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EXTRACT

From the Excellent Speech of Governor Strong, delivered before the Legislature of Massachusetts on the 1st instant.

"The patriotism of the American people has been manifest in upholding the present system of national government, and the continuance of our union is obviously necessary to secure respect from other nations, and preserve tranquillity among ourselves; for unless our views are circumscribed within a narrow circle, we must perceive, that division would lead us to disorder and weakness, and expose us to the loss of national importance, and individual liberty. So long as these states are united, they will continue to increase in power and prosperity, but whenever the ties which connect them are dissolved, they will probably decay and fall to ruin, by mutual jealousies and intestine feuds.

"There is no evil to which free governments are more exposed, than the prevalence of party spirit. The extreme violence of this spirit degrades the character of a nation, and vitiates the morals of the people; it has proved fatal to almost every other republic, either by enabling a successful Chief to establish his empire on its ruins, or by weakening its ability to oppose foreign invasion; it tends to pervert the judgment as well as corrupt the heart, and renders the subjects of it unfocial and intolerant. Men who, in the ordinary commerce of life, would disdain to make use of deception, when actuated by the rage of party, will give currency to reports, which at least they must think doubtful; their pretended patriotism degenerates into an eagerness to support party principles; and in order to influence opinions or measures, or to retaliate supposed injuries, they have no scruple in violating the plainest rules of decency and justice. Our sentiments on political subjects will be different, but this diversity, if in expressing it we confine ourselves within the limits of truth and candor, will not be injurious, and if it produces an honourable emulation to promote the public good, may even be useful. It is impossible that all should be of one opinion, and it is a reasonable indulgence to suffer every man to enjoy his own; in many cases, however, an open and fair examination of public measures is necessary, to enable the people to form a correct judgment concerning them; and if the current of opinion is different from ours, we may endeavour, by early discussion, without artifice or calumny, to correct the supposed error. But the man who unnecessarily excites public alarm or resentment, is a disturber of the peace, and whatever his pretences may be, he is actuated by improper motives, and has no regard to the interest of his country.

"We flatter ourselves that the mild character of our fellow citizens, and their general information, will save us from those excesses of party zeal, by which other nations have been disgraced; but there is such a propensity to indulge this passion, and it has so often proved destructive, that good men would suppress it in themselves, and discourage the appearance of it in others; this duty is peculiarly incumbent on the public officers of the state, for if at any time they should unfortunately happen to be under its influence, instead of guarding the public interest with steady patriotism, they might indirectly sacrifice it to private attachment. A prudent and temperate course of proceeding on the part of government, will generally produce moderation and acquiescence in the people; and I hope and trust, that in discharging the duties of our respective offices, our impartial conduct will prove, that we are the faithful agents of the Commonwealth, and not the leaders or instruments of a party; and that we invariably endeavour to promote the peace and prosperity of our fellow citizens, and not to excite their passions or confirm their prejudices."

ANSWER.

Of the House of Representatives to his Excellency's Speech

THE House of Representatives receive with pleasure & respect, the address of your Excellency to both branches of the Legislature, and offer in return their sincere congratulations, upon the recent instance, of the high esteem and increasing confidence of the citizens, manifested in the late election.

We are fully aware of the delicate nature, of that portion of your Excellency's duties, which regards appointments to office, and firmly believe that in the selection of candidates, your Excellency has been uniform-

ly actuated by the most impartial views, to the interest and convenience of the People. Competition for offices, of necessity, gives rise to personal disappointment; and the difficulty of deciding upon pretensions apparently equal, must sometimes occasion embarrassment. But no material detriment to the public interest, will arise from these sources, while the power of appointment, is exercised with a sincere desire, to select able and upright men. It is only when subjected to the influence of passion, intolerance, or party projects, that this power becomes a scourge to the people. The sound and pertinent sentiments advanced by your Excellency, upon the general importance of government, to the peace of society, its tendency to promote the public happiness, and induce a compliance with the laws of the Supreme Being, demand our most cordial assent and approbation.

We rejoice in the existence of that National Constitution, which unites the People of the several States in the bonds of interest, and entitles them to the common privilege of citizens. Nothing shall be wanting on our parts to continue and extend its advantages to our Fellow Citizens, by the performance of such duties, as on the part of this Commonwealth is now incumbent upon us.

The importance of the union of the States, and of the National Government to our safety and tranquillity, cannot be too frequently inculcated. We regard the preservation of both, as the most sacred of our public duties. In an extensive confederacy, composed of various States, mutual jealousies, and violent collisions of opinion are naturally expected, and it may sometimes happen, that local politics and predilections, may acquire a dangerous ascendancy in the public councils. In such seasons, patience, moderation, and reliance upon Constitutional redress, would become all good citizens. If instead of this temper, the public mind should be actuated by desperate resolutions to abandon the Union, or a premature dissolution of our means to maintain it; the disorder and weakness incident to small and jarring confederacies would expose us to the loss of national importance, and individual liberty.

We unite with your Excellency, in deprecating the pernicious effects, of that party spirit which has proved the bane of every Republic, and which is the principal, if not the only source of the calamities which threaten a free and independent People. The evils arising from the excessive indulgence of this intolerant and unfocial spirit among those who are not the immediate agents of public affairs, are sincere obstacles to general prosperity and private happiness. But if any elective government, not merely the People, but their Rulers, shall become infected with this malignant spirit of party; if bursting from the confines, of private circles it shall shed its fatal influence over magistrates & legislators, then indeed will the public interests be sacrificed to private attachments;—then will merit languish in obscurity and disgrace, while honours and promotion, await the selfish and unworthy; then will such a nation realize, that paper Constitutions are feeble barriers against the devices of sophistry, or the assaults of violence. We trust, however, with your Excellency, that the mild character of our fellow citizens, and their general information, will save us from those excesses of party zeal, by which other nations have been disgraced. This salutary object is naturally promoted by the moderate and conciliatory sentiments of a Chief Magistrate, when sanctioned by his conduct and example; and it is tribute of justice due to your Excellency to declare that your disposition to allay the acrimony of party, is not left to be inferred from your declarations only; but is apparent in the whole tenor of your Excellency's public conduct.

The interesting speech of PORTALIS, to the Legislature of France, inclines us to give the general features thereof, however imperfectly, for the gratification of the public.

After describing the disordered state of religion in France prior to the accession of the First Consul, he observed that the affairs of religion then fixed the anxious solicitude of the government. In forming any arrangement which should have the effect of restoring religious tranquillity, the first question that presented itself, was, "Is Religion necessary to the support of a state and to the happiness of individuals?" In endeavouring to shew that religion is essential to the government of nations, the

Orator sets out with allowing every degree of merit to the discoveries, to the instruction, to the Philosophy of modern times. "But whatever are our advantages (said he) whatever state of perfection we may have reached, every good mind is forced to admit that no society can exist independent of morals, and that the restraints of law are sufficient to secure the existence of this morality. For what purpose is it that magistrates exist, or that laws were formed? For what end is it that these laws hold out rewards and punishments? Is it not that man is, not guided by his reason alone, that he is naturally disposed to hope and to fear, and that Legislators have employed this propensity of his nature to conduct him to happiness and to virtue? Can the utility of religion to society then be denied, which holds out so many promises, and is sanctioned by such powerful threatenings of punishment? The influence of law & morals is sufficient.—Laws only regulate certain actions; religion extends to every part of human conduct. Laws reach only to the external deportment; religion regulates the heart. Laws relate only to the citizen; religion lays hold of the man. When we speak of the force of laws, do we consider the principle on which this force is founded? It depends less on the excellence of the laws than on their power. This excellence will always be more or less a subject of controversy. Unquestionably a law is more durable in proportion to its excellence, but its principal merit consists in its not being an argument, but a decision, not a simple position, but a fact. Of consequence a system of morals founded on religion has, necessarily, a degree of force which no system purely philosophical can ever possess. The multitude are much more impressed with what they are commanded to obey than what is proved to them to be right. Men in general require to have their opinion excited. They have more need of maxims than of demonstration.

He went on to discuss the question how far an established religion was expedient to the stability and order of a state, and contended that it was consistent with the justest principles of policy. By the influence of an established religion, he argued, that religious sentiments acquire "a character of energy, of steadiness, and of certainty, which they could never derive from the mere influence of science. Among advantages of an establishment was the union of external rites and ceremonies. True philosophy, said he, respects forms as much as pride despises them. There is a discipline necessary for conduct, as there is an order requisite for ideas. To deny the utility of rites and religious observances in the practice of morality, would be to deny the dominion of sensible notions over beings not purely intellectual, it would be to deny the existence of the empire of habit. A religion purely abstracted or intellectual, can never become a national or popular religion. Can a religion, which should address nothing to the senses or to the imagination, preserve its empire over the human heart? If nothing unites those professing a common faith, would there not in a few years be as many religions as there exists individuals? Have not useful truths need of being consecrated by salutary institutions?"

The justness of these views he illustrated by an appeal to history, and shewed, that if ever there has been any stable belief in the existence of a God, if there has existed any uniformity of opinion respecting the nature & destination of man, it had existed only among those adopting one system of worship, and united by the ties of an established religion. By religious institutions, he maintained, could the great truths of religion alone be preserved, and it was placed under the special protection of the great Author of nature. He next contrasted the effects of religion and atheism, on the happiness of society. The scepticism of an atheist, he remarks, tends as much to disconnect mankind as religion to unite them. "It does not make them tolerant, but renders them disposed to turn every thing sacred into ridicule. It dissolves all the ties which unite men together; it dries up the springs of sensibility, and stifles all the spontaneous emotions of nature; it strengthens self love; and makes it degenerate into gloomy self interestedness; it substitutes doubts for truths; it gives new vigour to the passions, and is weak in resisting error; and inspires pretensions without giving additional light.

From licentiousness of opinions it leads to licentiousness of conduct; it hardens the

heart; it destroys every endearing tie; it annihilates civil society. Superstition and fanaticism have their origin in the imperfections of human nature. With a lively imagination, with a feeble judgment, or a contracted spirit, an individual may be superstitious in other subjects, as well as those connected with religion. It is not at all contradictory for an individual to be at once impious and superstitious.—We might produce as instances of this the infidels of the middle ages, and some atheists of our times. On the other hand, every opinion, religious, political, or philosophical, may create enthusiasts and fanatics. Mere points of grammar have endangered a civil war, and councils have been begun in nations about the choice of a rope dancer. It is not fair, then, to impute to religion those evils which have existed independent of it, or which would continue to exist even if it were abolished. Men in general have need of faith to prevent them from being credulous; they require a form of external worship to preserve them from superstitions, an established religion is the only barrier which can protect us against the torrents of false opinions of a more or less dangerous kind, which the declivity of human reason would invent. Let us not fear the return of fanaticism.

Our manners, our illuminations, secure us against its approach. We honor literature, we cultivate the sciences by shewing proper respect for religion; we may be philosophers without impiety, and possessed with sentiments of religion without fanaticism! He combats at length the position, that religion has been productive of disorder and misery to mankind. Those crimes from which the misery originates he traces to their source, and shews that they could not with the smallest degree of reason be ascribed to religion, but were the effect of causes over which religion had no complete control. On the importance of public instruction he expatiates with much ability and eloquence, and contends that without the aid of religion this most interesting object could never be accomplished. "Science, exclaimed he, can only be the portion of a few, but with religion instruction may be gained without being learned. It is religion which discloses to man every interesting and useful truth, without either the means or the labour of painful research." On this point he quotes the sentiments expressed by the members of the several departments and assemblies of the republic, all of whom deplore the decay of national instruction, and earnestly urge the necessity of making religious sentiment the ground work of the education of youth.—He says, "it is religious ideas which have contributed more than any other circumstances to the civilization of mankind. It is by the assistance of religious ideas that the first legislators sought to moderate and to soften the passions and afflictions of the human heart." He illustrates his ideas by referring to the laws of all the great legislators of antiquity, who founded their rules for the education of youth on the grand basis of religion. He extends his views on this subject, and presents an interesting picture of the effects of religion in preserving the peculiar habits of social life. He describes with much feeling the effect of those days of rest, which the Christian system has prescribed. "Apart from our cities it is the spirit of religion which preserves the spirit of society. The inhabitants assemble and see each other on days of repose. By mutual intercourse the habits of mutual affection are contracted. The youths who wish to render themselves distinguished adopt an innocent luxury, which tends more to soften than to corrupt their manners. After the severest toils, instructions and relaxation are at once experienced. August ceremonies strike the senses and interest the heart; religious exercises prevent the dangers which could not fail to arise from inactive indolence. At the approach of religious solemnities, families are united in the most endearing bonds of affection; former enemies are reconciled, even the wicked experience something like remorse! Take religion from the heart of man, and by what will you replace it? If it is not preoccupied by good, it must afford a place for evil. The mind and the heart cannot long continue void." These, he goes on to observe, were the principles on which the government acted in the plans they had formed for restoring religious tranquillity to France. He states the circumstances under which Christianity appears to have the best claims to support, and the Catholic system is to be

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