

# MESSAGE.

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*Gentlemen of the Senate*

*and of the House of Delegates:*

After the lapse of nearly two years since the adjournment of the last session of the General Assembly, the Representatives of the people are again convened, according to the forms of the Constitution, to deliberate upon, and to provide for, the common welfare and interests of their constituents. The history of the intervening period has been singularly marked, by the occurrence of events of extraordinary magnitude and of momentous import; involving, in their results, the fate of existing governments, and deeply affecting the liberty and happiness of no inconsiderable portions of the human race. In the old world, the progress of mental cultivation and intellectual development, stimulated by the happy example of free institutions on this side the Atlantic, has awakened a spirit of inquiry into the natural rights and social condition of man, and aroused its people to a just sense of the hopeless degradation to which they have been consigned, by a long continued habit of passive obedience and unresisting submission. Repudiating the arrogant and impious pretension of divine right, in races of degenerate and imbecile rulers, the nations of continental Europe have arisen in their strength, and struggled manfully, for emancipation from the galling servitude which, for centuries, has oppressed them. If the heroic efforts of enslaved millions, to attain that equal station among the enfranchised of the earth, to which, by the laws of nature, they are justly entitled, have failed of success; if the sufferings and sacrifices, the blood and treasure, the fortitude, courage and constancy, which have sanctified the contest, have extorted from fortune no adequate favor; if treachery on the one hand, leagued with the brute force of combined despotisms on the other, has achieved what neither, singly and alone, could possibly have accomplished; if tyrants are revelling amidst the blighted hopes, the desolated hearths and fallen fortunes of a brave and gallant people, the lovers of liberty in every quarter of the globe are still left, not without consolation. Rational freedom, in its largest sense, is the inevitable destiny of