

Mr. *Austin's*

O R A T I O N .

AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED

JULY 4, 1786,

AT THE

REQUEST OF THE INHABITANTS

OF THE

TOWN OF BOSTON,

IN

CELEBRATION OF THE ANNIVERSARY

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

By JONATHAN L. ^{oring}AUSTIN, ESQ.

“TANTÆ MOLIS ERAT—CONDERE CENTEM.”

VIRG.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY PETER EDES.

[1786]

At a meeting of the freeholders and other inhabitants of the town of Boston, duly qualified and legally warned in public town-meeting assembled at Faneuil-Hall, on Tuesday the fourth day of July, Anno Domini 1786, ten o'clock in the forenoon :

On Motion---Voted,

THAT the Gentlemen, the Selectmen, be and hereby are appointed a Committee to wait on JONATHAN LORING AUSTIN, Esq; and, in the name of the town, to thank him for his spirited and elegant Oration this day delivered by him, at the request of the town, upon the anniversary of the Independence of the United States of America ; in which, according to the institution of the town, he considered the feelings, manners, and principles, which led to that great national event ; and to request of him a copy thereof for the press.

Attest. WILLIAM COOPER, *Town-Clerk.*

GENTLEMEN,

RELYING on that candour which first induced me to comply with your request, I submit the Oration delivered yesterday to the perusal of the public.

JONATHAN L. AUSTIN.

July 5, 1786.

AN
O R A T I O N.

A FIRM reliance on your candour, my ever honoured friends and fellow-citizens, encourages me to appear before you on the present occasion ; and, in compliance with your request, to attempt a review of those “ feelings, principles, and measures,” which *fixed* the important æra we now commemorate.——When I behold so many worthy patriots, who, during the late glorious struggle, have shone conspicuous in the cabinet, and in the field,—when I read in each smiling face and placid eye, the happy occasion for joy and ’gratulation ; the transporting subject fires my bosom, and with emotions of pleasure, I congratulate my country on the return of this anniversary—Hail auspicious-day ! an æra, in the American annals, to be ever remembered with *joy*, while as a sovereign and independent nation, these United States can maintain with honour and applause the character they have so gloriously acquired !

No example can be more honourable, none more becoming a grateful people, than to offer their unfeigned thanks to the supreme Governour of the universe on the natal day of their political existence. This is a tribute they owe to him, by whose goodness they have been protected, and to whose gracious interposition they must ultimately ascribe that great event.

AT

AT this early period of our independence, the force of oratory cannot be needful to revive those feelings which led us to oppose the imperious demands of Britain.—Thank heaven, those feelings are not extinguished, the enlivening spark, the generous ardour still glows in every bosom.

How often, amid the rude din of arms, have the citizens of this metropolis been summoned together, to resolve on measures for their common safety, or to weep over the remains of their slaughtered brethren? how often have our patriots, with all the energy which the cause of freedom inspired, warned us of impending dangers? how have our hearts glowed, while they urged a repentment of the numberless injuries we suffered?—yes, my friends, with pleasure we can now ruminare on events which have passed, and with the highest satisfaction recall instances of courage and magnanimity, when life, liberty and property were suspended on the decision.

By reverting to that cimmerician darkness from which we have just emerged, I mean not to open fresh wounds, or to raise an unmanly inveteracy against our enemies; but rather, to rivet on our minds the injuries we have suffered, and to impress those cruelties so wantonly exercised in the course of the late war; that our feelings may be more poignant at the recollection; and that we may be roused not to revenge, but to a steady uniform perseverance in support of the freedom and independence *so happily acquired*.

It would be needless to run over the historic page, and recite the causes which have raised other countries to empire, or reduced them to vassalage. This has been sufficiently illustrated by the gentlemen
 who

who have gone before me on this pleasing occasion. America at present furnishes sufficient topic, and is an ample field for contemplation and improvement.—But as similar causes will always produce similar effects ; so we may rest assured, that no nation will long continue free, after it has lost its virtue.

WHAT country, my friends, can produce so many events, in the course of a few years, as must ever distinguish the American page ? A young continent contending with a nation, whose establishment had been for ages, and whose armies had conquered the powers of the world ?—What spirit, short of an heavenly enthusiasm, could have animated these infant colonies, boldly to renounce the arbitrary mandates of a British parliament, and instead of fawning like suppliants, to arm themselves for their common defence ?—You dared to appeal to that GOD, who first planted the principles of natural freedom in the human breast—principles, repeatedly impressed on our infant minds by our great and glorious ancestors, and may yonder sun be shorn of its beams, ere their descendants forget the heavenly admonitions.

THE right *assumed* by the British parliament, to bind the colonies in all cases whatever, naturally caused that opposition from men determined to be free, which took place on their attempting to put this right into execution.—Your feelings were then roused in your country's cause—you could not behold with indifference that vaunting nation, with all the arrogance that pride could inspire, sending forth hosts of new created officers to collect a revenue, levied by arbitrary imposition ; or to revel on property fleeced from industrious citizens.

THIS right of Britain to bind the colonies in all cases whatever, was the *political creed*? Was ever slavery portrayed in more striking colours? Our lives, liberties and property to depend on the arbitrary disposal of a British parliament! The insulting declaration made you clamorous in opposition, united your determinations, and rendered you formidable in the defence of your liberties.

THE records of your assemblies can witness how early you began your measures to frustrate the intentions of your enemies. The plans you adopted and pursued, loudly speak your resolution and perseverance; and plain'y evince, that your opposition did not arise from a hasty disposition, to resist the due exercise of the British government—America was always ready to pay every submission to her authority, consistent with the established rights of freemen; she acknowledged the king as sovereign and head of her constitution, and as such, transmitted her humble petitions for a redress of grievances. These loyal addresses were continued for many years, though treated with the greatest contempt, or answered by aggravated impositions. An appeal to heaven at length put them to silence; and the memorable 19th of April 1775, dissolved that bond which held us before united. In this critical situation, though the sword was drawn in defence of your cause, yet your pens were still employed to ward off the fatal blow, and stop the effusion of human blood.

BUT alas! when Britain, like a determined foe, drove you from every resource but that of opposition; and declared that nothing short of absolute submission should appease; you keenly felt the iron hand of tyranny grasping your dearest rights; fearless of danger, you girded on the sword, and sounded the alarm of war.

AT

AT this period of our conflict, America appears blessed with the peculiar attention of heaven. These States united to the astonishment of our enemies, adopted measures, the effects of rational and dispassionate deliberation, pursued them with attention, and with caution and firmness carried them into execution : measures, which will ever be esteemed by all nations as the most prudent and decisive, evincing how sacredly dear we considered our liberties, and how jealous of our honor in the defence of them : measures which exhibit a striking proof, that decency and order should ever be the established principle of a free people, and that liberty, though held tenacious, should never be sullied with rashness.

THE principles, which actuated you in this glorious revolution, are similar to those which have governed all nations, possessed with the spirit of freedom. Bred up in sentiments which have ever stimulated men well informed of their natural rights, with hawk-eyed jealousy, you soon perceived every disguised attempt to deprive you of them. The dogmatical epithets "of giving and granting" were too derogatory to your feelings, and too dishonourary to be obeyed, you therefore contrasted *your* ideas of right with *their* assumed declaration, and asserted that the British parliament had no right to bind the American colonies in any case whatever." The declaration of Britain, was, however, soon succeeded by a determined resolution to put the right into execution, and to strain their exertions to the full stretch of their power. Officers were sent over to exercise their commissions ; and armies transported with all the artillery of war. But, though destruction and death were foremost in their ranks, yet amid these complicated dangers you stood undismayed.

To put the right into execution on one side, and to oppose it on the other, were the primary causes of your late exertions. On this foundation lay the vast superstructure of your opposition—this was the seed in embryo, from whence has sprang *a new world* in the chart of empires.*

SUCH feelings, principles and measures, led on to the important era we now commemorate—gradually we ascended, 'till we attained the summit—impelled from one degree of opposition to another, we at length obtained the prize, now held so deservedly sacred, not like cowards, who exult in the sunshine of success, but like heroes, who are inspired by encountering difficulties, we declared ourselves free and independent, in the moment of the greatest danger. In support of this declaration, with one heart, and a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence—we pledged to each other our lives, fortunes, and sacred honour.

AND now, my friends, permit me to congratulate you, on this glorious birth-day of our independence,—a day, which cut the cords that bound us to an unnatural parent—from this date we change our character from vassals to freemen—no longer bound in swaddling cloaths, and laid at the footstool of a royal master, but arrayed in the glorious garb of independence, we are seated among the nations of the world—oh blessed emancipation!—ye worthy patriots—ye faithful sons of genuine virtue, salute with rapture this returning day! hail INDEPENDENCE, ye blooming daughters, with your grateful songs. Let no envious brow disturb this gladning scene—let no wretch wear the sullen gloom of sorrow—be every humble tie forgot, each care suppressed, amid the general joy.

BUT

* The American States are spread over a great continent and make a WORLD within themselves.

It will be shocking to see in the *new world*, a repetition of all the evils which have hitherto laid waste the *old world*.

Doct^r PRICE.

IDEM.

BUT while we rejoice at our envied acquisition, let us not forget the price at which it was purchased. The flourishing plant of **AMERICAN LIBERTY**, has been largely sprinkled, with the blood of her favourite sons. The long catalogue of **WORTHIES** who nobly fell, while rearing its infant growth, forbids the most humble attempt to do honour to their particular memories—eight long years have been the burial days of our slaughtered brethren—the solemn road of death we have often trod—we have been conversant with all the horrors of the grave; and visited the tombs as the dwellings of our friends—**OH YE ILLUSTRIOUS DEAD!** we revere your memories, and while honour, virtue, and patriotism are known in America, your names shall be handed down with glory and applause!

WE, my fellow townsmen, can early date the æra of British slaughter, witness the 5th of March 1770—and though succeeding years have enlarged the field of melancholy contemplation, yet from this period we open the bloody scroll, and begin our tale of **DEATH**—yonder street can witness the sanguinary purposes of Britain; *there*, our brothers blood stained the foot-steps of the murdering soldier—*there*, our eyes were first pained with garments rolled in blood, and our ears pierced with the reiterated groans of dying citizens.

THE wanton destruction of our towns, and property, can never be obliterated from our remembrance. We have been often called to shed the tear of sympathy, and to condole with our distressed friends. In particular, when the devouring flames reduced Charlestown to a heap of ruins, that deep-wrought specimen of the horrors of war, in minds unaccustomed to such dreadful scenes, excited emotions which cannot be expressed.

BUT I forbear—PEACE with her balmy wings affords a pleasing reverse.—The sound of the trumpet, and the alarm of war are no longer heard in our land. We may now, with the highest satisfaction, anticipate the future glories of these United States, and with pleasure behold our demolished towns, like the phoenix from her ashes, rising to our view, with improved beauties.—While the historian records the destruction of Charlestown, and the ever-memorable battle on BUNKER'S HEIGHTS, he will not be unmindful to relate, that from the ruins of the old, a new town is now rising, on a more enlarged and regular plan.—Nor will he forget to notice, with equal admiration, the enterprize and ingenuity of our inhabitants, in the rapid construction of that extensive and noble BRIDGE * across Charles river, which joins her to this metropolis. May the late sufferings of our friends and neighbours, be more than compensated by their future advantages ; may the origin of their distress prove the instrument of their growth and prosperity.

IF we frequently revert to first principles, and often bring to our remembrance the events which took place at the commencement of this contest, it will enable us to form a just estimate of that INDEPENDENCE, which has cost so much blood and treasure. It will lead us, with one voice, to acknowledge the kind and protecting hand of
 heaven

* The length of the Bridge from the entrance of the wharf at Charlestown side to the entrance of the wharf at Boston side, wharf included	FEET.
Wharf at Charlestown side is	1503
Wharf at Boston side	100
The length of the Bridge exclusive of wharves	45
The breadth of the Bridge	1358
Ornamented with 40 lamps	42
Greatest depth from the bed of the river to the upper side of the plank flooring	46 feet 9 inches,
smallest	14 feet.

The first pier of this Bridge was drove on the 14th June 1785, and the Bridge completed on the 17th June 1786.

heaven stretched forth for our relief, when destitute of all human aid. Unexperienced in the art of war ; unprovided with arms and ammunition, and without the support of a single ally, we dared to oppose the force of Britain, a force even dangerous to the safety of Europe—at this period, an American soldier became formidable by his enthusiasm. The fear of danger was dispelled his breast, and LIBERTY AND CONQUEST were the motto of his weapons !

AT this time, we beheld a British general, and a formidable army, captives to an American militia ; a general renowned in war, with a phalanx of veterans suppliants to our clemency. We beheld the long reputed conquering troops of Britain, led through this country in ignominious bonds, following the trophies of their conquerors.—Many are the acts of courage and good conduct, which have been manifest during our late contest ; particularly, when our illustrious general, at the head of a few continental troops, baffled the force of our enemies, and by wise and cautious manœuvres captured a band of Hessians.

WE should therefore look back with satisfaction and pleasure on what we have hitherto accomplished ; such a review will serve to animate us in our farther pursuits, and give courage and confidence in times of danger. From our earliest infancy to the present hour, we have been led through every changing scene as the peculiar favorites of heaven, at this period therefore to distrust the gracious intentions of the Almighty, would be such base ingratitude

“ As chills my blood with horror but to name it.”

As an independent nation, our conduct should be founded on the most liberal principles, and our views, measures and pursuits should be draughted on an enlarged scale. If we are not governed by national sentiments, our actions will be trifling, our acquirements contemptible, and our honor levelled with the dust.

INATTENTION therefore, in any of the States, to the repeated calls of Congress to discharge the debts contracted in their behalf, argues, not only, an undue estimate of our noble acquisition, but eventually tends to the subversion of the federal union.

WE are happy on this occasion to notice the late patriotic decisions of our venerable political fathers for promoting our national honor ; this example, if followed by the several legislatures, will enable CONGRESS to preserve the dignity of these United States, establish our INDEPENDENCE upon a basis as lasting as it is glorious, and for ever silence the vaunting arrogance of our enemies at the fancied prospects of our disunion.

A GOVERNMENT, destitute of the confidence of the people, can never maintain that respectability so essentially necessary to their prosperity. Neither foreign or domestic loans can ever be expected, when suspicions of honor or punctuality prevail. No substitute in the place of money can possibly remedy, but will rather serve to increase the evil—it will effectually prevent the circulation of specie, occasion, in many instances, excessive usury, and finally plunge such a government into the greatest distress.

How

How we shall maintain, as a NATION, our respectability should therefore be the grand subject of enquiry—this is the object to which we must attend—for the moment America sullies her name, by forfeiting her honor, the fame she has acquired from the heroism of her sons, and the virtues she has displayed in the midst of her distress, will only serve, like a train of mourners, to attend the funeral of her glory ; but, by a due cultivation of manners, *a firm adherence to the faith we have pledged*, an union in council, a refinement in sentiment, a liberality and benevolence of conduct, we shall render ourselves happy at home, and respectable abroad ; our constellation will brighten in the political hemisphere, and the radiance of our stars, sparkle with increasing lustre.

MANY other important considerations claim our particular attention, among which, are agriculture, manufactures, and commerce.—The lands in this country will afford ample employment for numbers of individuals, and America prove such an assylum for the poor, as no other country can boast—even our barren wilds may be brought into fruitful fields, and the wilderness be made to blossom like the rose : here, the industrious husbandman may enjoy his property with safety, cultivate his field with confidence, and deposit the produce of his labour with security. The late honorable institution for the promotion of agriculture, must excite the most pleasing sensations in every friend to America. The respectability and knowledge of this society, we flatter ourselves, will be productive of the most beneficial improvements.

As an INDEPENDENT NATION, we should also encourage *manufactures*. Some measures have already been adopted by this State with a view to promote this essential object. Blessed with superior advantages

we ought to be inspired with national pride, and study to bring forward our numberless resources : but alas ! the frippery of dress, and the extravagance of fashion have been too prevalent among us.—Too fondly have we rushed into the arms of Britain, without considering the fatal tendency of our wanton imprudence.—Had we pursued different measures, had we paid proper attention to our own manufactures, our importations, I presume, would have been more cautiously regulated, and a few years would have furnished us, independent of strangers, with a variety of articles for our own consumption.—No nation is so capable of becoming independent, if deprived of foreign connections. Our fertile soil, the variety of our climates, and the ingenuity of our inhabitants, would render America a field of plenty, and a garden of luxuries.

BUT however we may flourish among ourselves, yet *commerce* is an object which merits our particular attention. Blessed with internal riches, we have it in our power to extend a beneficial commerce throughout the world—hitherto, we have acted like strangers to our mercantile interest ; and too inconsiderately plunged ourselves into every excess of folly.—Our valuable exports have been wantonly sacrificed for European trifles, which, far from enriching, have served to impoverish our country—thank heaven we are at length roused from that lethargy which has too long pervaded each State in the union—the late commercial acts of a few States, exhibit a proof of our patriotism, and may have a tendency to rouse the attention of Britain ; but we have now before us a far nobler and more extensive prospect, *a commercial system ripening to maturity*—with heart-felt satisfaction we anticipate the many benefits resulting from a convention of the several States—the resources of this extensive continent
will

will not only be better known, but mutual interest will be promoted and local jealousies removed. The northern and southern States will become more united in their commercial, as well as national views ; and the trade of each will receive mutual assistance—principles of liberality will be inculcated ; our ship building and navigation increased ; and our produce distributed, both in our own ships, as well as in those of *all nations*, throughout the world—in a word, this commercial convention may be productive of the highest advantages, promoting at once the lasting union, and mutual happiness of the confederate States. May heaven grant to the members, wisdom in their debates, union in their principles, and stability in their decisions.

Now, if ever, is the time to keep a more than ordinary watch over our manners ; to encourage industry, frugality and œconomy, and “ to check that subtle secret poison, which lurks under the pomp of luxury, and the charms of pleasure.” The eyes of Europe are upon us. Our enemies view us with jealousy, and watch our smallest operations ; while our friends, with pleasure seated in their countenances, rejoice at our national happiness—whether our foes shall congratulate each other on our fall ; or our friends rejoice at our prosperity, depends on our union, virtue, and patriotism.

THE American history has become a chart, wherein at one view, we can behold the transaction of different ages and nations, men and manners—do we revere the stern virtues of the SPARTAN ?—do we respect the polite and learned ATHENIAN ?—are we animated with the heroism, and honor of the ROMAN ?—virtues like these have shone conspicuous in America, and *patriotism* the most rigid has been frequently

quently displayed.—The steady uniform measures of an AMERICAN CONGRESS, when surrounded with dangers, evince, not only the greatest fortitude, but superiour wisdom and address.—The persevering virtues, the polite manners, the valor and bravery of the AMERICAN ARMY, demand our loudest approbation and applause. In our illustrious GENERAL, we behold——here language fails me to do justice to his merit!——He is——WASHINGTON——To excite our emulation to generous and humane actions, let us trace these virtues in the conduct of our ILLUSTRIOUS ALLIES.

THE alacrity and assistance of FRANCE, their benevolence and magnanimity, demand the most cordial thanks of America—with pleasure and satisfaction we reflect on the union which subsisted between the two armies. All national distinctions were lost in the one Godlike principle of benevolence. Engaged in one cause, commanded by one general, they freely mingled their choicest blood in the field of battle. Thus allied and united, how formidable and determined! witness the 17th October 1781, when the arms of a British army were piled beneath the standard of our UNITED FORCES—this alliance, while it adds lustre to the annals of France and America, will serve to dwindle the British page to a mere epitome of greatness.

MAY that Almighty Being who setteth up one, and putteth down another, still vouchsafe to bless, prosper, and defend our country—and “as *religion* is one of the best cements of society, the firmest prop of government, and the fairest ornament of both,” may we be zealous to maintain it, and to cultivate those virtues which exalt a nation.

MAY

An O R A T I O N.

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MAY knowledge and learning, under the genial smiles of peace, liberty, and the never failing patronage of government, expand and flourish in this western world—hither, those liberal arts transferred, that sweeten, that embellish existence here below—hither, may nations less adorned by freedom, pour their warm blessings, turn their wishful eyes, and while regretting theirs, extol our renown—and may the circling moon observe no race more happy in all her visitations ! animated with these glorious prospects ;

“ Let ev’ry face be brighten’d into joy,
“ And PUBLIC HONOR, ev’ry heart employ :
“ Eternal sunshine o’er each bosom play,
“ And ev’ry bliss, illumine ev’ry day.
“ While heav’n’s high King, well pleas’d, approves our song,
“ And guides the pastimes of the virtuous throng.”