

AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE REPUBLICAN CITIZENS

OF

NEWBURYPORT,

AND ITS VICINITY,

JULY 4, 1810.

BEING THE THIRTY-FOURTH ANNIVERSARY

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

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BY THE REV. SOLOMON AIKEN, A. M.
PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN DRACUT.

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ORATION.

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HAPPY are we, in beholding the things which we see, and in hearing of the prosperity of our highly favoured country. We are permitted to see the **THIRTY-FOURTH ANNIVERSARY** of the *Birth-Day of our Nation*; and are assembled for the commemoration thereof. It has been from time immemorial, an usage to celebrate days eventful and important to the nations and kingdoms of men. This hath not been without a precedent; and is sanctioned by a special Divine command.

When the chosen seed of the Father of the Faithful, was by the particular interpositions of the Divine hand, in miraculous operations, emancipated from their slavery in the land of Ham, and had become an independent nation; that auspicious day was, by the mandate of Jehovah, their Deliverer, annually commemorated. It is written, "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and you shall keep it a feast unto the **LORD**, throughout your generations: you shall keep it a feast, by an ordinance forever."

No case more exactly comports with ours, than the instance of the deliverance of this ancient people from their bondage, and becoming a distinct, free, and independent nation. Of them and of us it may be said, that a nation was born at once. From a similarity of circumstances attending these great events, combined with the utility of a suitable celebration, we may conclude it to be our duty, to commemorate so important and interesting an event, to ourselves and the world, as the natal day of our national existence. Our God would have us mindful of his mercies, and not forgetful of his beneficence. And what circum-

stance can be more peculiarly adapted to lead our contemplations upon the goodness and providence of God towards us, and our nation, than an annual exercise of this nature? And what contemplations are better suited to give us a realizing sense of a particular and universal providence, and more calculated to excite our gratitude to our infinite Benefactor? All this, doubtless, God's people felt in the commemoration of their deliverance. And it was the Divine design, in the institution of the memorial, that they should feel it. How naturally and necessarily would their thoughts be employed upon the history of their nation? This would combine all the wonderful and miraculous providences of God in their favour. Such as their Patriarchs experienced in the land of their pilgrimage; and all the circumstances of their sojourning in Egypt, with the supernatural operations of the Divine hand in their deliverance. How deeply impressed with a sense of the Divine providence, both in the natural and the moral world, must they have been? And the highest feelings of awe, reverence, and gratitude, must those contemplations have excited in them. The same effects, will a suitable commemoration of our national existence have upon us. In this we recognize marvellous, not to say miraculous providences of HIM, who is the great *Arbiter* of the nations of the earth.

In consequence of religious persecution, and the folly of the supposition, that human laws may bind the faith of mankind, and direct their mode of worship, this new world was first planted, by those who possessed and cherished the spirit of liberty, civil and religious, in their own breasts—by a few persecuted Christians. How surprizingly verified in this, is that declaration “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” Could the great accuser of the brethren, have foreseen that the oppression of the Church in the east, should have operated to the destruction of his pagan kingdom in the west; and have opened the way for the Prince of Peace to have erected HIS upon the ruins, as our eyes behold in this land; how sparing would he have been of his persecuting influence? Upon this, formerly a pagan land, where Satan reigned without controul, in his own element of darkness; our eyes now behold thousands of splendid edifices dedicated to the worship of the living and

true God ; and see multitudes thronging them, and listening to the lips of Christ's ambassadors, to hear that glorious Gospel, by which life and immortality are brought to light. Instead of the hideous and discordant yells of the pagans, and the worshipping of devils, our ears are blessed with sweet harmony in the songs of Zion, all animating, and raising the soul to God. Surely this can be the work only of HIM, whose prerogative it is to bring good, infinite good, out of evil. Who can review the numerous and eventful occurrences which have raised up and brought our nation to what it is, and not be impressed with a realizing sense of the particular and universal providence of God ? And especially, when in connection with this, there was a conflict between sin and holiness, tyranny and liberty, in a civil, and in a religious point of view. If God said of his ancient people, when they were few in number, and strangers in the land, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm ;" so did he say of the persecuted settlers of these United States. And especially of that heroic company, with the Rev. Mr. Robinson, the first planters of this Commonwealth.

It is true of all the settlements, that God took them under his holy keeping. Though they were afflicted, they were not destroyed by the Savages. God multiplied them in all their sufferings, as He did the ancient Hebrews. And they, governing themselves in the form of a pure democracy, until their numbers required a representative one ; and establishing their polity, both civil and religious, till they stood in that unparalleled attitude of prosperity, which excited the jealousy or avarice of the parent country, and which led to their endeavours to subjugate us by the force of arms. Then was particularly the time that God, our great protector, appeared in his majesty and strength, for our defence, and gave armies for our ransom. He appointed us a place, and gave us a name among the powers of the earth.

This auspicious day we celebrate ; and what is more applicable to the performance thereof, than with hearts of gratitude, that we take a view of its superlative blessings ? It dissolved and annihilated the strong chains of civil and religious tyranny which were forming for us. All our fellow citizens, the millions of this increasing and rising Nation,

may, without fear of disfranchisement, publicly avow their religious faith; and without the shackles of human laws, worship God, in the manner their own consciences may dictate. The day presents us also with a view of our civil liberties. It has severed the bands by which we were held under the mandates of a foreign and arbitrary power. It presents to our view, our nobles proceeding from ourselves, and our governors from the midst of us. It has barred from our land, cruel task-masters, and unfeeling tax-gatherers. It has hushed the shrill blast of martial sound, and bids us stand aloof from the perpetual wars, fightings, and bickerings of the European world. It saves our sons from the iron grasp of *press-gangs* and *man-stealers*. It invites them to sit under their own vines and fig-trees, with their joyful parents, where there are none to make them afraid. In view of the importance of our independence, a distinguished writer of our revolution says: "If the future expulsion of arms from one quarter of the world be a desirable object to a peaceable man....If the freedom of trade to every part of it, can engage the attention of the man of business....If the support or fall of millions of currency can affect our interest....If the entire possession of estates, by cutting off the lordly claims of Britain over the soil, deserve the regard of landed property....and if the right of making our own laws, uncontrouled by royal or ministerial spies or mandates, be worthy our care as freemen; then are all men interested in the support of Independence; and may he that supports it not, be driven from the blessing, and live unpitied beneath the servile sufferings of scandalous subjection!"

This day opened the door of Paradise to this new world; and elevated the United States, the youngest daughter, to the exalted seat of Preceptress of all the ancient states of the Globe. She teaches them the inutility of kings, and the folly of hereditary governments: That titles and distinctions of nobility are not for the happiness of a nation, for whom alone a government is instituted. Saith Dr. Knox, "I have no esteem for that species of politics which pretends to pursue a national good independently of the happiness of individuals, and I cannot help thinking a system of government which derives any part of its wealth from the wretchedness of the greater part

of its subjects, not only defective, but diabolical." She teaches that goodness and wisdom, with ability to rule, are not hereditary qualities; and the importance of rotation in office; well knowing that the human heart, under temptation, will easily swerve from the line of duty, where there is no restraint from a sense of amenableness to the people, and dependence on them for the tenure of office. She teaches ancient states also, that it is infinitely more for the honor and happiness of a nation, patiently to suffer small inconveniences and privations, unjustly, than to augment them, a thousand fold, by a dubious and sanguinary resentment.

The rising sun of the day of our Independence, dispels the mists of darkness. Light pours in from every quarter. Knowledge of every kind increases. The wisdom of our Fathers, in the institution of Universities; the spirit which now keeps them alive; the liberal principles on which our schools are founded and supported by law; give to genius a full scope for improvement. The door of offices of honor, profit, and trust, being open to the suffrages of the people, and the only attributes for office being wisdom, fidelity, and ability, all are on equal ground for them. And in addition to the advantages just named, with the nature of republican governments, to facilitate the improvement of knowledge in general, but that of political in particular; the late Administrators of our national government, have commenced the publication of diplomatic correspondence, with foreign nations and their ambassadors. This is a very important source of political knowledge to the people, and especially to the youth; they, paying due attention to it, by the time they arrive at maturity, may honourably perform the duties of a diplomatic commission. But in hereditary governments, noblemen, the sons of noblemen, and those of the higher order of the Clergy, must occupy every office of honour, profit, and trust, whether they be wise men, or bordering on idiotism; while genius, goodness, and fidelity in other classes; are undiscovered, as a diamond in the dust, having no opportunity for action. "Take away love, ambition, the changes and chances of this mortal life, and man will be content to eat, drink, sleep, and DIE."

The full genius of those nations has not opportunity to display itself; and those in office are devoid of all sense of amenableness to the people; to these things in a great measure, may be attributed that hypocrisy, duplicity, infidelity, and deceit, so glaringly apparent in foreign courts.

By the United States, all foreign powers are taught to govern themselves, according to their exigencies and circumstances, and not to toil and labour, to pay kings and nobles for doing it, at their asking price.

If a nation of men, by a choice of their representation, be unfit to govern themselves, who shall be found adequate to the important task?

Not only were the sources of knowledge, but those of wealth opened to us by the day we celebrate. Under our free government, the spirit of enterprize has full liberty for action and improvement. Individuals pursue that craft, art, or mystery, best suited to their genius or disposition. Mankind are formed with different inclinations, or propensities, to the various employments, and occupations of human life, which are calculated to improve, refine, and render society prosperous. And the more at liberty those propensities are, to pursue their natural or chosen occupations, the greater is the improvement, and the more perfect is society.

This, with the economy of our national government, and the inconsiderable expence, in comparison with that of European governments, taken to support it, renders us increasing in individual and national wealth. Here the labourer in general is lord of the soil; and when he is not, but a few active years will acquire him a landed property, sufficient for the maintenance of a family.

And with respect to the increase of national wealth, if it can be considered distinct from individual; the indulgence of a moments recurrence to public documents, will prove the correctness of the position. On the 1st January, 1791, the gross amount of debt, was, 75,463,476 dollars and 52 cents. The debt on the 1st of January 1801, was 83,038,050 dollars and 80 cents. The increase of debt in those ten years, viz. from 1791, to 1801, in the two first administrations, notwithstanding war with the Indians, and being on the eve of one with France, and an insurrection, amounted only to 7,574,574 dollars and 28 cents. The

debt on the 1st of January 1810, was only 33,172,302 dollars 32 cents, including the Louisiana stock.

The old debt remaining due on the 1st of January last, was only 41,922,302 dollars 32 cents. The sum paid of the old debt during the last nine years, amounts to 41,115,748 dollars 48 cents. So that almost half of our national debt was discharged during the last nine years, including the 15,000,000, the purchase of Louisiana.

This shows the increase of our national wealth, notwithstanding the embarrassment of our revenue, by the orders and decrees of the European belligerents.

A proportional increase of prosperity in nine years to come, as in the nine years last past; will discharge the whole of our national debt, with contracting another of 15,000,000.

This shows beyond all controversy the astonishing increase of our national wealth, in the last nine years.

A suitable commemoration of an anniversary like the present, is beneficial, as it invites to the invention of liberal things.

The great provider of mankind hath for wise purposes, unequally distributed the good things of life to them. While some are fed to the full, and surrounded with all the riches of life, the scanty portion of others is dealt to them with a sparing hand. This inequality in the distribution of the means of life, is designed by the great creator, that some should be dependent on others for their subsistence. Therefore, charity or liberality to the poor, is so much insisted on, in the divine oracles, as an indispensable duty, on those who are made stewards of God's bounty. And as in the exercise of this important duty, many considerations are combined; as the ability of the donor, the necessity of the receiver, the time and circumstances of the donation; not to receive again; not to be seen by men; and a duty so directly in opposition to the selfish, parsimonious heart; mankind are prone to neglect it more than any other duty. In times of general rejoicing, when the spirits are animated and the heart merry, it is a favourable season for liberal things. And these are a duty comprised in the commemoration of this day of our national nativity.

This is sanctioned by the usage of the then most enlightened and pious nation of the earth. The Jews dispersed

throughout the great Persian kingdom, in the days of Ahasuerus, the king, triumphed over the machinations of Haman, for their utter extirpation.

Instead of their being destroyed on the appointed day, they had power given them over their enemies. This conspicuous, and fortunate day for the Jews, was annually celebrated according to the proclamation of Esther the queen, and Mordicai the Jew; "As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them, from sorrow unto joy, and from mourning unto a good day; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and *gifts to the poor.*"

Days of rejoicing are peculiarly those of liberality; that the heart of the poor may be merry, and joy dispensed through all our ranks. The indispensable command of him, whose all things are, is equally binding in temporals and spirituals—"Freely ye have received, freely give."

This duty is attended with superior advantage to the donor, as "it is more blessed to give than to receive." A circumstance contributing to render the great beneficent Parent of the universe, more blessed than all creatures, in the aggregate, who receive all things from his munificent hand.

You, therefore, who are made stewards of God's property, will not deny yourselves of that virtuous blessedness which God hath put in your power; by opening your hands wide on this joyful anniversary, to gladden the hearts of the poor, and to make that of the widow to sing.

In view of the blessedness of our Independence, the day invites to a careful retention of it. How prone is man to neglect and abuse his greatest blessings, and provoke the all benevolent donor to remove them?

The generation rising up under our free and elective government, and not conversant with the history of others, know not how to prize their own; and may by a few designing men, and newspaper publications, with other writings, be made to believe it is the most defective of all governments; and to think that all adverse occurrences, affecting our nation, solely proceeding from our foreign relations, and unjust measures of foreign courts, are to be

attributed to the administration of our own government. Such is the effect of the licentiousness of the press.

Ignorance, more than any physical imbecility of a nation, is the occasion of oppression; and if we loose our liberty, it will depart by the door of ignorance. Some degree of knowledge, and of understanding the principles of our Constitution, and the measures of its administration, are absolutely requisite for the people to act understandingly in governmental concerns.

If a private individual, whether a farmer, merchant, or mechanic, should leave his business totally to persons employed to carry it on, and to commit to them his purse, his credit, his property and all his concerns; without knowing what they take, what they do, or how they manage, otherwise than a mixed, interested neighbourhood should tell him; would he not be thought to act most preposterously? and the public would judge an individual to require a guardian, who should neglect, refuse, or be unable to manage his own concerns.

But no less unsuitable is the conduct of a people, who have the government in their own hands, to be ignorant of it, and totally to neglect all public concerns. This conduct better comports with the condition of slaves, who have no voice or influence in their government, than with a free people. Those who will not govern themselves, must lose their liberty and be governed by others.

We therefore see it to be indispensable to the retention of our freedom, that we exert ourselves for the dissemination of political knowledge, through all ranks of our fellow citizens. And let it be a stigma upon a person who ought to know something of our public concerns, when he is totally ignorant of them. But here our duty is not terminated. Let us be aware of those circumstances and practices which are sources of ignorance.

Affluence which is naturally predicated of every free government, has its concatenation of temptations: From ease, to idleness, luxury, intemperance, and every effeminate practice; to the debility of the mind, as well as body. In this state, men will seek as their *summum bonum*, the gratification of their animal passions and appetites; and become more and more sordid, peevish, selfish, forgetful

and careless, of the public good ; and prepare themselves to be inactive, worthless *slaves*.

We must for the retention of our liberties avoid public sins, as well as private vices. He who hath given us independence and liberties, can, on our abuse of them, remove them in ways unforeseen and unthought of by us. We cannot manifest our thankfulness for, and due improvement of our religious liberties ; but by a serious and constant attendance on all the ordinances and institutions of the gospel.

Among the public sins of our land, we cannot forbear to mention the abuse of the important liberty of the press. Unhappily, a system of the most unseemly slander, and misrepresentation of facts, hath, for years past, been practised in our land ; greatly to the displeasure of God, and highly disgraceful to our nation.

Public slander and defamation, have overleaped all bounds ; and not content with their own, are found in the *most sacred departments* ; as if the strength of our government were to be tried by their force. But our nation is enlightened ; they are aware of the designs of their enemies ; the pillars of our union tremble not at their efforts ; the Sampsons of the business are shorn to the quick ! and let it be our endeavour to prevent the future growth of their locks.

This anniversary bids us recognize the price by which it was purchased. Heaven rarely bestows great temporal favors without corresponding exertions and sufferings to obtain them. These United States, once acknowledged British colonies, finding their charter stolen and violated, and the determination of the British parliament to carry into effect a system of policy towards them, which comprised a right to bind the colonies, without their representation, in all cases whatever ; roused in them a most determined opposition ; as the pretension was indicative of every prominent feature which designates tyranny ; and subjected the colonies, to the most abject state of slavery. The most humble petitions and remonstrances appeared to have no other effect on the British cabinet, than to incite them to enforce their determination, by the prowess of arms. This excited in the States a correspondent spirit of opposition ;

which pervaded all ranks and every grade of our fellow citizens. They saw nothing before them but this alternative, slavery for themselves and posterity, or a dire conflict.

To resist a power which made the thrones of Europe tremble, was awfully presumptuous! To submit to vassalage, was worse than death; and proving themselves unworthy of their magnanimous ancestors, who forsook all the delights of civilized Europe, encountered the dangers of the seas, and the more perilous circumstances of landing their families upon the dreary shore of a wilderness, inhabited only by savage beasts and more savage men; all for the sake of religious and civil liberty for themselves and posterity.

“What can we do?” said the colonies.—“Shall we, solitary, and alone, in the wilderness, resist the greatest power on the earth, which has a preponderating influence over all the sceptres of Europe? Slaves we cannot be. We appeal to the Prince of the kings of the earth for the rectitude of our cause, and the decision of the case.” Instantly were all ranks, and both sexes, as from Heaven inspired, with a firm, unshaken resolution, not to live slaves, nor suffer oppression to descend from them to their offspring. And when the scene of blood was opened at Lexington, the spirit of our heroes failed them not, nor did that of our heroines flinch. From that early morning, through revolving seasons, our before peaceful land became an Aceldama. Then commenced the time which “tried men’s souls;” those in the cabinet, and those who were destined to the field. The martial clarion resounded throughout our land:

“To arms! to arms!” was the call. The warlike spirit glowed in those bearing arms; and in addition to their own, they were stimulated by the fire of *female patriotism*; which unlocked the arms of the fair, from the most tender embraces of husbands and sons, and of those who cherished the fondest hopes of a future connubial connection; saying, “go! go, under the protection of Heaven, and save our country; and if you be not permitted to return, let us have the superlative consolation of hearing that you died valiantly. How can we submit to the degradation of becoming mothers of a progeny of slaves!” Our heroines, in their place, were not a whit behind our foremost heroes. Their

patriotic concurrence, and persuasive eloquence, strung the less soft, but more athletic nerves with vigour to wield the sword; and to them belong, lasting renown, and a full participation in all the honors and joys of the day.

But what, as the purchase of our independence ensues for almost eight succeeding years? To our country is allotted wearisome and perilous days, and sleepless nights. A profusion of blood and treasure. Now flushed with hope, and then more anxious for the cause. Wading through all the caprice and vicissitudes of a protracted and chequered war.

The merciless Britons on one side, and the savages of the wilderness on the other. Hope and fear, accompanied with sympathising compassion for those who mourned the loss of friends and connections, fallen in the high places of the field, extended from habitation to habitation. All were alive for intelligence from the conflicting armies, which they dreaded to hear. Cruelty and devastation marked the footsteps of the foe. They make their ravages.—They lay waste our pleasant———what do I see? What dreadful conflagration is that? 'Tis Charleston! 'tis wrapt in flames! see the pitchy exhalation, like curling mountains towering to the skies!

There is the vigorous son, aiding his aged father from the ruins. See the distressed maternal parent seeking her affrighted child, to snatch it from the encircling flames. And now, behold, under cover of the dusky, vapour of the consuming element, the adverse foe, in brilliant martial array, with firm and undaunted step, boldly marching to embrace the front of battle. Now are the engines and implements of death, in action. The earth trembles; the atmosphere is in agitation by the horrid conflict. The meridian sun, by nitrous explosions, is shorn of half his beams. Our foe moves boldly on, but in "torturing æther" Dole is dealt them. The ground is crimsoned with their blood. Thrice are they repulsed and fall back. And thrice.....Hark! hark!!.....What groans are those I hear? 'Tis Warren! 'tis *General Warren*! he is fallen! he is mortally wounded! see there he lies! he writhes, he groans, he bleeds, he is expiring!

Hold! he yet speaks!! I will listen and tell you what he says.....He's silent. He's no more. He's

gone forever! he said in painful accents, and a feeble voice, "O, my country! willingly do I offer the sacrifice of my life for thee. Death is not the worst of evils; slavery exceeds it. I only regret that I can stand no longer in thy defence. Be valiant, and you are free. Be virtuous, and you are happy. O, my dear country! I commend thee and thy cause, with my departing spirit, to my *God*."

And now, the voices of thousands of heroes, are in accordance with his.—Generals Montgomery, Thomas, Wooster, and Mercer, and the brave who fell with them.

Among whom, do not some of you recognize the voice of a former magnanimous husband, an heroic son, a valiant father, or an intrepid brother?

All of whom interposed their lives, between the stroke of tyranny and their country. Language of this argument and energy excites, yea more, it demands attention.

These were the sacrifices which were made to purchase our independence. The day calls our attention to the blood of our countrymen, and the remembrance of departed heroes, who died in our defence, that we might enjoy our liberties; and adjures us, religiously to improve, and **SACREDLY TO RETAIN THEM.**

