

ORATION,

Delivered in St. Michael's Church, before the inhabitants of Charleston, South-Carolina, on the fourth of July 1794, by DAVID RAMSAY, M. D. President of the Senate of South-Carolina.

FRIENDS, COUNTRYMEN, AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,

ON this day, eighteen years, a nation was born at once, a new order of things arose, and an illustrious era in the history of human affairs commenced.

Having delivered the first oration that was spoken in the United States, to celebrate this great event, I feel myself doubly honored in being again called upon, after a lapse of sixteen years, to perform the same duty.

It is worthy of remark, that the discovery of America was nearly coincident with the invention of the art of printing and of the mariner's compass. From these three sources the condition of mankind has been greatly improved.

The liberty of the press is enjoyed, in these states, in a manner that is unknown in other countries. Each citizen thinks what he pleases, and speaks and writes what he thinks.

It may seem presumptuous for us, who are a nation but of yesterday, to arrogate to ourselves the merit of having enlightened mankind in the art of government: but we became an independent people, under circumstances so favorable to the rights of man, that great indeed must have been our stupidity, had we not done so.

was known, anterior to our days, that a great, wise, and enlightened people, were peaceably convened by their representatives to deliberate on the principles of a constitution, by which they were to be governed.

In entering on this subject, where shall I begin? Where shall I end? Proofs are necessary. I need only appeal to experience. I have a witness in the breast of every one who hears me, and who knows the condition of the common people in other countries.

The doors of our legislative assemblies are open, and the conduct of our state officers may be safely questioned before the bar of the public, by any private citizen.

Among the privileges enjoyed by the citizens of these states, we may reckon an exemption from ecclesiastical establishments. These promote hypocrisy, and uniformly have been engines of oppression.

Religious freedom, banished from almost every other corner of the globe, has fixed her standard among us, and kindly invites the distressed from all quarters to repair hither.

exercise his reason in matters of faith. In others, a national creed is established, and exclusion from office is inflicted on all, however worthy, who dare to dissent.

The experience of 18 years, has proved that this universal equality is the most effectual method of preserving peace among contending sects.

Our political situation, resulting from independence, tends to exalt and improve the minds of our citizens. Great occasions always produce great men.

It is one of the peculiar privileges we enjoy, in consequence of independence, that no individual, no party interest, no foreign influence can plunge us into war.

To all the advantages of neutrality, we as an independent people, are entitled by the laws of nations, of nature, and of God. But it must be acknowledged, that at present we are deprived of many of them.

If we are to judge of the excellence of a government from its fruits, in the happiness of its subjects, we have abundant reason to be pleased with our own.

Upon an average, five of our citizens do not pay as much to the support of government as one European subject.

do not pay as much to the support of government as one European subject. The whole sum expended in administering the public affairs of the United States, is not equal to the fourth part of what is annually spent in supporting one crowned head in Europe.

From the increase of our trade and population, new ports are daily opened, and new towns and cities lift their heads in all directions.

It was hoped by our enemies, and feared by our friends, that the people of independent America, would not readily coalesce under a government, sufficiently energetic for the security of property and the preservation of internal peace.

Time would fail to enumerate all the superior advantages our citizens enjoy under that free government to which independence gave birth.

That we may rightly prize our political condition, let us cast our eyes over the inhabitants of the old world, and contrast their situation with our own.

Among the established governments of Europe that of Great Britain deservedly stands high: what is faulty in that we have avoided, what is excellent in it we have transplanted in our own.

It is true, that by the revolution of 1688, the people of England got a foreign prince to rule over them, on better terms than their own domestic tyrants had done.

blaze. It was reserved for Americans to put government on its proper foundation, the sovereignty of the people.

Do Englishmen value themselves on what is called Magna Charta? In the preamble to this celebrated instrument, it is stated, that "the king, of his mere free will, gave and granted to all freemen of his realm, the liberties" which are therein specified.

In comparing the constitution of the legislative assemblies of these states, with the parliament of Great Britain, how striking the contrast? Here the representatives are apportioned on such principles as collect and transmit the real sentiments of the represented.

With such a constitution, and with such extensive territory, as we possess, to what height of national greatness may we not aspire? Some of our large states have territory superior to the islands of Great Britain, and the whole together are little inferior to Europe itself.

Industry, frugality and temperance, are virtues which we should eminently cultivate. These are the only foundation, on which a popular government can rest with safety.