

ORATION,

COMMEMORATION,

American Independence :

DELIVERED AT THE EXCHANGE, IN THE CITY OF SAVANNAH,
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1802

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THIS
ORATION,
IS
DEDICATED

TO THE

Republicans of Chatham County.

BY THEIR FRIEND,

THOMAS U. P. CHARLTON.

PREFACE.

THE following Oration is, I am convinced, replete with imperfections.—My friends well know, that it was prepared on the spur of the occasion, under the pressure of many other engagements. In the course of a few hours, I began and put the finishing hand to it.—I have not since altered the complexion of a single expression or sentiment. I hope these circumstances, will have their due weight, in the scale of criticism.—The defects, however, which this Oration may involve, on the scores of style, method, or logical precision, communicate no uneasiness :—if it involves principles synonymous to the principles and sentiments of those, to whom it was addressed, I have no further anxiety.

THOMAS U. P. CHARLTON.

ORATION.

Republicans !

YOU are now convened, to commemorate an event, which gave to these United States, a separate and equal station, among the powers of the Earth.

Is it necessary, Republicans, to recapitulate the events, which preceded this memorable day?—I hope it is not necessary.—I hope, they exist in the recollection of every one present.—I hope they are deeply engraven on the hearts of all.

It may notwithstanding be expected, that I would advert to the most prominent features of the political condition of these States, antecedent to that epoch, which declared them free and independent.

In performing this part of my duty, I shall necessarily experience all those emotions, which naturally arise in the breast of a freeman, when recounting the mad freaks of despotism, and the struggles of a people for an emancipation from them.

Before then, America was declared Independent, these United States, in the relations of Colonies and Provinces, were cruelly scourged by every act, which a jealous, and an ambitious tyrant could invent.

These acts, were for a season patiently borne by our countrymen—(though determined to resist if encroachments on their birthrights were persisted in)—they supplicated, they petitioned. And for what did they supplicate,—for what did they petition?—Why, simply for a restoration of those rights, which had been illegally wrested from them,
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those rights, which Nature and Nature's God, had established, as inalienably, & imprescriptably theirs.

They desired only those privileges, which were inherent in the characters of Britons.

When charged with Sedition, what was their answer? It was this: "If Sedition consists, in a refusal to submit to unwarrantable acts of injustice and cruelty, we are indeed, in that acceptation of the term *Sedition*—a Seditious People.

When accused of aiming at Independence, what was their answer,—it was this: "If the accusation is exclusively supported by the allegations of ministers, we are indeed aiming at Independence;—if by our actions,—we are still a component part of the monarchy of Britain.

Such was the conciliatory language; such the endeavors of our countrymen, in the year '75, to stop the effusion of blood between them and Britain.

How was this language, how were these endeavours treated?—The Congress of '75, have told you how they were treated; "that they were treated with indignity, that they were repelled with insults."

At length, fired with indignation at the ignominies, hourly accumulating on them, by a servile and dependent connection with the British throne,—our Countrymen no longer endeavoured to sooth by concession,—or to court further oppressions, by a criminal inactivity. They rose in their strength, besought Almighty God to prosper their efforts; "and exhibited the curious spectacle, of a people attacked by unprovoked enemies, without imputation, or even suspicion of offence—of enemies who boasted of their privileges and civilization, and yet proffered no milder conditions, than **SERVITUDE OR DEATH.**"

This moment of national energy, Republicans,

cans; gave birth to the event, which we have convened this day to celebrate.

As the exertions of our countrymen, had hitherto been directed by the hand of wisdom, they did not at this moment, despise the admonitions of their guide.

They thought it a duty they owed themselves, and a respect other nations were entitled to, to state with the candour and boldness of freemen; the reasons which induced them to a separation from the British king.

These reasons are enumerated in the instrument denominated the Declaration of AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE, dated the 4th of July, 1776.—The reasons inumerated in that instrument, are certainly justifications of the American separation: if reasons supported by wisdom, justice, and truth, will be admitted as a justification.

With resources, drawn almost from shadows;—with a perseverance and valour, unparalleled in the revolutions of any people, our Countrymen at length triumphed:—they laughed their enemies to scorn:—*and they planted the standard of liberty, on the shattered ramparts of monarchy.*

The next step, was to legislate for themselves.—They accordingly formed a compact.—Experience, evinced the imperfections of this compact.—It was not adapted to the genius, or the relations of the American people.

They made, and adopted another compact,—the present Federal Constitution, a Constitution bottomed on the most beneficent principles; for, while it guarantees to the people of these United States, the best of all political systems,—I mean the democratic republican system,—it secures, as far as human wisdom can secure, the great ends for which Governments were primarily established;

to wit, national happiness, prosperity, and glory.

It is surely unnecessary for me, to go into a detailed eulogy of this *glorious compact*!—In doing so, I should merely fatigue you with arguments, which have issued from the mouths of a thousand orators—and which a thousand pens, have laboured to communicate to you.

Let it suffice to say, that the best argument, that can be urged in favour of any governmental system, is to be deduced from its effects on Society. Every blessing which a people could be indulged with, have lavishly emanated from the Constitutional Code of America.—And it *seems* to be acknowledged by *all*,—by every *sect* and *party*, that in the degree, that we deviate from or adhere to the principles of this Compact, in that proportion, we are slaves, or we are freemen.

Who could have supposed Citizens, that an institution involving all these advantages,—having public felicity as its principal end—acknowledging YOU the PEOPLE, as the fountain of power:—An institution, concentrating the best principles of the multi-form governments of the Earth, and rejecting their vices;—who could ever have supposed, that an institution thus designated, should have been attacked by the rude hand of short delegated power,—should have been attacked by those, who were instrumental in giving it shape, form and beauty!

The paradox does not remain to be proven.

LOOK to the *measures* of the late federal administration, as it has been denominated.—LOOK to the *measures* of the sectaries of that administration. Can you perceive in them aught, but destruction to the principles of the federal compact? Can you perceive in them aught, but an hostility the most inveterate, to the sovereignty of the people? Can you perceive in them aught, but an
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“appetite keen as death,” for powers and privileges, incompatible with your freedom? Did not the measures of that administration, tend to the introduction of an Order of things, which *had no other end* than the personal aggrandizement of its supporters.

BUT, the people of these UNITED STATES, were so deeply impressed with the holy benefits their republican system guaranteed to them, to remain long indifferent to these measures. They saw, that their Country was retrograding to despotism:—they began once more to feel the trammels of monarchy, and they said “LET THE TRUE PRINCIPLES OF THE GOVERNMENT BE RENOVATED.—Their omnipotent voice was obeyed.—THE TRUE PRINCIPLES OF THE GOVERNMENT WERE RENOVATED.

In other Countries, this would have been the signal for civil dissensions, the social system would have been shaken to its centre; or in other words, government would have been dissolved.

Herein, then appears, the superior energy of the democratic institution, which substitutes the mild, but efficient principles of *representation*, to that wild theory, which recognizes, a dissolution of government, and a devolution of personal resistance on the people, for every usurpation of rulers.

To this system of federal terrorism, republican virtue hath succeeded; and the friends of *liberty* and *equal rights*, have re-assumed their predominant station.—In *their* hands the Constitution is safe,—they will deliver it down to posterity, “if not improved, at least without derogation.”—But

Republicans!

Beware of that charybdis—COALITION—
The proposition that we are “ALL* REPUBLICANS,

* See President Jefferson's inaugural speech.

LICANS, ALL FEDERALISTS," if accredited by you, will lead to ruin.

It is a proposition, which may sound well, as the meek and conciliatory language of a great and benevolent Statesman; but it is a proposition, which YOUR feelings must renounce:—it is a proposition renounced by your opponents. †

So long, my Countrymen, as truth, and error, maintain their distinctions; so long will republicanism, and federalism assert their distinct, and separate operations.

The doctrines of the one, are in direct contrariety with the other.—The *one*, has no other end, no other object, than the best means of promoting the great interest of the public: the object, and the ends of the *other*, are, the interest of the few, the degradation of the many.

I would ask, whether the same bigotry,—the same pretension to exclusive perfection, is not discoverable in as eminent a degree among political, as religious sects?—The history of mankind, evinces that they do.

Would it be a task easy in its execution, to impress on the mind of the bigoted Mussulman, the philanthropy, the universal benevolence of the
divine

† It has been said, that reconciliatory language was the language now to be used: that little attention should be paid to glowing Orators on either side: and whatever might be said to the contrary, we were notwithstanding "all republicans, all federalists"—a man who advances such doctrine as this, is ignorant of the springs of the human heart, he is certainly unacquainted with the acrimony which exists among the political sects of our Country.

Put this simple question to the republican—Will you divest yourself of your zealous attachment to your interest, and unite with Federalists?—He would tell you, that such conduct would favour of the most despicable apostacy.

Put a similar question to the federalist, ask him, if his disposition inclines to coalition?—He would smile at the impertinence of your inquiry, and would answer you haughtily, that he *had no disposition*, to coalesce with democrats, Jacobins and anarchists.

divine Jesus? It would not.—The mahometan devotee, would laugh at you, call you dog, and tell you, that his scymeter would afford the best testimony of his belief in your tenets.

Has Reason yet been able, or will it, so long as the human mind retains its prejudices, to reconcile religious sectaries, agreeing in the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, but dividing on metaphysical and immaterial differences,—Such as the form of a robe, or the attitude in prayer?—Will the papist even in these enlightened days, give future bliss to the heretical protestant?

Has there ever been yet, a cordial reconciliation, been the Jacobites and whigs of England—the Jacobins and Aristocrats of France,—the Orange and the popular party of Holland,—the whigs and tories of America?—I answer, NO—They still hold each other in detestation. And must we attribute a greater share of charity and moderation, to Republicans and Federalists, than what is found to characterise other political sects, under other appellations? Believe me, my Countrymen, human nature is the same every where.—We have not arrived at that happy epoch, where the various shades of opinion, are resolvable into one uniform colour.—Passions, prejudices, and selfish calculations, still keep possession of the heart of man: and not until that epocha arrives, can we hope for that equable and righteous temper, which will give the death-wound to political and religious convulsions,—which leaving no motive for resentment, will connect the great family of mankind, by the indissoluble ties of PEACE and LIBERTY.

If this reasoning is convincing, why then adopt the idle,—the fallacious idea—*Coalition*—It is as evanescent, Republicans, as “the trace left by the sea soul, on the bosom of the ocean.”

Republicanism,

Republicanism, wants not adventitious assistance,—it has nothing to apprehend from the open or secret attacks of federalism.

Forming a component link, in the great chain of eternal arrangements, its own energies are sufficient to support it.—Besides, it has the lives and properties of *you Republicans*, to support it.

Let us then given up the idea Coalition.

Let Democratic-Republicanism, rest upon its own and appropriate basis :—it has strength, and numbers, to maintain its predominacy forever.

Revolutionary Soldiers!

If any of you are now present, this occasion must excite in you emotions, which those who did not participate in your toils, cannot experience—It is to *you*, that the tribute of a free people's applause is due.

Can the annals of any country, shew the like patriotism, the like heroism, which distinguished you, during our glorious revolutionary struggle?

Roman and Grecian magnanimity and valour, lose their lustre, when compared with *your* magnanimity, your valour.

What was not within the compass of your power, if ambition, or discontent, had actuated you at one period of the revolutionary contest.

Every motive combined to disgust you : yet ever faithful to the cause, which called you to arms, you remained at your posts, nor could all the horrors attached to your situation, induce you to desert the cause you were fighting for,—the cause of your God, your Country,—and posterity.

You gave, Soldiers, an instructive lesson to tyrants.—You taught them this eternal truth ; “ That REBELLION against them, was the law of God.”

The lesson has taken deep root on the continent of Europe : it has laid in ruins a mighty fabric

fabric of oppression there, and may in time pervade every nation, where tyranny now dwells.

Your Posterity Soldiers, may be witnesses of the beneficent effects of your hardy and enlightened heroism, on the myriads of the old world,—when those myriads shaking off their oppressions, will hail you as the remote cause of their emancipation, and will teach their children, to bow with submission, at the name and exploits, of the **AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIER**.—To you, who cherish the principles of '76—honor,—respect,—gratitude are due.

Let us bury in oblivion, the merits of the apostate Soldier.

Republicans!

Permit me to detain you a few minutes longer, and to claim your indulgence, whilst I conclude my duty on this occasion, with the language of a foreign patriot, whose attachment to your country, and its civil liberty, was perhaps equal to your own.

It is an animated, and correct description, of the many political blessings we enjoy.

In America, says he, † that country, which God and man, have concurred to render the blissful habitations of peace, and abundance, the poor are not broken down by taxes, to support the expensive trappings of royalty, or to pamper the luxury of an insolent nobility, no lordly peer tramples down the corn of the Husbandman, no proud prelate, wrings from him the tythe of his industry. They have neither chicanery in ermine, nor hypocrisy in law. The community is not there divided into an oppressed peasantry, and an overgrown

† Gerrald's British Convention.

grown aristocracy; the one of whom lives by the plunder of the state, while others are compelled to be objects of it.—Plenty is the lot of all, superfluity of none.—An equal and undistinguishing law, is the only sovereign acknowledged by a free, and an united people, which as all contribute to make, so all are inclined to support.

The word *subordination*, a term unknown in the vocabulary of freemen, and which means only a reciprocation of slavery and freedom, never wounds the ear, of the high minded republican.—The peace of millions cannot there be disturbed, by the bloody disposition of *one* man.

The maxims of the Prince of Peace, are not only preached but practised. The trumpet of war, is never sounded by the Heralds of despotism, to enkindle a spirit of murder and rapine.

Dungeons, chains, whips, racks and gibbets, are not there resorted to, as lessons of morality, or instruments of conviction. They have no wants, but such as nature gives, and which may be easily supplied by a moderate degree of labour. Life is simple, and therefore it is happy.

Almighty God, grant my countrymen, that we may always deserve this panegyric!—May it be enregistered in the book of eternity.

Six and twenty years ago, on the spot on which this building is erected, you assembled, to commemorate the declaration of American Independence.—May I indulge myself with an expectation, that six and twenty years hence, a remembrance will not be lost, of the sentiments I have delivered to you this day?

They are the sentiments of one, whose happiness is perfectly identified with your own:—of one, who if he knows his own heart, recognizes no other interest, than that which is predicated on the broad base, of the public good.

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Should those sentiments meet *your* approbation, Republicans, I am content.—Should they be reprobated by your enemies, it will be nothing more than I shall expect. *

* It has been very justly said, that there never was yet any truth, or any principle so irresistably obvious, that all men believed it at once. Time, and reason, must operate with each other, to the final establishment of principles, and therefore, those who may happen to be first convinced, have no right to persecute others, on whom conviction operates more slowly.—The moral principles of revolutions is to instruct ; not to destroy.

My vanity induces me to think, that I am an exception to these general propositions.—As soon as I could form an opinion, on governmental matters, that opinion was, that politics involved the first principles of ethics,—and that the democratic representative system, existed in the nature and fitness of things,—and was the only political system, that was calculated, to promote the comfort, and happiness of man.—Therefore conviction has not operated on *me* slowly.—God forbid, that I should wish a persecution to be commenced against those whose reason inclines them to a different opinion.—If they are honest, they have a right to think and act as they please.—But I will unfold their errors, and as far as I have the ability to do so, I will instruct my countrymen in the best means to obviate the effects of those errors.