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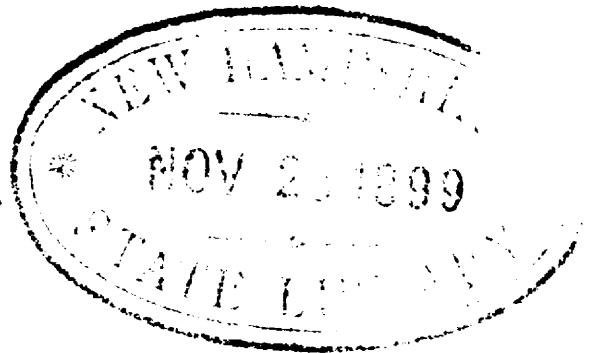
AT WILTON, NEW-HAMPSHIRE,

JULY 4, 1809,

IN COMMEMORATION

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.



.....
BY THOMAS BEEDE, A. M.
MINISTER OF SAID WILTON.
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CONCORD, (N. H.)
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Oration.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

THE purpose, for which we are assembled, is to celebrate the Independence of our Country. And, as you have appointed me to lead your meditations on this subject, I shall request your candid attention to the following considerations.

First, the signification of the term Independence.

Secondly, the means by which it was obtained.

Thirdly, the advantages, which the nation have derived from it.

Fourthly, the only sure way whereby it can be maintained.

FIRST. In regard to the signification of the term, we are not to receive it in a literal and absolute sense. For all nations, as well as individuals, are dependant on the High and Mighty Ruler of the Universe for their existence, support and happiness; and not only so, but they are mutually dependant on one another for many of the conveniencies and enjoyments of life. But there is a limited sense, in which both individuals and nations may be said to be independent. As when an individual is placed in affluent circumstances, so that he may choose his own place and mode of living, and needs no assistance, for which he is unable to make an adequate compensation; such an one is styled in-

dependent. So also when a nation depends on no foreign power for its constitutions, laws and the administration of its government, but these all proceed from itself, such a nation in a political sense is said to be independent, though it may at the same time depend on the productions of foreign countries for many of its conveniencies and comforts. It is an independence of this kind, of which the United States, under the auspices of Divine Providence have been put in possession. From their commercial habits they depend on various foreign countries for a portion of their supplies, which custom has rendered necessary; yet for their government they depend on none. They bow to the sceptre of no foreign despot. Their national constitution was not imposed upon them by the hand of usurpation nor by the sword of violence. It was made by the collected wisdom of the nation, and adopted by the free suffrages of the people. Their laws are such, as they themselves have approved, and their rulers men of their own choice. Such is the Independence of which the American people have boasted for thirty-three years, and which we have now in a public, joyful, and, as I hope, thankful manner, assembled to celebrate.

But I am, in the *second place*, to lead your attention to the means by which it was obtained.

It was a dear bought purchase. It was the effect of a long and painful struggle. Millions of the precious treasure of our country were expended, and the blood of thousands of our fathers and brethren was shed, before the galling chain, which had been forged for our slavery, could be broken. But it was broken. The appeal was made to heaven. Propitious heaven smiled approbation, and crowned our struggle with success.

In the beginning, these United States were Colonies of Great-Britain. The first European settlers, having migrated from that country, were of course dependent on her for their form of government, laws and officers of administration. And, owing to ignorance in subduing a wilderness, to the hostility of savages, and to sundry misfortunes incident to their new situation, they for many years depended in a great measure on the mother country for the necessary articles of subsistence. And, while Britain was flattered with the hope of enriching herself by their industry, some relief, though generally inadequate, was afforded. But their hardships by means of sickness, famine, and the hostile attacks of savages, were incalculable. Those, who survived these calamities, having learned wisdom from experience, were at length able to establish themselves in an eligible situation. Their numbers rapidly increased by natural population, and by the promiscuous immigration of foreigners. Through industry and economy their wealth and political consequence began to be considerable, whereby the notice of foreign nations was strongly attracted.

France, having taken possession of Canada, viewed with a jealous eye the growing possessions of her inveterate rival. Wherefore, to injure Great-Britain, and to enrich herself, she meditated a plan to extend her dominions across our western country from Canada to Louisiana. The savages, armed with the instruments of cruelty, were called in to her aid, and the hostile operations commenced. But the Americans in the true spirit of patriotism, being aided by the British, resisted her forces. And, after many painful and bloody engagements, they at length frustrated her plans, defeated her armies, and subjected Canada to the Crown of England.

Peace was then restored on every side ; and the American Colonies began to flatter themselves, that they should quietly enjoy the fruits of their labors. But all was not right. Great-Britain, finding herself embarrassed with debt, anxiously desired to cast her burdens on her American subjects. A corrupt and ill-judging ministry devised measures to raise a revenue by laying a tax on the people of this country ; which was to be assessed without their consent, or representation in the British Parliament. This conduct appeared to the Americans unjust, oppressive, and tyrannical. Accordingly in the most loyal and dignified manner they remonstrated against it. Having remonstrated, they petitioned. And, being strongly attached to the British nation at large, and to the royal family in particular, from the circumstances of their birth and education, they were unwilling to withdraw their allegiance from the crown ; all they desired was a redress of grievances. Wherefore, their petitions, couched in the most humble and respectful terms, were repeated again and again. No effect, however, was produced, except a modification of the evil complained of, not a removal of it. The British still asserted that they had a right to control the American Colonies in all cases whatsoever ; that they had a right to tax them without their consent, or representation, and at their discretion to transport disobedient subjects across the Atlantic Ocean for trial.

Through fear of consequences, they were willing to relinquish a part of their aggravating measures ; but still the principle itself was not abandoned.

They absolutely refused to give up their assumed right of taxing the Colonies without their consent, and of controlling them in all cases whatsoever. It was this right, which at length became the main subject of dispute. If they had a right to lay a tax of three pence upon a pound of tea, by the same rule they had a right to lay a tax of three shillings, or three dollars, whenever they should see fit.

The Americans, convinced that the principle was unjust, and, if carried into effect, would lay a foundation of incalculable mischief and misery in future, were determined, they would never tamely submit to it.

Great Britain, on the other hand, considering the Colonies to be actuated by a spirit of rebellion, sent over an armed force to put to silence the murmuring of the people, and to compel obedience to her tributary system. This coercive measure had an opposite effect from what was expected. It served only to widen the breach, and to increase that opposition, which was already unconquerable. The British army, however, being totally deceived in regard to the true spirit of the times, and the resources of the country, rashly undertook to put in execution the orders of their Government by commencing hostilities.

On the nineteenth day of April, 1775, the plains of Lexington and Concord were stained with the blood of a number of our countrymen in a wanton attack by the British army. This attack was considered on the part of the Americans, as an open declaration of war. The country flew to arms ; and in a short time afterward in the memorable battle on Bunker's Hill gave them a specimen of their spirit and strength. But still the Americans by their opposition and warlike preparations did not aim at Independence. Their only object was

to make such formidable resistance to the forces sent against them, as would bring Great-Britain to a sense of her duty, and her interest. Negotiation was still tried, but tried in vain. At length, finding all conciliatory measures to be fruitless, and perceiving the mother country augmenting her forces, and proceeding against them, as against so many rebels, they began to think it was inconsistent to profess loyalty to a Sovereign, who was determined either to enslave or destroy them. The subject of Independence then became the topic of conversation. The sense of the people was soon learned ; and on the 4th day of July, 1776, the Congress was able to make a decision. On that ever memorable day they solemnly declared that " These United Colonies are, and of right ought to be FREE and INDEPENDENT STATES."

The next great object, which claimed their attention was to defend by force and arms the rights, which they had thus solemnly asserted. The necessary preparations had been too long delayed under the expectation that the dispute would be settled without a war. Regular troops were now to be formed out of raw and undisciplined soldiers. Money was to be created ; and ammunition to be extracted from the bowels of the earth ; but patriotism descended from heaven. The Congress were endued with wisdom and firmness. Through their sagacity the immortal WASHINGTON was placed at the head of our armies. Under the prudent and valiant conduct of this consummate General, the contest was maintained with persevering ardor for about seven years ; when the Council of Heaven decided in favor of the Americans. After this on the third day of September, 1783, the defeated Britons, having been obliged to acknowledge our Independence,

were willing to make a public declaration of this acknowledgement by signing a treaty of peace. Such were the causes which led to our Independence, and such were the means by which it was obtained.

THIRDLY, I am to point out some of the most important advantages, which have been derived from it.

Among these advantages *civil and religious liberty* stands at the head. By *civil liberty* we are not to understand exemption from the observance of truth and justice, nor from the restraints of good and wholesome laws. And by *religious liberty*, we are not to understand a freedom from religious obligation, nor a permission to disturb others in their peaceful worship. But, on the contrary, we are to receive civil liberty as a permission freely to exercise and enjoy all the rights and privileges, which belong to mankind in their associated capacity. In the use of which we may labor and enjoy our earnings; we may exchange one commodity for another, so long as the principles of equity and justice are observed. We are not compelled to pay any taxes, duties or customs, but such as we have consented to, through the representatives of our own choice. We are freed from the dominion of hereditary princes, who having been born in power, and nursed in the lap of pleasure, have not acquired a knowledge of the feelings and interests of the people by their own experience.

In regard to religious liberty, we are to receive it as an unlimited toleration to think and judge for ourselves in sacred things; to pursue the dictates of our own consciences in the matter of religion, the mode of worship, and in the method of appointing and supporting teachers without the dread of persecution, or political interference.

From this liberty, *civil and religious, flow such streams as make glad the city of our God.* It keeps alive the spirit of industry, of learning and laudable enterprize. It nourishes the purest morality, and the most uncorrupted piety ; and in all respects produces such happy fruits, as render life desirable and property worth possessing.

This liberty with all its concomitant advantages is now our own ; and to secure a rational enjoyment of it constitutions of government have been framed, and adopted on *pure republican principles.* By which constitutions men, who have been raised up to fill offices of civil trust and power, are continued either during good behaviour, or for a limited time only, when the power reverts back to the people ; and if they find their confidence has been abused, or misplaced, they may by their free suffrages elect other men of better qualifications to take place of those, who have been deficient in wisdom and integrity.

But, had Great Britain succeeded in her endeavors to subjugate our country, the liberty wherewith we have been made free and happy, must have been lost, perhaps forever. Like a parent destitute of natural affection, she was determined to proceed against her children, as against aliens, outcasts, and rebels, who had forfeited all just claim to mercy or protection. We must have bowed to her sceptre, or have been smitten by the sword of vengeance, which was brandished over our heads. No republican institutions could have secured our rights, or entitled us to the privilege of free and frequent elections. Our officers of government, as well as the assessment of taxes must have been imposed upon us without our choice, or consent. An hereditary monarch, whether a wise man or a fool, must have

guided, or misguided, our public councils. Our money must have been extorted from us to fill the coffers of a nation three thousand miles distant, or to assist in defraying the expenses of bloody and extirminating wars in Europe ; and any conduct on our part, contrary to passive obedience and nonresistance, must have met with the punishment of treason. Civil authority interfering in matters of conscience, would, in all probability, have dictated the articles of our faith, and a military force have executed the orders of despotism.—Here then we see the advantages of our Independence in being liberated from these great evils, and placed in the possession of opposite blessings.

The *fourth article*, which claims our consideration, is the most important of all ; that is, the way whereby our Independence is to be maintained.—In vain we have fought, in vain we have bled ; we have spent our treasure in vain, if we be unable to defend what has been so successfully achieved. But to defend and maintain what, in our political character, we hold most dear, it is necessary to be well acquainted with the means.

Among the means NATIONAL UNION will be found an indispensable requisite. It is a maxim, as true as it is common, that “ united we stand, divided we fall.” By union of forces the nation is strong and formidable—able to repel the attacks of any hostile invaders. But divided, when split up into small kingdoms, or republics, each kingdom, or republic becomes contemptible for its weakness, and must fall an easy prey to the ambition of any considerable prince, whenever he may employ his forces against it. And, besides should these States be divided into two, or more distinct nations, jealousies and rivalships of a most dangerous and

fatal tendency would be likely to exist. These jealousies and rivalships would ripen into war. In the event of which the weaker nation must submit to the triumph and despotism of the stronger, or put itself under the protection of a foreign prince. But should a foreign prince become the protector of a part of our divided country, he would soon become the protector of the whole, and all must be reduced to slavery. View the subject, therefore, in whatever light you will, you must be convinced that a division of the States would destroy our republican system of government, and that the liberty and Independence, which we now enjoy under its administration, would unavoidably be prostrated along with it. Duly impressed with this sentiment, it becomes the duty of every individual citizen to exert himself, as far as his influence can extend, to preserve the Union of the States, and to discourage and discountenance all the arts of designing, restless men, who attempt to exasperate one section of the community against another with a view to a separation.

But there are men, who have no wish to divide the Union, yet being actuated by an inflamed *party spirit*, incautiously resort to measures, which have a direct tendency to produce this evil. When men are commanded by their passions instead of their judgment; when their hearts are filled with envy, and their heads intoxicated with zeal, they will rashly speak evil of those who differ from them in sentiment. This continual evil speaking, accompanied with abuse and insult, will in process of time produce fixed habits of hatred. And when parties have learned to hate and despise one another, they no longer consider themselves as being possessed of one common interest. Such conduct cannot fail of the most unhappy effects. It will, unless seasonably restrained, ultimately occasion those

political divisions of the nation, which each party, in another view of the subject, had sincerely deprecated.

Nearly allied to *party spirit* among ourselves is a *party feeling* or *prejudice* exercised towards foreign nations ; which may, in its excessive operations, occasion the same, or similar evils to those of the former. It is to be remembered that there is no such thing, as disinterested benevolence subsisting between one nation and another. Hence the impropriety of cherishing passionate attachments for any particular nation, except our own. For, whenever such attachments are indulged on the one part, they will never be returned on the other. The former may pity the weakness of the latter, but will never return them an equivalent for their love. By indulging excessive fondness, therefore, for any foreign nation, we resign a part of our dignity and independence, and insensibly fall into a degree of slavery. On the other hand, excessive prejudices against any foreign nation may prove equally destructive. They can serve no better purpose, than to provoke such resentments and hostile attacks, as will deprive us of peace, and endanger our liberty. The only consistent part, then, to be acted, with regard to foreign nations, is to observe equal justice with all ; to endeavor to keep peace and good fellowship with them, so far as it can be done consistently with the honor, dignity and Independence of our nation, and no further.

The principal duties, however, which devolve upon us, as the subjects of a free government, in order to maintain our rights and privileges, consist in the adoption of *sound policy* at home. Make the fountain pure, and the streams will be pure also. If our policy be correct at home, it will be correct abroad. If we would be respected by foreign nations, we must respect ourselves by a sacred regard to those political institutions, for

which we have so warmly contended; and so unanimously adopted.

This policy requires a due attention to the right of suffrage, that it be not abused. In the exercise of this right, when we are called upon to select men to manage the important concerns of government, it becomes our duty to lay aside, as much as possible, all party feelings, and party prejudices, and bring in our suffrages for such men, as we candidly judge to be the most worthy of public confidence: men who love liberty with order; who will use their best endeavors to preserve the several branches of government distinct from one another, cautiously avoiding all monopolizing encroachments;...men of wisdom, firmness and sound principle, *who fear God and hate covetousness*; unto whom we should not be unwilling to commit the management of our private concerns. And, having elected such men into office, let us bless them with our prayers, and watch over them for their good, but never view them with too much jealousy, nor rashly condemn any of their measures, though they appear to us impolitic, without a perfect knowledge of the reasons and motives which induced them. For, if we become excessively jealous, we may thereby treat wise and virtuous rulers, who have uniformly consulted our good, with such ingratitude, as will provoke the Great Sovereign of the Universe to send us men of an opposite character for a punishment, who will prove a terror to those who do good, as well as to those who do evil.

Moreover, in paying a proper respect to our rulers, it will be our duty, as a free people, conscientiously to observe all the constitutional laws, which they in their wisdom may see cause to enact for the general good. Otherwise, if we allow ourselves to live in a habitual violation of good and wholesome laws, we thereby forfeit

all just claim to be protected by them against the encroachments of others. And, if we become lawless and disobedient, we are no longer free and independent; for we are slaves to our passions, and, being destitute of protection, are continually exposed to the injuries of the violent.

But the most important thing to be observed, in regard to a wise policy, is the cultivation and encouragement of pure religion. This will point out all the personal and social duties under adequate sanctions. As a governing principle in the heart, it will influence both magistrates and subjects to a proper course of conduct at home and abroad. While under the conviction and confident expectation of a future accountability to the Judge of all the earth, no people can be indifferent, in regard to their actions. But remove the restraints and sanctions of religion, and you take away the main pillars of the political edifice, and the whole building will fall into promiscuous ruin. Liberated from the sanction of an oath, and from the dread of a future punishment, the magistrate may betray his country, and the subject become a perfidious monster, whenever private personal interest can by such means be subserved. Too much cannot easily be urged under this important head, but I must forbear. I will only add, that we as a people, are under the highest obligations to Almighty God, not only for spiritual blessings in our common Redeemer, but for that *civil liberty*, wherewith he has made us free. It was not by the strength of *our* arms, that the Independence of our country was won; but it was by the strength of *the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel*. We used the means, but HE decided the victory. The proper language of our hearts, then, should be, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory."

To conclude. From the preceding considerations, be persuaded, my fellow citizens, to use your most sincere and vigorous exertions to strengthen the bands of our national Union. Suppress party spirit with all unreasonable foreign prejudices. Remember that ye are brethren, members of the same political family, and heirs of one glorious inheritance. When called to exercise the right of election, endeavor to promote such persons only to public trust and confidence, as you shall judge to be good men and true. Learn to respect the virtuous rulers of your own choice by *rendering honor to whom honor is due*. Cheerfully and conscientiously obey all wise and constitutional laws. Enlighten your own minds and those of your children with useful learning, that your rights and your duty may be well understood. *Strive as much as in you lies to live peaceably with all men*, especially with those of your own country. And while you hold the olive branch in one hand, let the sword of defence be valiantly maintained by the other. Above all, cultivate and encourage undefiled religion in yourselves and others, as a duty of the last importance. Then you may confidently expect, that the same Almighty Being, who in the late revolution gave you a signal deliverance from the sceptre of tyranny, will still continue his blessings ;...that he will shield and protect you from all the enemies of your peace, and transmit your national Independence from generation to generation, so long as the sun or the moon shall endure.