A N 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. Prefident of the Senate of South-Carolina.

FRIENDS, COUNTRYMEN, AND FELLOW-CITIZENS;

this day, eighteen years, a nation was born at once, a new order of things arole, and an illuffrious æra in the hiltory of human affairs commenced. The ties which before had joined us to Great Britain were fevered, and we affumed a place among the nations of the earth.

Having delivered the first oration that was spoken in the United States, to celebrate this great event, I feel myfelf doubly honored in being again called upon, after a laple of fixteen years, to erform the fame duty. Were my abilities equal to the important lubject, your entertainment would be great; but 1 must cast myfelf on your candor, and folicit indulgence, for falling far fhort of that difplay of eloquence, which this eventful day is calculated to infpire. It is worthy of remark, that the difcovery of America was nearly co-incident with the invention of the art of printing and of the mariner's compais. From these three fources the condition of mankind has been greatly improved. By means of the art of printing, the darknefs of ignorance, which for many centuries had overfhadowed mankind, has given place to the light of knowledge, and learned men of every clime conflitute but one republic. In confe-quence of the mariner's compafs, all the nations of out globe form one extended family, reciprocally administering to the wants of each other. May I be allowed to add, that the difcovery of America is the first link of a chain of causes, which bids fair to enlarge the happines of mankind, by regenerating the prin-ciples of government in every quarter of the world. Among the events refulting from this difcovery, and which lead to that great revolution, the declaration of independence is confpicuoufly pre-emihent. I will not wound your ears, on this feftive day, by a repetition of the many injuries received by this country from Great Britain, which forced us to cut the Gordian knot, which b fore had joined us together. Suffice it to obferve, that for the twelve years preceeding the fourth of July, 1776, claim role on claim, injury followed injury, and opprefion trod on the heels of oppreffion, till we had no alternative left but that of abject flavery, or compleat independence. The spirit of freedom decided in favor of the latter. Heaven fmiled on our exertions. After an eight years war in which our countrymen difplayed the patience, the perfeverance, and the magnanimity of republicans, ftruggling for every thing that is dear to freemen, their most fanguine wishes were realifed. The government of Great Britain, which began the war to enforce their claim, to bind us in all cafes whatfoever, after fpending a hundred milli-ons of money, and facrificing a hundred thousand fubjects, to no purpose, was obliged to give up the contest, to retire from our fhores, and to relinquish, by a folemn treaty, all claim to bind us in any cafe whatfoever. Such a triumph of liberty could not fail of vibrating round to world. A great and mighty nation, on the other fide of the Atlantic, in imitation of our example, has abolished a system of oppression, under which their forefathers for many centuries had groaned. We truft and hope, that they will discover as great abilities in planning and executing a good new government, as they have hitherto done deftroying an ancient bad one. Should this well founded expectation be realifed, we may hope, that revolutions will follow revolutions, till defpotifm is banifh-ed from our globe. In this point of view, the enlarged philanthropilt mult not only rejoice in the benefits acquired by this country from its independence, but still more in those, which are likely to flow from it to the opprefied of every country. It may feem prefumptious for us, who are a nation but of yefterday, to arrogate to ourfelves the merit of having enlightened mankind in the art of government : but we became an independent people, under circumstances fo favorable to the rights of man, that great indeed must have been our stupidity, had we not done fo. When we review the origin of other nations, we find that accidental circumftances had a principal share in forming their constitutions. At one time a fuccefsful invader, at another a daring chieftain, fixed the conftituent parts of their government ; but it never

was known, anterior to our days, that a great, wife, and enlightened people, were peaceably convened by their repre fentatives to deliberate on the principles of a conflictation, by which they were to be governed. From the first fettlement of this country, every thing con-curred to infpire its inhabitants with the love of liberty. The facility of procuring landed property, gave every citizen an opportunity of becoming an independent freeholder. Remote from the influence of kings, bifhops, and nobles, the equality of rights was inculcated by the experience of every day. Having grown up to maturity under circum-Itances fo favorable to liberty, and then being at once fevered from all connexion with the old world, the people of this country, in forming a conflitution for their future government, had every in-citement to eitablith fuch principles, as promifed to fecure the greatest poffible fum of political good, with the least poffible portion of evil. When fuch a people became perfectly their own mafters, and free to adopt any conditution they pleafed, great would have been their fhame, had they not improved on those forms of government which originated in times of darknefs, and were inflituted under the influence of privileged orders. On this anniverfary of independence, it cannot be improper to thew that this has actually been done, and that in confequence thereof we enjoy advantages, rights and privileges fu-perior to moft, if not to all of the human race. Bear with me then, while I attempt to demonstrate this, by a detail of particulars :

In entering on this fubject, where fhall I begin ? Where fhall I end? Proofs are neceffary. I need only appeal to ex-perience. I have a witnefs in the breaft of every one who hears me, and who knows the condition of the common people in other countries. In the United States, the bleffings of fociety are enoyed with the least possible relinquish-ment of personal liberty. We have hit the happy medium between despotifm and anarchy. Every citizen is perfect-ly free of the will of every other citizen, while all are equally subject to the laws, Among us no one can exercife any au-thority by virtue of birth. All fart e-qual in the race of life. No man is bom a legiflator. We are not bound by any our money to fupport the idlenefs and extravagance of court favorites. No burdens are impofed on us, but fuch as the public good requires. No cnormous falaries are received by the few at the expense of the many. No taxes are le-vied, but fuch as are laid equally on the legislator and private citizen. No man can be deprived of his life, liberty or laws but those to which we have conproperty, but by operation of laws, freely, fairly and by common confent previoully enacted.

The liberty of the press is enjoyed, in these flates, in a manner that is unknown in other countries. Each citizen thinks what he pleafes, and fpeaks and writes what he thinks. Pardon me, illustrious Washington, that I have inwardly rejoiced on feeing thy much refpected name abufed in our newfpapers. Slanders against thy adamantine characare as harmless as pointless arrows thot from broken bows; but they prove that our printing preffes are free. The doors of our legislative assemblies are open, and the conduct of our state officers may be fafely queffioned before the bar of the public, by any private citizen. So great is the refpontibility of men in high flations among us, that it is the fafhion to rule well. We read of the rapacity, crucky and opprefion of men in power; but our rulers feem, for the molt part, to be exempt from these vices. Such are the effects of governments, formed on equal principles, that men in authority cannot eafly for-get, that they are the fervants of the community, over which they prefide. Our rulers, taken from the people, and at flated periods returning to them, have the ftrongeft incitement to make the pub-lic will their guide, and the public good their end.

others, a national creed is effablished, and xclution from office is inflicted on all,

exclution from office is inflicted on all, however worthy, who dare to diffent. In their happy flates, it is a fundamental conflictutional point, "that no religious teft fhall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public truft." The experience of 18 years, has prov-ed that this univerial equality is the molt effectual method of preferving peace among contending fects. It has also demonstrat-ed, that the church and flate are diffinct focieties, and can very well fublift without any alliance or dependance on each other. While the government, without partiality to any denomination, leaves all to frand on an equal footing, none can prove fuccefs-

to any denomination, leaves all to hand on an equal footing, none can prove fuccefs-ful but by the learning, virtue, and piety of its profeffors. Our political fituation, refulting from independence, tends to exalt and improve the minds of our citizens Great occafions always produce great men. While we were fubjects, the functions of government were perform-ed for us, but not by us. To adminifter the public affairs of fifteen flates, and of four millions of people, the mi-litary, civil, and political talents of many will be neceffary. Every office, in each of these multifavious departments, is open to every citizen, who has the abilities requifite for the difcharge of its duties. Such prospects cannot fail of exciting a laudable ambition in our youth to make themfelves worthy of public confidence.

It is one of the peculiar previleges we enjoy, in confequence of independence, that no individual, no party intereft, no foreign influence can plunge us into war. Under our excellent conflitution, that fcourge of nations will be avoided, unlefs unprovoked and unredreffed inju-ries roufe the body of the people. Had we not afferted our rank among nations, we, as appendages to Great Britain, would this day have been engaged in hoftilities against France, though bravely struggling for the rights of man : and all this at the call of a foreign mafter, and without any voice or will of our own in the matter. Think of the cruel war now carrying on by kings and nobles against the equal rights of mancall to mind the flaughtered thousands, whole blood is daily shedding on the plains of Europe, and let your daily tribute of thanks afcend to the common parent of the univerfe, who has eftablished you in a separate government, exempt from participating in these hor-

Inwarranted outrages on our commerce. If the voice and intereft of the people of that country, was the rule of their govern-ment, as it is with us, thefe aggreffions on our rights would never have taken place; but unfortunately for them, and for us, the interefts of the great body of their fub-jects have been factificed to the fears and caloufies of their privileged orders. In the madness of their zeal to restrain France from doing, what every independent na-tion has a right to do, they have needlefsly plunged their own country into a ruinous war ; and in the profecution of it, inflead of refpecting our rights, as a heutral na-tion, they have treated us as if we were their fubjects, bound to forego every branch our accustomed lawful commerce, that might, in their apprehension, contravene their defigus. Many thanks to our worthy Prefident, for his honeft endeavors to preerve to us the bleffings of peace. May hey be functersful; but if on their failure, the laft extremity must be reforted to, we may call heaven and earth to witnefs, that all the blood, and all the guilt of war will lie at the door of Great Britain. Peace was our intereft—peace was our wifn ; and for the prefervation of it, the government and people of these flates have done every thing that was reafonable and proper for them to do. May the fword of the United States never be unfheathed for the purpofes of ambition : but if it must be uplif-ted in felf.defence, may it fall with deci-five effect on the diffurbers of mankind. I beg pardon for this digreffion, and with pleafure turn away from contemplating the follies of that government, a feparation from which we this day celebrate, that I may proceed in pointing out the fuperior advantages, which we, as an independent people enjoy. If we are to judge of the excellence of a government from its fruits, in the happiness of its subjects, we have abundant reafon to be pleafed with our own -fince the peace of 1783, our country has been in a flate of progreffive im-provement-debts and other embarraffments growing out of the late war, are, in most cafes, nearly annihilated. Our numbers have been greatly augmented, both from the introduction of foreigners and the natural increase of our own citizens. Our exports and imports have overflowed all their ancient boundaries. A revenue fufficient to fupport national credit, and to fatisfy all other public exigencies, has been eafily railed, and that without burdening the people. Upon an average, five of our citizens

exercise his reason in matters of faith. In | do not pay as much to the support of blaze. It was referved for American overnment as one European subject. The whole fum expended in administer-ing the public affairs of the United States, is not equal to the fourth part of what is annually fpent in fupporting 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. The wildernefs on our weltern frontier, is conftantly leffening by the extension of new fettlements. Many who now hear me, have been witness to the legislature of a ltate comfortably accommodated in a place, where feven years ago the trees of the forest had never experienced the ax of the hufbandman.

It was hoped by our enemies; and ly coalefce under a government, fuffici-ently energetic for the fecurity of property and the prefervation of internal peace ; but they have both been difap-pointed. In thefe flates there is a vicorous execution of the laws, and an and bound to obey. A citizen has withpright administration of juffice. Property and perfonal rights are well fecured. Criminals are eafily brought to suffer the punishment due to their demerits : and no legal impediment exifts in the way of creditors recovering the full amount of what is due to them. Thefe bleffings are fecured to us with. out the intervention of a flanding army. Our government refting on the affections of the people, needs no other fup port than that of citizen foldiers. How unlike this to foreign countries, where normous taxes are necessary to pay ftanding armies, and where ftanding armies are neceffary to fecure the payment of enormous taxes

Time would fail to enumerate all the fuperior advantages our citizens enjoy under that free government to which ndependence gave birth. I may fafely thirm, in general, that as it proceeded from the people, it has been administered for their benefit. The public good has been the pole that by which its operations have been directed.

That we may rightly prize our poliical condition, let us caft our eyes over the inhabitants of the old world, and contrast their fituation with our own A few among them are exalted to be more than men, but the great bulk of the people, bowed down under the gal. ling yoke of oppression, are in a state of dependence which debafes human nature. In the benighted regions of Alia, and Africa, ignorance and delpotifm frown over the unhappy land. The lower claffes are treated like beafts of burden, and transferred without ceremony from one matter to another. In fome parts of Europe, the condition of the peasantry is not quite so bad, but in what country are the rights and happi nels of the common people fo much ref-pected as in these flates ? In this enumeration I purpofely omit France. Her former government was one of the worft. We truft and hope, that when peace is reftored, her enlightened rulers will furnifh a new and firong proof of the con-nexion between lillerty and happines. Among the established governments

that we have avoided, what is excellent in it we have transplanted in our own, with additions and improvements. Is trial by jury the pride of Britons? It is in like manner the birthright of our ci-tizens. Do Englishmen boast of the privileges they enjoy by virtue of the act of parliament, commonly called the Habeas corpus act ? We enjoy the fame, and with more facility, for with us two magistrates (one of whom is of the quorum) are empowered to give all the relief to a confined citizen which is con-templated by that act. Do Englishmen glory in the tevolution of 1688, and of the cotemporary acts of parliament, which declared the rights and liberties of the fubject? We have much more reafon to be proud of our conflicution. Whoever examines these declaratory acts of the English parliament, will find, that all the provisions in favor of liberty which they contain, fly up and kick the beam, when weighed against the following fingle sentence in our constitution : All power is originally vefted in the people, and all free governments are ily favored. We ought, in the first place, founded on their authority, and infli- to be grateful to the All-wife disposer tuted for their peace, fafety and happi-nefs." of events, who has given us fo great a portion of political happinels. To pol-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 domeftic tyrants had done, but neverthelets, they only exchanged one malt for another : For in their act of fetthement, to ufe their own words, " they molt humbly and faithfully fubmitted themfelyes, their heirs and their posterities." This æra was only the early dawn of that liberty

to put government on its proper four

dation, the fovereignty of the people. Do Englishmen value themfelves on what is called Magna Charta ? In the preamble to this celebrated inftrume it is itated, that " the king, of h mere free will, gave and granted to all freemen of his realm, the liberties" which are therein specified. What is thus faid to be given and granted by the free will of the lovereign, we the people of America hold in our own ight. The fovereignty refts in our-lelves, and inftead of receiving the pririleges of free citizens as a boon from the hands of our rulers, we defined their powers by a conflitution of our own framing, which preferibed to them, that thus far they might go, but no farther. feared by our friends, that the people of All power, not thus expressly delegated, independent America, would not readi-is retained. Here, let us paule, and leifurely furvey the difference, the im-menfe difference, between a citizen and a fubject. A free citizen, of a free ftate, is the higheft ftyle of man. A fubject is born in a flate of dependence, in himfelf a portion of fovereignty, and is capable of forming or amending the conftitution, by which he is to be go-verned; and of electing, or of being elected, to the office of its first magiftrate. In monarchies, the fubjects are what they are by the grace of their fo-vereign ; but in free reprefentative, governments, rulers are what they are by

the grace of the people. In comparing the conftruction of the legislative allemblies of thefe flates, with the parliament of Great Britain, how striking the contrast? Here the reprefentatives are apportioned on fuch prin-ciples as collects and tranimits the real fentiments of the reprefented : Bot in Great Britain the parliament is a mock. ery of representation. The electors are but a handful of the whole mais of fubjects. Large towns have few or no reprefentatives, while decayed boroughs are authorifed to fend infinitely more than would be their quota on any rea-fonable fystem. In these states the le-gislative affemblies are like miniature pictures of the whole community, where each part retains its comparative importance, though on a reduced fcale. In the parliament of Great Britain, the few give law to the many. It has been demonstrated by calculations on this fubjact, that a majority of the English house of commons is chosen by less than 8000 perfons, though the kingdom contains more than eight millions of fubjects. Here the views and withes of the legislature, are for the most part the views and wifnes of the people; but in England the reverse is often the cafe. In the British parliament, the minister with a penfioned majority, may carry what schemes he pleases; but in our legislative assemblies, every overture mult ftand or fall according to its real or apparent tendency, to help or hurt the people. Thus might I go on till I outraged your patience, in demonstrating the inperiority of our government over those which are reputed the best in the old world.

With fuch a conflictution, and with fuch extensive territory, as we poffefs, of Europe that of Great Britain de- to what heighth of national greatnels fervedly flands high : what is faulty in may we not afpire ? Some of our large flates have territory fuperior to the illands of Great Britain, and the whole together are little inferior to Europe itfelf. The natural advantages of our country are many and great. We are not left to depend on others for our fupport and ftrength. Our luxuriant foil is capable of producing, not only enough for the encreasing multitude that inhabits it, but a furplufage for exportation, fufficient to fupply the wants of hundreds of thoufands in foreign countries. Our numbers, if they continue to encreafe, as they hitherto have done, will, in lefs than a century, amount to forty millions. The light of fcience is kindling up in every corner of these flates. Manufactures, and all the uleful arts are making rapid progrefs among us, while agriculture, the first and bett employment of man, surpasses all its ancient limits. With pleafure I could dwell on the pleafing prospect of our ri-fing greatness; but I halten to point out what is the line of conduct proper to be purfued by those who are fo highfefs fuch a country, with the bleffings of liberty and peace, together with that fecurity of perfon and property, which refults from a well ordered efficient go-vernment, is, or ought to be matter of conftant thankfulnefs.

Among the privileges enjoyed by the citizens of these flates, we may reccon an exemption from ecclefiaftical eftablishments. These promote hypocrify, and uniformly have been engines of op-prefiion. They have transmitted error rom one generation to another, and reftrained that free spirit of enquiry, which leads to improvement. In this country no priefts can decimate the fruits of our industry, nor is any preference whatever, given to one left above another.

Religious freedom; banifhed from almost every other corner of the globe, has fixed her ftandard among us, and kindly invites the diffrested from all quarters to tensite hither. In forme places repair hither. In fome places fire and faggot await the man, who prefumes to

Industry, frugality and temperance, are virtues which we should eminently cultivate. These are the only foundation, on which a popular government which now thines on us in its noontide be plain in their apparel-their enter-