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AN

ORATION,

PRONOUNCED AT BLANDFORD,

ON THE 4TH OF JULY, 1814,

BEFORE THE

BLANDFORD AND GRANVILLE BRANCHES

OF THE

WASHINGTON BENEVOLENT SOCIETY OF THE
COUNTY OF HAMPDEN."

IN COMMEMORATION OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

By PATRICK BOIES, Esq.

SPRINGFIELD:
PRINTED BY THOMAS DICKMAN.

AT a meeting of the Blandford Branch of the
“ *Washington Benevolent Society of the County
of Hampden,*” at their Hall in Blandford, on the
4th of July, 1814—

VOTED, That Col. Alanson Knox, Mess'rs. James
Lloyd, 2d. and Reuben Blair, be a Committee to
present the thanks of the Society to Patrick Boies,
Esq. for his elegant and patriotic Oration this day
delivered, and request a copy for the press.

ELI HALL, Secretary.

ORATION.

THE benevolent Author of our existence, has furnished us with sentiments of pleasure in the contemplation of virtuous actions, and illustrious events. Such, the day we have convened to celebrate, is calculated to inspire in the bosom of the American patriot.

It is the annual tribute which a grateful people will freely pay to the memory of those who proclaimed and who achieved the independence of their country. That heart must be bared with iron, which has no effusion of gratitude for the enjoyment of the liberty, whose purchase was the precious blood of our fathers; and that mind must be distempered with madness which feels no solicitude for the continuance of those blessings, that flow from the independence of our country "so dearly acquired and so solemnly bequeathed."

Though we breathe in a republican atmosphere, not yet completely poisoned by noxious vapours, who that loves his country, and a posterity that will come after him, who is not alive to the dangers of the future? Who that turns his eyes to the blood-stained theatre of Europe and surveys the rushing empires, the tottering thrones, the broken battlements of republics, once as fair and proud as our own, tumbled into ruin before the shock of revolutions which have shaken the world to its centre, whose breast is not disturbed with boding fears that

our turn may come. Let not the guardians of our independence sleep upon their posts. How long the temple of our liberty shall stand amidst the storms which are gathering around her in portentous fury, depends upon the purity of those who worship at her shrine.

The history of those events which distinguished the acquisition of our independence, and gave America to rank among the free nations of the earth, is too familiar to need repetition. The dawn of this day is sufficient to awaken the memory to the scenes of the revolution. Long and doubtful was the conflict. The fears of some and the despondency of many, strove to bury in oblivion the wrongs and aggressions of the enemy, and to hush in slumber the rising spirit of liberty. Without a paramount force, with troops untutored in the science of war, the contest was, by all, considered short, because so unequal. But the finger of Heaven pointed out the man who was to rescue his country from bondage. The genius of Washington pervaded the councils of the nation and his spirit quickened the conduct of the field. A period of seven years had witnessed the arduous struggle, when our Eagle, long hovering with dubious wing, lighted upon the American standard, and announced the victory of our independence. Great Britain, finding the spirit of resistance increase as she advanced, renounced her claim of domination, and the freedom of our country was acknowledged. Yet doubtful was the prospect of its enjoyment. The gloom of midnight brooded over the infant republick.

A discontented soldiery were to be disbanded, who, stimulated by a man, then an officer of rank, and now high in the callendar of office, with arms in their hands, imperiously demanded remuneration for their services, and murmured loudly of their country's ingratitude to those who had borne the

burdens and dangers of the revolution. Indignation burning within, was ready to burst forth in flames of vengeance. Nothing but the voice of their beloved chief could soothe their angry passions, and restore them to quiet. He spoke, and attention hung in silence upon his lips; he reasoned, and conviction closed the argument.

As yet, a government was to be organized which was to unite, under one confederacy, different and independent states with opposite feelings and jarring interests. There is something so fascinating in the idea of liberty, that the sudden enjoyment of it intoxicates the passions to revel in excess, while reason is led away in fetters. A people, verging towards democracy, grow giddy with the enchantment, and are impatient under the reins of government however mild and moderate the check. Thus the federal constitution, though acknowledged sufficient to secure all the essential rights and privileges of republican freedom, though confessedly framed by men, the most distinguished for virtue and talents, the nation has ever produced; yet the authority of restraint was too much for a squeamish democracy. Faction, finding ours to be the soil of liberty, reared his serpent crest, and scattering wide his venom, threatened "to confound and dash maturest councils." A ceaseless and unyielding opposition was raised to the adoption of the constitution. Much breath was spent, and much ink and paper wasted. On that side were enlisted some whose talents might have honored a better cause.

I would ask the man of sober reflection, how he will appreciate the vaunting patriotism of those who, as the wheel of fortune turns, from zealous haters become zealous lovers. "Marvel not" that coquetry, so fashionable to the age, should be found among politicians.

But happily the poison of corrupt influence had

not then contaminated the freedom and purity of election. "The integrity of men was measured by their *practice*, not by their *professions*." Reason prevailed over prejudice, and the new government went into operation under the auspices of him "who was first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

Impartial history has recorded, and the recollection of many now living, will bear unerring testimony to the merit of Washington's administration. He was not the hero of "of mushroom growth," who rises through the bustle and splendor of the camp, and whose fame flourishes and dies on "the tented field." But he was the statesman profound in policy, who, with equal skill, could wield the sword or extend the olive branch. No sooner was he in the presidential chair, though compassed "by clouds and darkness," than order seemed to spring from confusion. No partialities, no antipathies disturbed the even tenour of his course.

The different departments of government were not filled by men, who alone signalize themselves in the conflict which is won by a dominant party; but by those whose wisdom, and attachment to their country, had been proved by deeds of more than mortal fame.

He was not one of those who cherish a long and deadly vengeance against a nation which had once been his enemy, but in the liberal spirit of our declaration of independence all were held "enemies in war, in peace friends." In forming treaties he did not linger for years over a punctilio, too timid to advance, and too wilful to recede, poisoning the destinies of a whole nation on a point of etiquette. With prudence never betrayed, with wisdom never deceived, he surveyed his ground before he advanced; with resolution unshaken, with fortitude unappalled, he maintained the ground he took.

Without any sacrifice of public faith, with the complete triumph of national honor; the peace of the United States was established with all nations where peace was an object. Then flourished commerce, which gave an unparalleled growth to industry and wealth. The American Eagle, borne by the hardy sons of neptune, was "carried in triumph round the globe." Through the nation was diffused that active and persevering spirit of enterprise which neither felt nor feared the hostile sword.

But in this wide field of glory were sowing the seeds which were to produce other fruits in other times. The southern planters were deeply indebted to British merchants. They had fondly hoped that these debts would be cancelled by the treaty which followed the revolution.* Disappointed that the obligations of national law were not violated to favour them, they laboured incessantly to rekindle the ancient animosity towards Great Britain, and to embarrass and perplex the measures of administration.

Soon were ushered on the stage the tragic scenes of the French revolution,—that indelible stain of blood upon the human character—that reckless plunge of madness, into despotism. Her professed object, covered with the specious pretext of liberty, engaged the universal wish of Americans that her exertions might be crowned with success. They remembered too, with gratitude, the hand which assisted in rearing the fabrick of our freedom and independence. They did not at first fathom the vortex into which she was rushing, nor survey the wide spread havock with which she was about to inundate the world.

But the mock-patriots of that revolution soon avowed their determination to "set fire to the four

* See Mr. Harper's speech delivered at Annapolis, 20th January, 1814, in which a lucid and comprehensive view of this subject taken by that able and patriotic statesman, P. 15, and onward.

corners of Europe," The cloven foot appears. England was compelled to resist an overgrowing military power let loose, in rapacious violence and lawless aggression, while France was spreading her toils to entrap America in an alliance, and thus chain her to the car of ambitious conquest. For this purpose the infamous Genet, Fauchet, and Adet, were successively sent to scatter sedition through the union,—who by turns flattered, menaced, and insulted. They found and organized a faction blindly devoted to their views, and "ready to follow wherever the foul fiend led the way."

But Washington, whose discerning mind had looked through the false guise, was not to be decoyed by artifice, nor overawed by terror. Uniting to his own the tried wisdom of his own cabinet, it was at once resolved to keep the United States aloof from the conflict of the belligerent powers. Hence the proclamation of neutrality was issued—a measure which was made the subject of rancorous invective by the opposition party. The same inveterate hostility was exhibited, but with more malignant spirit, at the British treaty of 1794, under which this country enjoyed her halcyon days of prosperity. The same jealous friends of liberty, now so ready to resolve every thing under Executive influence, then attempted to usurp the constitutional authority of the President, and to wrest the treaty-making power from his hand.* The administration were reprobated as the disciples of British monarchy, as eni- mical to the views of France whose cause we ought to make our own, and whose love of liberty was leading through a mild and amiable revolution, though drenched at every step in the blood of her citizens.

The enemies of Washington who hitherto, had

* Marshal's life of Washington, P. 657 and 659, Vol. 5.

only dared to vent their fretful spleen, in secret, and malicious whispers, were now clamorous and loud. The charge of violating the constitution, and the charge of embezzlement* (so harmless because so common a thing in modern times) were unblushingly made against him in the face of the public. In vain shoot arrows to extinguish the lustre of the sun in his meridian!—In vain shall slander conjure from the regions of darkness, her most malignant fiend to asperse the name of that sainted patriot.

Hamilton too, who had conducted with matchless ability and integrity in the department of revenue, was denounced a British monarchist, an enemy to the republick. More than once was he impeached by the little, pigmy efforts of faction, on the floor of congress. But that breast was not to be wounded which was “armed so strong in honesty.” He opposed himself to the view of his enemies “they confounded, all resistance lost, all courage, down their idle weapons dropt.” “His soul was made of sterner stuff” than to bend to the fear of popularity. His country was his earthly idol at whose altar he stood ready to offer up his life. Blot with tears, thou angel of charity, the record of his death!

It is not the design of this day to make party criminations, nor is it intended to screen sentiments where truth and reason warrant their assertion. Whether we are treading the path of national glory, whether our once dignified and happy neutrality has not been rashly abandoned, whether honor and virtue “are the stability of our times,” are subjects which the faithful historian will not fail to review, and which force themselves upon our attention. It is the misfortune and often the ruin of free governments that the people are seduced, and deluded, by the unprincipled machinations of office seeking dema-

* Mrshall's life of Washington, Vol. 5, P. 637.

gogues. Some aspiring Absalom, some hypocritical Cromwell, some treacherous daring Napoleon are ever on the watch, to steal away the unguarded heart with honied lips and Crocodile eyes, beneath whose gilded "beams, belieing Heaven, lurk searchless cunning, cruelty, and death." To increase and strengthen a party, is the ladder over which ambition climbs into power. To press a favourite measure, to gratify partial feelings, are the ruling objects, however great the national sacrifice, and however much the dearest rights and privileges of the people may be frittered away in the dispensations of favour or of vengeance.

Many, now slumbering in death, of whose virtues this ungrateful country was not worthy, saw and predicted the downward steps we have taken. The same views have embittered the reflections and damped the hopes of many now living, who might have been the pride and boast of our nation's honor. They saw a wide departure from that stable policy which once predominated in the American councils,

They saw and now realize the destruction of commerce in the fatal, the desolating blow which was to be given by the restrictive system. The ocean, once the scene of industry and enterprize, has been abandoned, to follow down "the full tide of successful experiment." For years has the mariner been cloistered from all intercourse with his favourite element, imprisoned in his own native land, bound in fetters and deprived of employment.

In the wild and fanciful project of starving an enemy more than three thousand miles off, into compliance with new and extravagant terms, our people have been excluded navigation with every little skiff that floats upon our mill ponds—nay more, every wheelbarrow might be arrested by a spy of the custom-house, should it happen to be found rolling in the direction of the enemy. Few were the tears of sor-

row, silent was the grief of mourners, when the funeral requiem was sung over the last member of the restrictive family, the late embargo—that monster of disgraceful birth and unlamented death.

Commercial prospects are little brightened at the late quixotic adventures which have been made in her favour. Washington was her patron and friend, but he had different views of her encouragement and protection. In his last address to congress he observes, “to an active external commerce, the protection of a naval force is indispensable. To secure respect to a neutral flag requires a naval force organized and ready to vindicate it from insult or aggression. These considerations invite the United States to look to the means and set about the gradual creation of a navy, so that a future war of Europe may not find our commerce in the same unprotected state in which it was found by the present.”*

But the refinement of later times has exploded the old doctrine of naval protection. It is reserved for modern invention to find the opening of “free trade” and the field of redressing sailors rights by making a crusade to the North Pole. Canada must be invaded, that we may peaceably touch at Bordeaux.

The bolts of war must be hurled in battering thunders against the walls of Quebec, to force a passage through the Mediterranean, or secure an entrance into the Baltic. I forbear to puzzle in the labyrinth through which this nation has been conducted to the present most unhappy war. It opens a field of conjecture in which political speculators of far more discerning ken “have found no end in wandering mazes lost.” How the letter from the French government of the 5th of August, 1810, the mere condition on which the Berlin and Milan

* Detached parts of Washington’s message to congress, 1796. See Ramsay’s life of Washington, P. 504.

decrees might be repealed, should be so construed as to be considered the actual repeal of those decrees, and the ground of non-intercourse against her enemy, when every breeze of Heaven wafted to our shores the confirmation of their existence in the complaints of our suffering and insulted citizens, and her late imperial director repeatedly declared them, "the fundamental laws of his empire!" How the repeal itself of the 28th of April, 1811, should not have come to our government till the July of 1812, till war with England had been proclaimed from our cabinet, and echoed by the pliant voice of a congress majority, are subjects wrapt in such intricate folds of machivellianism that even our secretary of state shrinks at the investigation.*

The Duke of Bassano declared he had done his duty. Mr. Barlow "admired but could not comprehend."—Mr. Russell "knew nothing of the matter"—Monsieur Serrurier had found a new world, was in pursuit of a new mistress, and could not tell what was doing on the other side of the water.

So no one is found to draw aside the veil from the mystery which envelopes the whole proceeding. Why then must war be declared? Hear the reason given by its advocates themselves. "France had twisted her knot about us which could not be untied and must be cut."† More than two years has the nation groaned under this hateful Incubus, and the object is not yet in sight.

"There is an unchangeable relation between rash councils and feeble execution." Thus the impudent front of Canada "opposition" is not yet "look-

* See Mr. Monroe's report in answer to resolutions of the House of Representatives, calling for information on the subject of the repeal of 28th April, 1811, and the documents accompanying it.

† Mr. Calhoun's speech.

ed down"* nor has the blasphemous imprecation of "the red artillery of Heaven driven the fast anchored island from her moorings."† On the north every advance is met by certain repulse. On the west our frontiers exposed to the merciless ferocity of savage invaders.—The miserable inhabitants writhing under the tortures of the tomahawk and scalping knife—their dwellings wrapt in flames—At every cry of the woods the plowman flies to his cottage—At every rustling leaf the trembling mother presses her infant closer to her breast. On the east our whole coast blockaded by a naval force which defies all hope of resistance.

We would not palliate the wrongs nor veil the aggressions of the enemy. There runs not a drop of American blood in the veins of that man, who would sell the smallest particle of our nation's honor for English gold or English friendship. "Palsied be the hand" that would pluck a feather from the royal bird of American Independence to plume the diadem of the Prince of Hanover. Let him challenge an equal conflict on the water, and the youthful Perry does not cower to the British Lion.

Let him invade, with hostile step, the soil of freedom and virtue, and patriotism shall again thicken the van that will be led by another Washington.

It behooves those, whose pride is their love of liberty, "to shun the very garment spotted with pollution"—to keep "clean their hands, and pure their hearts" from foreign influence and corruption. It is foreign influence, "the fruit of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste brings death" into a land of freedom. Is it hereafter to be told by the historian of these times, that the people of this free and once happy country, the descendants of fathers whose breasts were seared in the battles which gained the

* Hull's proclamation.

† Mr. Williams' extemporaneous ravings, "the melancholly madness of poetry, without the inspiration."

independence of the nation, so soon apostatized from virtue as to become the dupes of foreign powers, the partizans of foreign courts, the friends and advocates of kings and emperors on the other side of the globe? Immortal genius of Washington! forbid it— forbid it, O! my countrymen.

But it would be dangerous to close the eyes, and stop the mouth of freedom, when “the Lion had come up from the thicket and the destroyer of the” nations “was on his way.” Was it the vision of a dream, the whim of an idle or groundless fear, to suggest the danger of the intrigues of France. Was it criminal to forewarn the people of her corrupting influence, and tell them to avoid the rock on which she split? Rather would it not have been criminal to hold a traitorous silence on such a subject? Did we want the example of republics betrayed into her power? Where now are Switzerland and Holland?—once the favoured abodes of liberty, quiet, and happiness—ingulfed in the undistinguished ruin of despotism—manacled in the continental system of Bonaparte—even their national land marks broken down—and “not a stone tells where their freedom lies.” Thus the wily serpent plays his enchantment round some heedless bird; awhile he charms his prey, till nearer in his lure, the victim falls upon his poisoned fang and dies.

But the day of retribution has arrived; and avenging justice has drawn her sword in defence of the long oppressed and insulted rights of man. Let it gladden the festival of this day, that Europe “has shook the poppies from her brow,” and arisen to her emancipation. He whose ambition had measured out the earth, whose name was terror, whose friendship was treachery, whose march was desolation, “has fallen, has become a hissing and a by-word amongst the nations.” Harmless is that hand which had forged chains to bind the world in vassalage.

The torch that kindled the flames of Moscow was destined to light the path to freedom. The arch enemy had lost the magic of his charm in his first attempt upon Russia. He there found hearts consecrated to the love of country, united in their beloved sovereign and impregnable to all the assaults of corrupt influence. No sacrifice so great but they freely made it for the deliverance of their nation. The invader is driven home in confusion, and slaughter follows his train. The fire of his ambition is checked but not extinguished. Another campaign is immediately projected, and Germany is chosen the field for retrieving his losses and reviving the disappointed hopes of tyranny. A conscription is ordered of three hundred thousand of the slaves of his power, whose blood must stain the victory he had resolved to win. But before the gallic legions throng the field, the spirit of freedom had electrified the surrounding nations. Moved by the same impulse, Prussia, Sweden, and Austria had united with Russia in one confederacy. Never was an alliance formed by such a constellation of heroes.

The mind passes with rapid, but melancholly pleasure, along the banks of the Elbe, to view those sanguinary conflicts which distinguished the victorious march of the allies. On the crimsoned fields of Dresden, it lingers in mournful pause over the slumbering ashes of the great, the good Moreau—whose soul was wrapt in celestial flame,—whose arm could bear the standard of victory, or wield the sceptre of an empire. Often will the passing stranger stop, and shed the tear of sympathy on the untimely grave of this departed hero. But his blood, like that of the martyrs, sealed the triumph of his cause. Wherever the enemy appears, an evil genius meets him. Driven from Leipsic, his last entrenchment and strong hold in Germany, securing his own personal safety by a dastardly abandonment of

his troops, he again flies to his empire covered with shame and defeat. Yet the great work was not accomplished—the august band of the allies had resolved to deliver the continent from thralldom, to shorten the reign of despotism, and break the chains of the oppressor. They soon appear in France and speak deliverance to the nation. The people hail the restoration of the Bourbons—The tyrant sees his friends forsake him, his cringing parasites disappear—he trembles and turns pale at the hand writing suddenly appearing on the walls of his palace, “Thy kingdom is numbered and finished.” Are there any who regret the downfall of that fell destroyer of the human race, “who had rather Napoleon were king than live like freemen,” let them abandon the soil of liberty, retire with him to some sequestered island, and may no “frightful climate” drive them from repose. Charity must be chilled to the heart to suppose it.

When future ages shall read in history the views and crimes of a Bonaparte the soul sickens with horror or recoils with disgust, let them turn to some other page and there find the consoling relief, that the same era was distinguished by the sublime virtues of an Alexander. Go on thou illustrious chief—restore the ancient rights of nations—extend the universal empire of peace—return to bless thy subjects, and when the marble monument shall have crumbled into dust, posterity “shall rise up and call thee blessed.”

The American cannot view with indifference the astonishing changes unfolding in such rapid succession on the continent of Europe, when the weal or woe of this nation may hang suspended on the issue. As yet no haughty tyrant lords dominion over us. While the privilege of election is kept entire in this country, no man or body of men can snatch the wand of power from the sovereign hand of the people.

But they may abuse even the endearing right of suffrage, by enlisting their minds on the side of party, and blindly devoting themselves to particular men and measures. In such times the question is not whether this or that man will best support our country's rights, and administer the government in the spirit and temper of the constitution ; but is he firmly attached to the interests of our party ; and will he favour the designs and views of particular states ?

In this contemptible strife the nation is drifted down the current, unmindful of the dangerous impuse that hurries them along.

A virtuous and enlightened people must be sensible that they jeopardise their all, when they do not make integrity the criterion of office. As soon think to pluck the blooming rose from the heights of Iceland, while the sun is setting in the southern tropic, as to look for patriotism and public spirit where the heart is a stranger to integrity.

Let the people keep an ever watchful eye upon the conduct of their rulers ; let them live in the exercise of sober reason and deliberate enquiry, and they may easily distinguish the character of administration. " By their fruits ye shall know them." The short history of our country exhibits the striking contrast of what we have been, and what we are.

I will not farther comment upon the administration and character of him who justly merited the endearing appellation of the Father of his country. The lapse of ages cannot destroy the monuments of his praise.

" The Cassia shall forever bloom o're his head,
For he hath gone down cloudless in the west,
Ripe in years and full of glory."

We who have taken the name of Washington, have also taken the obligation to emulate his virtues and the bright example he has left us. Under this

sound name we stand pledged, to venerate our ancient institutions, to obey the laws, and reverence the constitution.

These protect the worship, and defend the altars of our holy religion—these secure the hallowed retreat of beauty, innocence, and virtue—these guard the sacred rights of the fire-side and quiet the fears of the anxious mother while she rocks “the sleep of the cradle.”

Though this land be laid in desolation, by the scourge of a disastrous and ill conducted war. Though discord light its “torch from the fire-brands of the furies,” yet “nothing shall separate us from the love” of our country,

“At whose dread name we’ll wave the sword on high,

And swear for her to live, for her to die.”