements of the soul, without the full and free exercise of which, science and virtue will never flourish? Look around you to the nations that now exist. View, in historick retrospect, the nations that have heretofore existed. The collected result will be, an entire conviction of these all-interesting truths—where tyranny reigns, there is the country of ignorance and vice—where good government prevails, there is the country of science and virtue. Under a good government, therefore, we must look for the accomplished man.

But shall we confine our views even here? While we wish to be accomplished men and citizens, shall we wish to be nothing more? While we perform our duty, and promote our happiness in this world, shall we bestow no regards upon the next? Does no connexion subsist between the two? From this connexion flows the most important of all the blessings of good government. But here let us pause—unassisted reason can guide us

no farther—she directs us to that heaven-descended science, by which life and immortality have been brought to light.

May we not now say, that we have reason for our joy? But while we cherish the delightful emotion, let us remember those things, which are requisite to give it permanence and stability. Shall we lie supine, and look in listless langour, for those blessings and enjoyments, to which exertion is inseparably attached? If we would be happy, we must be active. The constitution and our manners must mutually support and be supported. Even on this festivity, it will not be disagreeable or incongruous to review the virtues and manners that both justify and adorn it.

Frugality and temperance first attract our attention. These simple but powerful virtues are the sole foundation, on which a good government can rest with security. They were the virtues, which nursed and educated infant Rome, and prepared her for all her greatness. But in the giddy hour of her prosperity, she spurned from her the obscure instruments, by which it was procured; and, in their place, substituted luxury and dissipation. The consequence was such as might have been expected. She preserved, for some time, a gay and flourishing appearance; but the internal health and soundness of her constitution were gone. At last, she fell a victim to the poisonous draughts, which were administered by her perfidious favourites. The fate of Rome, both in her rising and in her falling state, will be the fate of every other nation that shall follow both parts of her example.

Industry appears next among the virtues of a good citizen. Idleness is the nurse of villains. The industrious alone constitute a nation's strength. I will not expatiate on this fruitful subject. Let one animating reflection suffice. In a well constituted commonwealth, the industry of every citizen extends beyond himself. A common interest pervades the society. Each gains from all, and all gain from each. It has often been observed, that the sciences flourish all together: the remark applies equally to the arts.

Your patriotick feelings attest the truth of what I say, when, among the virtues necessary to merit and preserve the advantages of a good government, I number a warm and uniform attachment to liberty, and to the constitution. The enemies of liberty are artful and insidious. A counterfeit steals her dress, imitates her manner, forges her signature, assumes her name. But the real name of the deceiver is licentiousness. Such is her effrontery, that she will charge liberty to her face with imposture: and she

will, with shameless front, insist that herself alone is the genuine character, and that herself alone is entitled to the respect, which the genuine character deserves. With the giddy and undiscerning, on whom a deeper impression is made by dauntless impudence than by modest merit, her pretensions are often successful. She receives the honours of liberty, and liberty herself is treated as a traitor and a usurper. Generally, however, this bold impostor acts only a secondary part. Though she alone appear upon the stage, her motions are regulated by dark ambition, who sits concealed behind the curtain, and who knows that despotism, his other favourite, can always follow the success of licentiousness. Against these enemies of liberty, who act in concert, though they appear on opposite sides, the patriot citizen will keep a watchful guard.

A good constitution is the greatest blessing, which a society can enjoy. Need I infer, that it is the duty of every citizen to use his best and most unremitting endeavours for preserving it pure, healthful, and vigorous? For the accomplishment of this great purpose, the exertions of no one citizen are unimportant. Let no one, therefore, harbour, for a moment, the mean idea, that he is and can be of no value to his country: let the contrary manly impression animate his soul. Every one can, at *many* times, perform, to the state, *useful* services; and he, who steadily pursues the road of patriotism, has the most inviting prospect of being able, at *some* times, to perform *eminent* ones. Allow me to direct your attention, in a very particular manner, to a momentous part, which, by this constitution, every citizen will frequently be called to act. All those in places of power and trust will be elected either immediately by the people, or in such a manner that their appointment will depend ultimately on such immediate election. All the derivative movements of government must spring from the original movement of the people at large. If to this they give a sufficient force and a just direction, all the others will be governed by its controlling power. To speak without a metaphor, if the people, at their elections, take care to choose none but representatives that are wise and good, their representatives will take care, in their turn, to choose or appoint none but such as are wise and good also. The remark applies to every succeeding election and appointment. Thus the characters proper for publick officers will be diffused from the immediate elections of the people over the remotest parts of administration. Of what immense consequence is it, then, that this primary duty

should be faithfully and skilfully discharged! On the faithful and skilful discharge of it, the publick happiness or infelicity, under this and every other constitution, must, in a very great measure, depend. For, believe me, no government, even the best, can be happily administered by ignorant or vicious men. You will forgive me, I am sure, for endeavouring to impress upon your minds, in the strongest manner, the importance of this great duty. It is the first concoction in politicks; and if an error is committed here, it can never be corrected in any subsequent process: the certain consequence must be disease. Let no one say, that he is but a single citizen; and that his ticket will be but one in the box. That one ticket may turn the election. In battle, every soldier should consider the publick safety as depending on his single arm: at an election, every citizen should consider the publick happiness as depending on his single vote.

A progressive state is necessary to the happiness and perfection of man. Whatever attainments are already reached, attainments still higher should be pursued. Let us, therefore, strive with noble emulation. Let us suppose we have done nothing, while any thing yet remains to be done. Let us, with fervent zeal, press forward, and make unceasing advances in every thing that can support, improve, refine, or embellish society. To enter into particulars under each of these heads, and to dilate them according to their importance, would be improper at this time. A few remarks on the last of them will be congenial with the entertainments of this auspicious day.

If we give the slightest attention to nature, we shall discover, that with utility, she is curious to blend ornament. Can we imitate a better pattern? Publick exhibitions have been the favourite amusements of some of the wisest and most accomplished nations. Greece, in her most shining era, considered her games as far from being the least respectable among her publick establishments. The shows of the circus evince that, on this subject, the sentiments of Greece were fortified by those of Rome.

Publick processions may be so planned and executed as to join both the properties of nature's rule. They may instruct and improve, while they entertain and please. They may point out the elegance or usefulness of the sciences and the arts. They may preserve the memory, and engrave the importance of great political events. They may represent, with peculiar felicity and force, the operation and effects of great political truths. The

picturesque and splendid decorations around me furnish the most beautiful and most brilliant proofs, that these remarks are far from being imaginary.

The commencement of our government has been eminently glorious: let our progress in every excellence be proportionably great. It will—it must be so. What an enrapturing prospect opens on the United States! Placid husbandry walks in front, attended by the venerable plough. Lowing herds adorn our vallies: bleating flocks spread over our hills: verdant meadows, enamelled pastures, yellow harvests, bending orchards, rise in rapid succession from east to west. Plenty, with her copious horn, sits easy smiling, and, in conscious complacency, enjoys and presides over the scenes. Commerce next advances in all her splendid and embellished forms. The rivers, and lakes, and seas, are crowded with ships. Their shores are covered with cities. The cities are filled with inhabitants. The arts, decked with elegance, yet with simplicity, appear in beautiful variety, and well adjusted arrangement. Around them are diffused, in rich abundance, the necessities, the decencies, and the ornaments of life. With heartfelt contentment, industry beholds his honest labours flourishing and secure. Peace walks serene and unalarmed over all the unmolested regions—while liberty, virtue, and religion go hand in hand, harmoniously, protecting, enlivening, and exalting all! Happy country! May thy happiness be perpetual!