

AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

REPUBLICANS OF PORTLAND,

ON THE

THIRTY-NINTH ANNIVERSARY

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

.....
BY NATHANIEL H. CARTER,
.....

PORTLAND:

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1815.

MR. NATHANIEL H. CARTER,

SIR,

The Oration which you did us the honor this day to pronounce, was listened to with so much delight, and received with so much applause, that your friends are extremely desirous its sentiments should be more widely diffused—We are therefore requested in behalf of our Republican brethren to solicit a copy for publication.

WOODBURY STORER,
ISAAC ILSLEY,
NATH'L MITCHELL.

Portland, July 4, 1815.

GENTLEMEN,

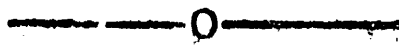
I feel myself highly honored by the flattering terms, in which you express your approbation of my performance before you this day. With some hesitation I submit a copy for publication; assuring you, that nothing but your polite request could induce me to hazard this hasty production in a situation, where the partiality of friendship cannot cover its numerous defects.

I beg you, Gentlemen, and the Republican citizens, in whose behalf you act, to accept assurances of my respect and esteem,

N. H. CARTER.

HON. WOODBURY STORER,
ISAAC ILSLEY, Esq.
Mr. NATHANIEL MITCHELL.

ORATION.



MY RESPECTED FELLOW CITIZENS,

THE causes that gave birth to the great event, which we are this day assembled to commemorate; the struggle of freemen against tyrants; and the triumph of Republican virtue over regal despotism are topics, which have been so often discussed, that to dwell on them at this time might be uninteresting. The deeds of the statesmen and heroes of the Revolution have been so frequently celebrated in story and in song, that their "names have become as familiar as household words." The child learns to lisp them while he yet hangs on the embrace of his parent, and, next to his heavenly Benefactor, is taught to venerate the authors of his political, civil and religious freedom. Founders of a great empire, their names have been indelibly inscribed on the bosom of that country, which their valor and blood redeemed from the grasp of oppression. Framers of our institutions, their principles, sentiments and feelings are so blended and identified with these monuments of their wisdom, that we cannot cherish the one without venerating the memories of the other. So long as posterity shall admire the noble fabric of our Constitution, they will not forget the architects, who moulded and reared its gigantic pillars. The mere recurrence of this anniversary awakens all these associations; and never

shall this joyous day go by, but the names of the Revolutionary patriots shall be freshly remembered in our flowing cups.

From a period of our history, on which eloquence and poetry have lavished their choicest honors, the speaker will cheerfully turn, and solicit your attention to other times, other men and other events.

In presenting a few desultory remarks on the late war, permit me, fellow citizens, to tender you my sincere congratulations, that we can speak of that event as one that is past. The bloody tragedy has closed. "The confused sound of the warrior is no longer heard, nor are our eyes pained with the sight of garments rolled in blood." The agreeable contrast between the state of our country at this time and one year since, cannot fail of contributing largely to the festivities of this day. Never did this returning anniversary bring more causes for rejoicing. On our last national birth-day such was the state of this country, that the patriot wept for her woes. Wherever he directed his view, he beheld her wrapped in clouds and darkness. The Republic was torn by intestine broils and party feuds. A formidable and threatening foe hung upon the frontiers, and was constantly receiving reinforcements. Relieved from European wars, the myrmidons of Britain, like the locusts of Egypt, came warping upon every eastern gale. A hostile fleet hovered upon our shores. The barbarous edict had gone forth, dooming all accessible places to devastation and ruin. How faithfully the decree would be executed had been learned from the merciless cruelties of the enemy on the borders of the Chesapeake. Every day was bringing fresh tidings of their unheard of barbarities. The mouldering ruins of Havre de Grace and Hampton taught us, that theirs was no idle threat. Under such circumstances, who could relish the festive joys of this day? Who could raise the goblet to his lips, when he knew it was mingled with the bitterest tears of his country?

But on this occasion the pleasures of the banquet will be sweetened by the cheering reflection,

“ That danger’s troubled night is o’er,
And the star of Peace return’d.”

To-day will be seen, interspersed in the numerous assemblies throughout the nation, encircled by their friends, and cheered by the plaudits of an admiring country—the heroes of the North, who a year ago this evening crossed the Niagara with the resolution, that if the sun of American glory must set, it should set in blood—those gallant seamen, who, scattered on the waves of every sea from the equator to the poles, perhaps on the last festival hoisted their flag and drank to their friends and country on the rocks of Norway, or an island in the Pacific ocean—many of those unhappy captives, whom the fortune of war doomed to pine away the day in cheerless solitude,

“ Shut from the common air, and common use of their own limbs.”

It has been frequently asked, fellow citizens, “ what we have gained by the war ?” An attempt will be made to answer, in part, this brief question by enumerating some of its consequences to this nation.

One of the most prominent and most important effects of the war is, the tendency it has had to elevate and establish the American character.

From the earliest settlement of this country there has been a disposition in most European nations to degrade and vilify every thing American. For a long time it was a prevailing opinion in Europe, that the indigenous productions of the *old* world suddenly degenerated on being transplanted in the *new*. It was true, the features of the Western continent were as noble as those of the Eastern. The mountains were as lofty, the rivers as majestic, and the vales as rich and beautiful. It was in fact warmed by the same sun, and refreshed by the

same breezes as other parts of the world. But still there was some invisible cause, that counteracted all these bounties of nature. The Genius of America seemed a malignant spirit, that "blew mildew from between his shrivel'd lips." He blasted every thing, on which he laid his withering hand. The vegetable world shrunk under his blighting foot-steps. The colonists after a few generations "became as grass-hoppers" before the tall and princely European. The emigrants had already dwindled into dwarfs; and eastern philosophers believed as firmly as they did the infallibility of Popes or Kings, that within a century or two at farthest, the whole western continent would be peopled with a race of Liliputians.

After Dr. Franklin had succeeded to his mind in disarming the cloud of its thunder, and Mr. Jefferson had finished his declaration of Independence, these two *degenerate* sons of *degenerate* sires, happening to stumble on the bones of a *mammoth*, began to doubt some of the dogmas of these profound eastern doctors. They had the unblushing impudence to maintain, that potatoes and cattle and Indians and even *white* men would grow as large on *this* as on the *other* side of the Atlantic.

When French Counts and English Peers had seen specimens of American *dwarfs*, and found by dint of the scale, that many of your men of Yankee growth came up to good six feet, they thought proper to abandon their favorite theory of physical degeneracy. It was granted the *persons* of the Americans were large enough—nay *too large*. They were mere weeds, that grew up in the shade of their immense forests. But then their *minds*—O their minds were savage as their mountains and barren as their swamps and bogs. The cry of physical degeneracy being thus suddenly changed into that of moral depravity, hostilities against the American character have been waged with little cessation to this day.

The Revolutionary war served for a while to check

the torrent of abuse, which had been poured upon this country. The ability, with which that *rebellion* was managed, convinced English noblemen, that if American statesmen were not perfectly familiar with the writings of Plato and Cicero; yet they could draft a petition to a king, a bill of rights, or declaration of Independence with a tolerable degree of correctness.— Though the American officer could not charm the polished ear of Burgoyne with the Greek odes of Pindar, or amorous ditties of Anacreon, he could sing to his lordship the sweet native air of *Yankee-doodle*.

But it is the fate of Englishmen not always to profit by experience. Though they are a very “thinking people,” they will have their South-sea speculations and Walcheren expeditions. They will wage American wars, although Pitt and Whitbread warn them of the consequences. They in fact need the same discipline, which Dr. Johnson recommends for boys. Whatever they learn *must be flogged into them*.

The lesson, which the Revolution taught them, was soon forgotten. The memorials of that ill-fated contest were melting away. The officers and soldiers, who were at Bunker-Hill, Saratoga and Yorktown, were no more. The bolts of eloquence had ceased to roll from the tongue of Chatham. “A new king rose up, who knew not Joseph.” George was crazy; and his son had never found time amidst his debaucheries to run over the dull annals of the American Revolution. As the recollection of American bravery faded away, the corps of detractors increased in number and virulence. English travellers, who made the tour of the United States, instead of weeping at the tombs of their fallen countrymen, resorted to the haunts of vice and dissipation to pick up shreds of scandal against the American character. No ribaldry was too foul for the polished Lords and Ladies of St. James’ to swallow, provided it was aimed against the United States. Nor was this scandal confined to

the courtly circles of Westminster. Catch-penny tales of travellers were spreading through the great body of the English people, and the populace were becoming extremely enlightened in their views of this country. The truckmen of London and pedlars of Birmingham could tell you, that the Americans were *en masse* a stupid, vile and vicious people; rude, uncivilized and unpolished as Hottentots.

What the English thought of the naval and military character of this country, is manifest from their insulting language and outrageous conduct. In the language of one of our own statesmen, they thought the Americans too tame and pusillanimous "to be kicked into a war." The depredations committed upon our commerce, the impressment of our seamen, and an open attack upon one of our ships of war, all which violations of our sovereignty met no other resistance than remonstrance, were well calculated to give currency to this opinion. But it was the misfortune of England to construe the anxiety of the American government to terminate all difficulties amicably, into the dread of a contest. She supposed the spirit of the nation dead, when it only slumbered.

Guided by such erroneous views, and fixing no limits where her aggressions should cease, she hoped to fritter away our independence without arousing the indignation of the people. Englishmen did not disguise their contempt of our character, but openly avowed it by the grossest insults. An American had become a taunt and a bye-word wherever he went. However unjust this might be, it *must* and *did* excite the bitterest feelings in the breast of the gallant American officer. He was not permitted to enter the cabin of a British captain, or sit at the same table with those, whom he has since conquered.

It is well known that during the first years of the war the successes of our arms were principally confined to one element. On the ocean the achievements of our

heroes first wiped away the foul stain from the American character. The skill, gallantry, and humanity of the navy have extorted praises even from Englishmen, and raised our country above "all Greek, above all Roman fame." The effect of our naval victories in checking, or rather in diverting the tide of scandal, and in raising the character of the United States from that degradation, to which, in the eyes of Europe, it had sunk, was almost instantaneous. Nothing more was heard of "fir-built" ships and flags of "bunting."

Finding the escutcheons of our naval renown incapable of being soiled by their vile aspersions, the English directed their whole artillery of abuse and falsehood against the American Army. It was represented as a collection of lawless banditti, assembled for rapine and plunder, naked, hungry, without discipline, more barbarous than their favorite Cossacks or American allies. What resistance they expected to meet from such an army may be learned from the language they held no longer ago than last summer. The Americans were to be *chastised*, yes soundly chastised. The last vial of British wrath was to be poured out upon this devoted country. The campaign was planned in England, and the heroes of the Peninsula were sent out to execute it. The grand British army was to march in three divisions from the Atlantic to the Lakes. The eastern division would march along the shores of New-England to New-York—take that city—thence up the Hudson and meet Sir George Prevost at *Plattsburg*. The second division land at *Baltimore*—take that—march to Philadelphia—take that—thence cross over to the Niagara. The left wing of this grand army, *having taken* New-Orleans, would move directly through the region of the *back-woodsmen*, and strike the shores of Lake Erie, not far from *Put-in-Bay*. There were other objects, that would come within the scope of their policy. One was to send the President to Elba—another to establish printing presses for the purpose of correcting the odious sen-

timents of Southern democrats. In short, when this sweeping campaign was finished, there was to be a pretty thorough change in men, measures and manners.

With such contempt, fellow-citizens, was the military strength of this nation treated. With such perfect ease was your country to be conquered by Englishmen. They anticipated little or no opposition. They did indeed see a speck of an army, hanging like a small cloud in the western horizon. But it was disregarded. They did not dream, that its bosom was charged with sleeping thunderbolts. Little did the haughty Briton suppose, that there was in that very army, which he so much despised, a holy band of patriots, who should tear the laurel from the brow of European conquerors; whose deeds should procure for themselves and their country an imperishable name, and place the character of the American soldier beyond the reach of calumny and detraction.

In some respects the result of the late war was even more glorious than that of the Revolution. The English have no circumstances to palliate their defeats and disgrace. They cannot attribute our successes to French arms, or Dutch loans. We have had no Fayettees, Lees, Kosiuscos, or Steubens to plan our campaigns, or fight our battles. Nor had England any wars to wage against other nations during that period of the war, in which the American arms were crowned with the greatest success. Nay, she was so overrun with idle troops, that many *superfluous* regiments were sent to North America solely for the purpose of keeping them out of mischief at home. Under such circumstances there is no palliative of her dishonor—no opiate to calm the anguish of her wounded pride. She may indeed for a while succeed in concealing the records of her disgrace from the people. The Prince Regent may continue to strike the American flag on the Serpentine—ministers may distort facts and present false statements—centinels may be posted on every wharf to prevent American

publications from being smuggled in. But after all "the murder will out." Sooner or later, the sad tale will come to the ears of the deluded populace. The honest soldier and sailor, who served in America, on their return home will unfold a plain "unvarnished tale." "They will strip their sleeves and show their scars." The marks of the bayonet, their limbs lopped off or shattered in battle—the simple story of "moving accident by flood and field," will tell what kind of foes they met, and speak a language, which was never found in the Regent's communications, or the prostituted columns of ministerial Gazettes.

Another important effect of the war is the almost unanimous sentiment it has produced in favor of a Navy.

Amidst the political divisions, which have unhappily disturbed the peace and tranquility of this nation, it is a consoling thought, that there is even *one* subject, on which *all* are united. With very few exceptions, the only strife has been who should manifest the greatest enthusiasm in honoring the heroes of the ocean. The triumphs of a few frigates and a little band of heroes over a nation, whose flag, in the language of one of her poets, "had brav'd a thousand years the battle and the breeze," were so unexpected and brilliant as to excite a universal burst of admiration and applause. Such was the chivalry of our naval chiefs, that we seemed wandering in the regions of romance, and listening to tales of fiction. Such a torrent of popularity could not be resisted. It swept away every opposing obstacle. Even those, who supposed it might soil the purity of New-England morals and religion, to unite in celebrating the triumphs of an unholy war, found that checking popular sentiment by legislative resolve was like opposing the ocean with a reed. So great was the moral and religious corruption of a vast majority of the American people, that they chose rather to join in pæans

of praise to our own warriors than to rejoice at the successes of Tartars and Cossacks. The populace even deserted the temples, in which the purest strains of eloquence, and the sweetest anthems were rising to "the Deliverer of Europe," to follow the mob, and huzza for naval victories. They could not remember, "nor frame to pronounce" these barbarous *Shiboleths* of the North—your Platoffs and Kutuzoffs and Swartzenburghs, while the names of Hull and Decatur and Bainbridge and Perry and Porter and McDonough were perfectly familiar, and were forever on their tongues.

The sentiments of the people in favor of an efficient navy are now too deeply rooted, ever to be eradicated. To a country possessing such an extensive seaboard, so many navigable waters, and such inexhaustible stores of materials for a navy, this is an all important consideration. Commerce ever *has been*, and probably ever *will be*, one of the great leading interests of the United States. Though the home of our Eagle be in her native mountains, yet her flight shall extend beyond the seas. Her aërie shall be supplied with the bounties of remotest regions. Under the shadow of her wing, the gallant sailor shall trim his bark, and traverse the ocean,

"Far as the breezes blow, or billows foam."

How cheerfully will he spread his canvass to the gale, when he is assured, the winds and waves are the only enemies he will have to encounter! With what pleasure will he revisit those spots in the ocean, which a halo of glory shall long encircle! What joy will it give him to visit distant climes, when he knows there are no shores, however remote, which the fame of his achievements has not reached! Scarcely any, which have not seen his flag, and heard his cannon. For our vessels, though few in number, visited during the war every quarter of the globe. Their canvass was alternately swelled by the trade wind and the monsoon, by the scorching

blasts of Africa and the icy gales of the poles. The American stars did not shine with a cold and stationary lustre ; but shot like burning meteors from clime to clime. At one time they were seen sweeping along the waves of the Pacific ; at another, round the shores of England, or on the borders of the White Sea. With a reputation thus widely extended, the American tar will be respected and caressed in every country. The unsullied banner, under which he sails, will be a sure guarantee of his safety, and a passport to honor and hospitality.

A third beneficial effect of the war is the evidence it has furnished of the strength and durability of our political institutions.

Gold is never so valuable as when it has passed the hottest crucible. Ours has been tried in a fiery furnace, heated to sevenfold rage, and proved to be genuine. Having passed the ordeal, it will hence be dearer than ever to the patriot's breast.

It has always been said by the enemies of Republicanism, that the institutions of our country would do well enough in time of Peace, but could not withstand the tumult, commotion and shock of War. Nor were the most sanguine friends of our form of government so positive of the incorrectness of these assertions, as to be anxious to see them brought to a trial. This opinion of the weakness and instability of the government of the United States was grounded on the intrinsic mildness of our laws, and the nature of our population, strengthened by the evidence, which history furnishes of the melancholy fate of all former Republics. Mild as our government is, and we glory in this characteristic, it has had energy enough to conduct its subjects through an arduous and honorable war.

It has been said, that the great mass of the American people is a chaos of jarring elements, having no natural affinity, and incapable of consolidation. We have been

reproached with being a collection of vagabond Englishmen, Irishmen, Scotchmen, Frenchmen, and every nation and tongue under heaven. It was calculated, not without some reason, that the best affections of many of these emigrants would cling to the land of their nativity; that these numerous tribes, differing in habits and manners, actuated by discordant principles, interests and feelings, could have no common tie, nor be brought to act in a common cause; that as soon as a state of war should throw this heterogeneous mass into motion, the United States would present a scene of "confusion worse confounded."

There can be no doubt of the influence, which these opinions have had on the British ministry. Their darling policy towards this nation has been—*divide and conquer*. It commenced long ago, and has been pursued with unremitting assiduity. It induced England to heap insult upon insult till the United States should be driven into a war, and then she hoped the first thrust of her sword would sever the ties of Union.

Let us rejoice, fellow-citizens, that this system of intrigue has not succeeded; and that all attempts to dissolve the chords of union, and alienate one portion of our beloved country from the rest, have met the indignant frown of a great majority of the people. Nor is it probable this favorite policy of conquering by first dividing will at present be renewed. The troops, who served in America, can inform ministers, they met on the field of battle every description of emigrants, from the unfortunate sons of Africa, to the scarcely less unfortunate sons of Erin. English officers learned at New-Orleans, that exiles from all nations have some affection for the country, which received them with open arms, and for the mild and equal laws, by which they are protected. This attachment will hereafter be stronger than it ever has been. The events of the war have woven a thousand new ties to bind the citizen to his country. Long shall the patriot love to linger

round the shores of Erie and Champlain, on the banks of the Niagara and Mississippi. Around these consecrated spots the best feelings and the purest affections of the rising generation shall hover.

The mountain oak never stands so firm, nor is so much an object of admiration, as when it has withstood the storm, and mocked the fury of the tempest. Thus our political institutions have acquired new strength and new interest from the assaults which they have sustained. It is next to impossible to conceive of greater perils, than have already threatened our Constitution. But like the gallant ship, which bears her name, she has braved all the dangers of a tempestuous sea, and gloriously triumphed over all her enemies. Both are now safely moored in the haven of Peace, equal monuments of national pride and national glory. At present nothing can be foreseen to forbid our Laws from being as durable as our hills. As far as the eye can reach through the vista of future years, no dangers are discovered to threaten a dissolution of the Union—no obstacle to prevent the United States from becoming a great and happy nation.

We know many statesmen have foretold the speedy downfall of our Republic. Numerous predictions have been uttered, and some few have been willing to see them verified. One of these political prophets has said, that a republic would not last longer than “birch stakes.” Two or three generations of stakes have passed a way since this oracle was promulgated, and no symptoms of *rottenness* have yet appeared in the fabric of our laws. However durable may be the monument, which the fancy and eloquence of that man erected, it is possible the last trace of his fame may be obliterated before his prophecies shall be fulfilled. The Corinthian columns of Republican greatness may perhaps be seen standing long after the marble of his tomb shall have crumbled into dust.

The fourth and last effect of the war with a consideration of which your patience will at this time be exercised, is the security it will furnish against future wars, and its tendency to perpetuate the blessings of an honorable Peace. This is a consequence of the war, on which every good citizen will dwell with peculiar delight. The extreme reluctance with which the American government appealed to the last resort of injured nations, and the difficulty experienced in raising an adequate army, proved beyond a doubt, that the genius of this nation is not military. The officers and soldiers of the American army exchanged the pursuits of civil life for the camp, more from a sense of the duties they owed their country, than from any high aspirations after glory and renown. Rich in the rural treasures, which a bountiful soil and honest industry had given them, blest in the sweet relations of domestic life, they sought no other honors—no other happiness. Educated in Republican simplicity and taught from the cradle to despise every thing that looked like show, their bosoms had never learned to sigh for the trappings of war.

“Far from the maddening crowd’s ignoble strife,
 Their sober wishes never learn’d to stray ;
 Along the cool sequester’d vale of life,
 They held the noiseless tenor of their way.”

This single consideration speaks volumes in praise of our country. Though these peaceable habits produced temporary distress and embarrassment in the operations of war, we hope they will be still cherished. That nation is sincerely to be pitied, whose leading policy is military glory. The monuments of fame, which such a nation raises, are like the pyramid, which an Eastern despot contemplated building of the skulls of his subjects, cemented with their own blood.

Although the splendid achievements of our heroes and the glorious termination of the war are well cal-

culated to enkindle a martial spirit in the people, and excite a thirst for military honors, yet there is very little danger of these feelings being carried to excess. The army has already been disbanded. The sword and bayonet have been laid aside till an injured country shall again require their services. Have you heard of any violent detention of arms? any riots or tumults at the disbanding of the army? Have you heard a whisper of dissatisfaction, a lisp of complaint from the brave officer, because he has not been retained in the service of his country? No: having accomplished the purpose for which the sword was drawn, he returns cheerfully to his former pursuits. Arms have no attractions for him, when they cannot be actively employed. The soldier, who followed Ripley, Brown, Scott, Miller or Jackson through scenes of danger and of glory, may now be seen jovially whistling by the side of his team, or beguiling the labors of the field with the story of his adventures. Nay, one of these Generals, 'tis said, intends retiring to some rural spot beyond the Allegany. There, should his country again call for his services, he may perhaps be found at the plough, cultivating his few acres, like Cincinnatus or Washington. But wherever he, or his brave associates in arms may go, they will be followed by the gratitude and affection of their countrymen.

Fellow-citizens, we may fairly calculate, that the reputation, which the United States have gained by the war, will be a guarantee of a long reign of peace. Till the present age of heroes has passed away, the English will not be fond of renewing the contest. They will not be anxious to revisit the shores of America till the lapse of years shall have swept away the memorials of their defeat and disgrace. And 'twill take long to do this. It will be some time before the rains of heaven shall have washed the blood from the plains of Chippewa and Bridgewater, and mantled them with their former verdure. Still longer before the corroding

tooth of time shall have effaced the image of the crown from the cannon, which lie rusting on the borders of the Lakes. Half a century will not level the mound, and fill the entrenchment before New-Orleans.

Nor will other European Powers be forward to provoke the hostility of a nation, who has successfully resisted the gigantic power of Britain. They have been attentive spectators of the contest, and will learn wisdom from the disasters of another. It must however be acknowledged, that in this age of wonders, at a period so big with vicissitudes and revolutions, no political events can be calculated on with any degree of certainty. When he, who was but yesterday an "exile on a rock in the midst of the seas" is to-day the Emperor of thirty millions of people, who will venture to predict "what a day may bring forth." Perhaps these fond anticipations of peace and prosperity to my country may prove but an empty dream. Till universal justice shall prevail, and man cease to be a foe to man, we must expect a share of the common calamities of nations. And till that happy period shall arrive, whether peace or war, prosperity or adversity, may await our nation, we hope there will always be found virtue enough in the people to cherish and defend the blessings, which their fathers bequeathed.

In offering these remarks on the effects of the war, there has been no wish to conceal the sacrifices, which it has cost the nation. Much treasure and much blood have been expended. But we are consoled with the reflection, that these sacrifices were neither unnecessary, nor unsuccessful.

In many instances the laurel of the hero has been bathed in the tears of the widow and orphan. Although these are distresses, incident to a state of war, they will not fail to excite your sympathy and compassion. The unfortunate soldier, the widow and fatherless will never in vain solicit the boon of charity.

Amidst the festivities of this day let us not forget the brave, who have fallen in battle. As we pass the flowing goblet, let us drink to the memory of Pike and Lawrence and Allen and Burrows and Babbitt. May their names and virtues be sacred; and the tear of remembrance water the laurei,

“As it clings to the cypress, that waves o'er their tomb.”