

Cover MS4552.1.179.34

Antiquarian Society,

from J. Porter.

Duplicate

Albany

DR. SPRAGUE'S ORATION

COMMEMORATIVE OF

LAFAYETTE.

AN
ORATION

COMMEMORATIVE OF THE LATE

GENERAL LAFAYETTE,

PRONOUNCED BEFORE THE MILITARY AND CIVIC SOCIETIES OF
THE CITY OF ALBANY,

IN THE SOUTH DUTCH CHURCH,

JULY 24, 1834.

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.
PASTOR OF THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN ALBANY.

ALBANY:
PRINTED BY PACKARD AND VAN BENTHUYSEN.
.....
1834.

W 4552, 1.13

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1918

FUNERAL ORATION.

FELLOW-CITIZENS :

I cannot look over this assemblage, or look abroad upon this land, but the interrogation forces itself upon me, Where are the great men and the mighty, the sages, the patriots, the heroes, of the American Revolution? Many of them indeed fell on the field of battle; and their life-blood was part of the price of our country's liberty. Scarcely had the conflict begun, before the illustrious names of Montgomery and Warren appeared on the catalogue of the slain; and that catalogue grew by fresh accessions from each successive battle, till it became at once fearfully extended and superlatively glorious. Nevertheless, far the greater part of those by whom that noble enterprise was sustained, were spared to see the end of it; and many of them lived not only to catch the first beams of national freedom that darted across the land, but to see the bright sun of our independence mounting in majesty

A

towards mid-heaven. Within much less than half a century past, there was a galaxy of those great and heroic spirits here, moulding our institutions, guiding our councils, and watching over the fabric of liberty which their wisdom and patriotism had reared. But one star after another has been struck out of that field of glory, till there is only here and there a luminous point to relieve the eye from a sepulchral gloom. Washington, always great, and great in every thing,—his country has long since wept over his tomb, and his life has become part of the history of the world. And those too who were his associates in the cabinet and in the field, in perils and in honors, have almost all bowed to the mandate of the destroyer. Of the immortal band who, at the hazard of an ignominious death, affixed their names to the noblest document on earth, not an individual survives to tell of the thrilling and agitating scenes of that momentous hour. There are indeed a few still sparsely scattered over the land, who were connected with the war of the Revolution; but they are men of another age; and we cannot forget, while we listen to their story of the past, that they are speaking to us from the borders of the tomb. Peace to the last years of their sojourn on earth! Peace to their spirits, such as the world cannot give! Peace to their memories, when the grave shall have taken them into its keeping!

Amidst the progressive desolation we have witnessed in the ranks of our revolutionary patriots, we have had occasion for a grateful recognition of the providence of God, in the fact that one great and immortal name, which is more identified than almost any other with our national independence, has, till within a very recent period, had a place among the living. The individual to whom I refer, was not indeed a *natural* son of America; and for many years he has had his home where also he had his birth—in another hemisphere; but he has proved himself to be one of America's most *faithful* sons; and she, in turn, has adopted and cherished him as her own: she has heard his voice as if it spoke from the depths of oracular wisdom; and unless the sun of liberty should go down here in perpetual night, his memory will become more and more fragrant to the latest age. She has heard the tidings of his death with emotions exceeded only by those which she felt when she was bereaved of her illustrious Chief; and as she delighted to hold communion with his great spirit while he was yet alive, so now she loves to linger with reverence and gratitude about his far distant grave. And in the magnificent and imposing rites which are going forward in connexion with this event throughout our land, rely on it, you witness nothing but the appropriate expression of a nation's sorrow. There is indeed pageantry here;

but it is not that hollow pageantry which custom decrees to mere rank, and which, sometimes, by a revolting association, couples badges of woe with the spirit of gladness: but it is the solemn and dignified utterance of a deep public feeling; it is the worthy tribute of a nation of freemen to the memory of a man who sacrificed much, and hazarded every thing, for their liberties. Ye do well, my countrymen, to pause this day at the tomb of your hero. Heaven grant that you may heed his counsels, and imbibe his patriotism, while you embalm his memory in your gratitude and your tears!

It is not my purpose, on this occasion, to bring before you, in a connected view, even the leading incidents in the life of Lafayette; not only because it may fairly be presumed that you are familiar with the outline of his history, but because it were scarcely possible to sketch it, even in the most general manner, within the brief hour allotted to this exercise. Let me rather invite you to contemplate **SOME OF THE MORE PROMINENT ATTRIBUTES BY WHICH THE CAREER OF THIS APOSTLE OF LIBERTY WAS DISTINGUISHED,** and to mark **THE INFLUENCE WHICH IT HAS ALREADY EXERTED, AND IS YET TO EXERT, ON THE DESTINIES OF THE WORLD.**

One of the first things which strikes the mind in contemplating the **COURSE** of Lafayette, is his *generous and lofty disinterestedness*. He was

emphatically a volunteer in the cause of liberty; and he always stood ready, if occasion required, to be a martyr to it. It was this cause which quickened the beatings of his youthful heart, and which shed such overpowering radiance upon his vision that he could scarcely look on any other object of human pursuit. Fortune was nothing, fame was nothing, even the blandishments of friendship and the joys of domestic life, lost their power to attract, when brought into the light of the glorious idea of giving a nation its liberty. Read the history of most other heroes, and you will discover, more or less, the workings of a grovelling selfishness: you will see Revenge doing her dark and bloody deeds, and calling them an offering to a country's glory: you will see Ambition fighting desperately, with the praises of liberty upon her lips, but with her eye fixed upon a throne, and her heart panting to occupy it: but you look in vain through the history of Lafayette to find a single instance, in which that truly disinterested spirit, which seems to have been one of the elements of his nature, ever forsook him. It was the triumph of liberty upon which his heart was fixed; and in comparison with that he forgot even the glory of his own name.

Recur for a moment to his history, and see whether it does not justify all, and more than all, which I have here attributed to him. Consider the circumstances in which he was placed, when

he took up the lofty and almost chivalrous determination of joining the American cause. He was of noble birth; and belonged to a family which, through a succession of generations, had been distinguished in the history of their country. His education had qualified him to mingle in the services, and move amidst the splendours, of the court; and he had already been promoted to an office in one of the guards of honor. His noble and generous spirit, his elegant and attractive manners, rendered him a universal favorite. In addition to this, he was a husband and a father; and was peculiarly fitted to sustain and enjoy the domestic relations. In short, his worldly prospects seemed to combine every thing that was brilliant and fascinating: affluence had poured her splendours around him; honor had placed her laurel wreath upon his youthful brow; and friendship waited every where to greet him with her congratulations and her smiles. What else than a genuine love of liberty,—a desire to promote the interests of his fellow men, could have led him to break away from his family, his country, his prospects, and to cast in his lot with an afflicted people, to whom he was bound by no other tie than that which binds together the whole human family?

And then consider what there was in *our* circumstances to attract him hither, if any other principle than a pure love of liberty had had do-

minion over him. He knew that it was a doubtful and bleeding cause that he was coming to assist; and that if it should go down, he might lose every thing in the wreck. He knew that our army, compared with the force they had to encounter, were a feeble and undisciplined body ; and that the latest intelligence which had reached France respecting them was, that they were retreating in haste through New-Jersey, marking their footsteps with their blood. He knew that our credit abroad was at the lowest point; for when he made proposals of joining the American service to our commissioners at Paris, they were obliged to acknowledge that they had not the means of furnishing him with a decent conveyance. In short, our cause presented itself to him not only in all its greatness, but in all its weakness; and when he came hither, and found us as one against a thousand, he beheld nothing which he had not distinctly taken into the account in determining on the hazardous enterprise. Who then will ever suspect the influence of any selfish considerations in bringing him to our aid? If he had been dreaming of personal aggrandizement, it was strange indeed that he should have joined his fortunes with those of a people, over whom there had gathered a cloud, in which the whole world saw nothing but the elements of a tempest, which was to sweep over this land with the besom of destruction.

Observe yet another proof of his disinterestedness in the terms on which he came to this country, and offered his services, and in the personal sacrifices which he subsequently made to carry forward the American cause. When our commissioners at Paris told him that we were without resources adequate to the prosecution of the plan he proposed, "then," said he, "I shall purchase a vessel and fit it out for myself;" and you know the enterprise was actually sustained at his own personal expense. When he requested of Congress the privilege of serving in our army, he subjoined, as a condition, that it should be without pay, and as a volunteer. When he witnessed the wants and sufferings of his soldiers, he generously appropriated of his own private fortune to their relief. When the public exigencies had so exhausted the public treasury that there were no means at command for sustaining some important operations, he unhesitatingly used the credit of his own name for the necessary amount. Indeed every step that he took showed that he had embarked his all for the liberties of our country; and that all, even to his heart's blood, should be sacrificed, if our country's cause should require it.

It were easy to illustrate this feature in his character still farther, by referring to other portions of his history, and particularly to the part which he has borne in the revolutions of his own

country. I know indeed of *no* part of his history as a public man, to which I might not appeal for evidence that he lost sight of himself, in his regard to the great cause of civil liberty. Wherever his history shall be known, (and it will be known every where,) his noble disinterestedness will receive the homage of every enlightened friend of man.

Let me invite you next to contemplate his *firmness and valor*. I know not that his enemies have ever pointed to more than a single act of his life as even seeming to indicate a deficiency in either of these qualities; and that act, fairly interpreted, has not the shadow of any such meaning. You will anticipate me when I say that I refer to his leaving the French army, after the fall of the constitution. But consider the circumstances in which he was placed, and say whether, if it indicated weakness that he made his escape, it would not have indicated insanity to have remained; or rather, whether the course which he adopted, was not consistent alike with courage and with wisdom. He beheld the constitution—the proud and magnificent fabric which he had been chiefly instrumental of rearing, reduced, by the dark storm of political fanaticism, to an unsightly ruin. He had evidence which could not be resisted that the spirit which prevailed at Paris had found its way into the army, and that it was extending like a death-dew on

B

every side. He knew that his enemies were to be his judges; and he foresaw with the confidence of entire certainty,—what immediately took place,—that an order would be passed in the assembly which would be equivalent to the writing of his death-warrant. Hitherto he had been the master spirit of the revolution; but now the storm raged beyond his control; the principles for which he contended had given place to the wild misrule of a bloody faction; and the alternative was presented before him, of laying himself a victim on the altar of popular fury without any reason to hope that his country would be benefitted by the sacrifice, or of seeking a retreat where he might be beyond the reach of his enemies. He chose the latter side of the alternative; and to have done otherwise would have been to have rashly sported with a life which, for aught he knew, might be, and which we know, actually has been, protracted many years for the benefit of the world.

And now for the positive proofs that he was always firm—always brave—though I need only allude to them, for they are written on your memory as with the point of a diamond. Look then at the firmness he exhibited while he was yet in the days of his youth—in persevering in his purpose to come to our aid, against the importunity of friends, and in the face of a prohibition from his own government. Mark the

courage he evinced at the battle of Brandywine, and at a later period, in his forced march to Virginia. Witness his successful trial of generalship with Lord Cornwallis, who sportively boasted that "the boy could not escape him," but who was taught by the siege of Yorktown the same wholesome lesson which Goliath of giant memory had learned before him—that it is not prudent to defy too hastily the energy even of a *stripling's* arm, especially when it happens to be lifted in a righteous cause. Observe the fearful hazard which he incurred in protecting the royal family from the violence of the mob; and subsequently, in writing the famous letter to the convention, in which he vehemently denounced the faction that was then becoming predominant; and when the authenticity of that letter was denied, in standing up before the assembly and avowing himself its author, and vindicating the honors of the constitution which he saw before him in the dust. Though he would not needlessly throw away his life, yet he never shrunk from exposing it at what he believed was the call of duty. There was no element of his nature by which he could judge of the throbbings of a coward's heart;—no condition of peril in which he was ever placed, that he did not stand forth in the dignity of true courage.

But courageous as he was, he was not less distinguished for *coolness and discretion*. He might

have had all his bravery and all his disinterestedness, and yet, if he had been incautious and impetuous, he would have been quite another man. But it was one of the chief glories of his character that, with a courage which opposition could not daunt, he united a dignified calmness which the most sudden approach of danger could not surprize. No matter how delicate or how difficult were the circumstances in which he was placed;—whether he was managing a retreat at the head of an army, or going forth to arrest the violence of a mob, or lifting up his voice in the tribune, at the hazard of having his head brought to the block, we find always the same admirable presence of mind: even his least premeditated movements seem to have been the result of cool reflection. When, for instance, the populace of Paris had adopted a cockade of blue and red, as an expression of irritation and disgust towards the court, Lafayette, in the cool spirit of conciliation, added to it the white of the royal arms, and predicted, as he placed it in his own hat, that “it would go round the world.” When the national guard importunately clamored to accompany to Versailles the infuriated mob, who were thirsting for the blood of the royal family, he threw himself into the midst of that immense multitude, and with incredible effort, but with perfect calmness, labored to subdue their ferocity, and change their purpose. When, at the dawn of

day, a desperate onset was made upon the palace with a view to assassinate the queen, he was present, in a moment, with the national troops, to prevent the effusion of royal blood. And when the populace, in the spirit of malignant rage, called for her to appear on the balcony of the palace, he, by his own suggestion, led her out, and by kissing her hand in their presence with incomparable grace and dignity, appeased their fury at once, and caused the air to resound with shouts of "Long live the queen; Long live the general." It has been said by Madame De Stael, that nobody ever saw Lafayette disconcerted; and here as truly as in any thing, lay the secret of his astonishing influence.

Let me say, farther, what I have already in some measure anticipated, that he was distinguished by *a uniform and uncompromising adherence to his own principles*. No man was ever more earnest than he in the cause of human freedom; and yet no man ever distinguished more accurately between genuine freedom and its counterfeits. He would have all men enjoy their true rights; but he would not recognise the right of any man wantonly to invade public peace or order. And with these principles the whole course of his life was strictly consistent. He enlisted in the American cause, because he saw that we were unrighteously oppressed; and that the liberty for which we were striving, was that of which no hu-

man power had a right to deprive us. And when he returned to France, he entered with a single eye into *her* cause, and actually succeeded in the establishment of a constitution in the spirit of liberal principles. But when he perceived that his own principles were lost sight of, and the genius of true liberty was spreading her wings to fly, and a cloud was gathering over the land charged with anarchy and blood, he stood forth against his own countrymen in the majesty of a prompt resistance; and without retreating towards the principles of the ancient despotism, he boldly asserted the rights of the king, and stood up in defence of the constitution. And at a later period, when Napoleon, in repeated instances, endeavored to secure his co-operation, he not only sternly and steadily declined his proposals, but even openly resisted his selfish and arbitrary movements, and declared that he saw in them the elements of ruin. He had no sympathy with the spirit of anarchy on the one hand, or of tyranny on the other; and hence he was equally ready to declare himself against the oppressive and bloody policy of the emperor, and against the wild and brutal movements of the mob. His principles were the same in the last revolution as in the first; the same when he was fighting for the liberties of America in the spring time of youth, and when he was struggling for the liberties of France in the winter of age. And his principles always

controlled his conduct; and hence the beautiful consistency that reigned through his life.

Let me speak, next, of *the fortitude with which he endured his sufferings*. In almost any circumstances, a military life brings with it suspense, privation, calamity. But I will not here advert to the ordinary trials which Lafayette experienced in common with other men of the same profession: I will limit myself to that dark spot in his history, which gives his name such an affecting prominence on the catalogue of sufferers, and over which Americans yet to be born will pause and weep. The hero, convinced that he could do nothing more to save his country, has fled to save his life. But though he knows it not, he is on his way to a prison; and years of ignominious suffering are about to roll over him. I hear the door of the dungeon of Olmutz shut; and it conveys to me the fearful assurance that he who has bled in the cause of my country, is exiled from the light of heaven,—I had almost said, entombed a living monument of fiend-like cruelty. And now, my countrymen, if you can keep a steady eye upon what is passing there, you shall witness a scene of complicated misery, which is enough to make the blood set back with horror. Your illustrious benefactor has had it authoritatively announced to him, that the residue of his life will be nothing better than a lingering death. He has heard that, while he will be left to suffer in dreary

solitude, no report even of his existence will ever reach his friends. He has contracted violent disease amidst the damps of his dungeon, so that he is reduced to the weakness of a child, and his hair has fallen from his head; but no hand of charity ministers to his wants, no voice of sympathy falls upon his ear. For aught he knows, he is yet a husband and a father; but where his beloved wife and children are,—if indeed they have not fallen under the revolutionary axe,—it is impossible for him to conjecture. By a course of events, they are at length privileged to become his companions in exile; but on the melancholy condition that their exile, like his, shall be perpetual. For a long period his fate is involved in the deepest mystery, and it is even problematical whether he is among the living; but at length the place of his confinement is ascertained; and a most chivalrous and desperate effort is made for his deliverance: but it fails; and they who have made it now share the horrors of the dungeon with him who has been the object of it; and every thing seems to indicate that they must all suffer till they die. I need not say that God, in his good providence, sent deliverance to them all; and one of them,—a countryman of ours,* still lives,—if I mistake not,—to tell, more impressively than any one else can do, the story of the dungeon of Olmutz.

* Francis K. Huger, Esq., of South Carolina.

But throughout this scene of suffering the fortitude of the illustrious prisoner never faltered. We cannot know indeed what might have sometimes been the tumult of his thoughts, and the agony of his spirit, during those five long years of imprisonment; but every thing that we do know would indicate that he never yielded to the horrors of despondency. And when, at length, an attempt was made on the part of the Austrian government, to compel him to receive his freedom on certain conditions of their own, he declared with unshrinking firmness that he would not accept his liberation at the expense of compromising any of his rights, either as a Frenchman or an American citizen. The intense sufferings of five years had not so exhausted the energies of his mind, but that he chose rather to continue to suffer than submit to a dishonorable release.

I have spoken of the fortitude with which he endured his sufferings; and now I will speak of *the dignity with which he wore his honors*. I say nothing here of the hereditary and accidental distinctions of his birth, or of the lustre which had begun to surround his name at court while he had yet scarcely emerged from boyhood; but I fix upon his first visit to America, as marking his entrance upon a path in which honors continually clustered upon him, that were created by his own greatness. And first of all, let me say, he was honored in a degree that few others ever were,

with the confidence and friendship of Washington. There was a chord in the bosom of that great man which vibrated to every thing that was magnanimous and patriotic; and from the hour that he first looked upon the youthful hero, he welcomed him to a place both in his dwelling and in his affections. And I need not say that his friendship for him lasted, and grew stronger, till death stopped the beatings of his generous heart. Washington had always an eye upon him in the perils of his subsequent life; and if the Austrian government had not been constituted with sinews of iron and a heart of adamant, which enabled them to resist any thing, Washington's influence would have penetrated the prison of Olmutz, and given light and liberty to his illustrious friend. And he was the favorite not only of the Father of his country, but of the country itself; for wherever he moved, gratitude and honor attended his footsteps; and, in more than one instance, Congress testified to the heroism he had displayed, and the services he had rendered, and officially proffered him a nation's benedictions. On his return to France, at the close of our revolution, fresh honors awaited him every where. The great men and the nobles thronged about him to do him homage; the cities and villages which he entered welcomed him, with unwonted exultation, as the friend of man; poetry and music lent their fascinating influence to spread abroad his fame;

their places of amusement rung with shouts at the most remote allusion to his brilliant career; and his name seemed already to stand out in the history of the world encircled with a halo of glory. Farther onward in his career, you see him at the head of the national guards of France; holding in his hands the power of the monarchy; standing beneath the throne and the altar, and in circumstances of magnificence and solemnity which have scarcely a parallel in the annals of the world, swearing, in behalf of the nation, to the constitution which his wisdom and perseverance had obtained. And without attempting to trace the whole of his brilliant path, let me bring you to a point where I can appeal to your personal recollections;—to that fortunate era in the history of our country, when he came among us as a nation's guest;—to that year of jubilee, when our hills and valleys which, half a century before, had witnessed to his generous and heroic services, broke forth into singing on being permitted again to receive his venerable footsteps. You remember how that year was crowded with incidents which made the bosom of every American thrill; how the din of party strife was hushed, that the notes of joy, and thankfulness, and gratulation, might rise the higher; how every city, and every village,—I might almost say every hamlet, was longing to find itself in the path of the illustrious guest. You remember how we compelled him to move about in

a sort of civic triumph ; how the old soldier, as he pressed up to welcome his general, seemed half to lose the furrows of age under the buoyancy and extacy of his recollections ; how those of us who had never seen his face, but had heard his story, gazed after him as the object of our brightest and earliest visions ; how even infant voices were lifted to bid him welcome, and infant hands to heap upon him their benedictions. Such honors, I venture to say, were never awarded to any other man ; and what constituted their chief value was, that they were a voluntary tribute from an enlightened and grateful people.

But amidst all this accumulation of honors, you cannot point to a single incident of his life which betrays the influence of vanity. Grateful indeed he was for the favorable regards of his fellow men ; but as no man ever courted popular favor less, so he was never intoxicated by the praises of the multitude. He could listen to the shouts of victory on the field of battle, when he was himself the conqueror ; he could find himself the real head of a mighty empire, and could know that his hand guided its majestic movements ; he could control the great decisions of the senate house, and be the counsellor of kings, and carry trepidation even to the bosom of Napoleon himself ; he could hear ten thousand grateful voices loud as the sound of many waters joining to do him homage ;—and yet never lose the dignity of self-

restraint, or betray the weakness of self-exaltation. It was one of the elements of his greatness that he could triumph over the temptations of success, as well as sustain himself against the shocks of defeat; that he was no more inflated by the flatteries of a court, than terrified by the fury of a mob.

I have detained you so long on the character of Lafayette, that I can only glance at the CONSEQUENCES of his eventful life.

Let me ask you then to go back to the period which witnessed the beginning of his career, and let your eye rest upon what his eye rested, when he looked abroad upon the nations. Throughout continental Europe he beheld the reign of an iron despotism. Every where there was a practical acknowledgment of the political dogma which Louis the fourteenth had openly declared, that "the king is the state;" and so deep was the slumber into which the people had fallen, that they did not so much as dream of the true doctrine of liberty, and seemed scarcely to writhe under their bondage. The night of ignorance had lasted so long, that men knew not but that darkness was their appropriate element; and it was the policy of despots to render that night perpetual: and hence we find that when the morning star of improvement dawned, they regarded it as an omen of evil, as truly as Herod the tyrant did the star of Bethlehem. In short, the

whole continent of Europe was politically a field of desolation. Not a bosom heaved, nor an eye kindled, nor a limb moved, in favor of true liberty. The eye of Lafayette wandered over that immense region in the midst of which his own lot was cast, and though he could see enough of the insignia of royalty, and the imposing magnificence of palaces, and the luxury and refinement of courts, yet he could see nothing to indicate that the spirit of freedom was there ; nay, he could read in all the political arrangements of the day, as if it had been written on the broad face of the heavens above him, that the nations should continue to be enslaved, if the policy of cabinets and the prowess of armies could effect it.

The state of England was indeed somewhat better. By the revolution of 1688 which placed upon the throne William and Mary, a considerable advance had been made in the cause of liberty. Nevertheless England had much to learn on this subject ; and what she knew, she did not practise ; for at that very time she was extending over one of her own children a rod of iron. And that child too had fled from her, more than a century before, into the wilderness ; because, instead of the protection she had a right to claim as belonging to the household, she was hunted down, like an alien, by a most bloody persecution : nevertheless, she had not disowned her relationship, or renounced her allegiance, or assumed an attitude

of defiance, but had uniformly evinced a filial veneration, and had been forbearing till forbearance became a weakness, not to say a crime. England then, far from being right in theory,—was much farther from being right in practice, when Lafayette began his career: indeed it was her *arbitrary* spirit, which kindled his *noble* spirit; *her* hand lifted to oppress, that roused *him* to a desperate resistance.

And as for our own country,—though there was poverty, and weakness, and misfortune here, yet here was the germ of true liberty. There was intelligence widely diffused; the representative principle, which is one of the main springs of a popular government, had, in various ways, been recognised; and the minds of those whose fathers had fled from oppression had not grown cool on the subject of their rights, by having been kept immediately in the shade of a towering monarchy. Our heroic benefactor, looking at us from beyond the sea, perceived that the corner stone of the temple of freedom had here been laid; and his bosom burned to aid in carrying it upward towards heaven. The spirit of liberty was indeed here; but the victory was yet to be achieved: here were men who were ready to pour out their blood; but it was still a fearful problem whether such an offering would save their posterity from an ignoble servitude.

Such was the state of the world when Lafayette first looked forth upon it, in the spirit of a youthful martyr, and longed for its liberty. But how changed, when he casts an eye over it in the evening of his life! America rises to his view, disenthralled. She pays no tribute now but the tribute of gratitude to her deliverer, and to Him who caused them to triumph. From a little one oppressed by a despotic arm, she has become a great nation rejoicing in her liberty. Her influence encircles the globe; her flag floats in every clime; her institutions are becoming more and more the admiration of the world; and if the kings and great ones of the earth affect to look upon her with disdain, it is only because they see in her the elements of stability and power, and fear that their own time is short. France too,—how unlike what she was, when she lifted her voice, and had well nigh lifted her arm, to stop him in the lofty purpose of espousing the cause of American freedom! She early caught the spirit of liberty, but it forthwith mounted up into a storm of licentiousness, and exploded in a convulsive revolution. Need I say that that revolution was too deeply charged with horror to admit of being adequately described? Conceive of the united desolations of the tempest, marking its way by the wrecks of whatever is beautiful in nature, and goodly in art; of the lightning, blasting, and scathing, and consuming, with a wild and re-

sisless energy ; of the pestilence, piercing thousands in the seat of life with its envenomed and invisible arrows ; of the earthquake, opening a grave for whole cities in the twinkling of an eye ; of the volcano, heaving, and belching forth death from its deep and fiery bosom ; and imagine that there is a malignant spirit, breathing and acting in these terrific exhibitions of nature, and still you have no adequate idea of the horrible realities of the French Revolution. That fearful storm, in its more immediate influence, no doubt retarded the progress of genuine liberty ; and it seems to have prepared the nation for a return to a temporary despotism. Years passed away, and the French were really an enslaved people ; but their very chains appeared to them the ensigns of freedom, as they saw them in the glory of Napoleon's name. In later times, the spirit of liberty has shown itself under more auspicious influences ; and the events of the last few years have proved that this spirit will triumph ; and if France is not prepared to welcome the genius of true freedom, let her take heed lest the angry fiend of anarchy should again become the master of her destinies, and there should be rained down upon her another storm of blood. France has indeed taken the lead in the cause of liberty of the other countries of continental Europe ; but most of them have caught in a degree the spirit of reform ; and even where the light has but just be-

D

gun to penetrate, there seems to be a yielding of the darkness far around. Though the people may not have risen to the point of actually claiming their rights, yet many of them mutter forth their reproaches against tyrants while they sit in the dust, and beguile the hours of their bondage by anticipating the songs of liberty. And even in those countries where, to a superficial eye, every thing still seems stagnant under the influence of tyranny, the wise and the observing can see symptoms of a recovering spirit; and it would not be contrary to the analogy of Providence, if, amidst this apparent apathy, there should prove to have been the gathering together of elements for a sudden and desolating storm. And Britain, during this eventful period, has, by no means, been stationary. Freedom has there been making a gradual and steady progress, though she has not yet done her perfect work. Perhaps public sentiment was never advancing more rapidly in the British nation than at this hour; and some of their own wise statesmen see, or think they see, in their political horizon, signs of fearful import. The people are calling for reform, and the rulers are holding back; and unless the reasonable claims of the people are met, they may ere long show themselves the strongest in a revolution that shall invade the honors, and even annihilate the existence, of the throne.

Need I say that, during the period which we are contemplating, the world has been marching onward in the path not only of political, but general, improvement? Knowledge, which is but the harbinger of liberty, has been diffusing itself over the world, like the beams of the morning. Commerce has increased many fold. The practical arts on which so many of the conveniences of life depend, have been carried forward with surprising success. The barriers which formerly separated the nations have been gradually giving way; and people of different countries are beginning to learn that they can meet without presenting the bayonet to each others' bosoms. And last, though not least, Religion has asserted *her* right to rule, and the nations have begun to yield to her benignant sway: there is an angel now on the wing, with a message of mercy to proclaim to every creature; and as she moves onward through the heavens, the earth beneath her brightens into a field of supernal beauty. Indeed if you ask me what is the difference between the state of the world now and at the time when Lafayette commenced his course, I can only say that it is the difference between a wilderness in which there is scarcely a spot of verdure, because the sun can not penetrate it, and a wilderness which the industry of man has opened, in some measure, to the genial influence of heaven, and which is already beginning to bud and blossom as the rose.

nations where the gloom of tyranny now reigns. I look in vain to find a single fragment of a despot's throne. I see Freedom, and Commerce, and Learning, and Religion, walking together like a band of sisters over the earth. I hear it in the breeze, I read it in the skies, that the winter is past, and the earth is blooming into a perennial spring. And from every part of this vast field of fragrance and beauty which opens upon me, I hear pronounced, in accents of gratitude, the name of Lafayette; while I behold multitudes from the west and the south, from the east and the north, crowding around his tomb, and bestrewing it with garlands.

My friends, if I have been carried farther than your patience has accompanied me, you have my apology in the greatness of my theme. I know I have not done justice to the character of your hero; but to have said less were to have dishonored it. My mind still lingers upon it as in a field of glory; and even now I cannot let you go, without seizing upon the occasion to impress one admonition, which he addressed to us while living,* and which he repeats with still more

* The following is an extract of a letter addressed by General Lafayette to our highly respected countryman, S. F. B. Morse, Esq. President of the National Academy of Design, as he was on the eve of embarking from France for his native country. It is dated Lagrange, Sept. 27, 1832.

“I believe it to be the duty of every American returned home to let his fellow-citizens know what an ill-natured handle is made of the violent collisions, threats of a separation, and reciprocal abuse, to injure the cha-

solemn emphasis, from amidst the shadows of the tomb : it is that **WE SHOULD NOT SPORT WITH OUR LIBERTIES**. He charges us to remember that we have them as an inheritance ; and though they cost *us* nothing, yet they cost *our fathers* every thing. He bids us look upon every stone in this temple of freedom as precious, and to be jealous of the hand that would move even one stone out of its place. He calls upon us to lay down our arms which we have taken up against each other in political warfare ; to remember that we have the interests of a common country to sustain ; and to address ourselves to this great work in the strength of a united people. He reminds us too that we are a spectacle to the world ; that, in the providence of God, the last hope of liberty has been lodged here ; and that if it expires through our neglect, our very name will become a by-word and hissing among the nations. Americans, you will not turn away from the voice of your departed hero. You will not dare to tell the world that you can sport with an admonition that issues from his tomb. Come then and join

racter and question the stability of republican institutions. I too much depend on the patriotism and good sense of the several parties in the United States, to be afraid that these differences may terminate in a final dissolution of the Union ; and should such an event be destined in future to take place, deprecated as it has been by the last wishes of the departed founders of the Revolution, Washington at their head, it ought at least in charity not to take place before the period which cannot be remote, when every one of those who have fought and bled in the cause, shall have joined their contemporaries."