

AN

ORATION

PRONOUNCED AT DEDHAM,

ON THE

ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECLARATION

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

JULY 4th, 1812.

BY JABEZ CHICKERING.

“Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence, the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake.”

WASHINGTON.

BOSTON:

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1812.

Dedham, July 4th, 1812.

SIR,

AGREEABLY to a vote of the citizens, this day assembled at Dedham, to commemorate the declaration of Independence, the Committee appointed for that purpose, present you thanks for your spirited and appropriate Oration on the occasion, and request a copy for the press.

SAMUEL HAVEN, *Per Order.*

JABEZ CHICKERING, Esq.



Monday morning, July 6th, 1812.

GENTLEMEN,

RELYING on the usual candor of the disciples of Washington, I cheerfully comply with your request.

I am, with sentiments of respect, your humble servant.

JABEZ CHICKERING.

**HON SAMUEL HAVEN, and }
Gentlemen of the Committee. }**

ORATION.

SOCIAL affections are no less conducive to the happiness of individuals, than to the strength, harmony and prosperity of communities. They tend to alleviate those passions and prejudices, which disgrace mankind and destroy the bands of society. Upon their influence depend the generous virtues, which add equal lustre to the character of the citizen, the statesman, and the christian. The presence of those, whom we respect and love, raises in the convivial circle the heartfelt smile; in an assembly of our fellow citizens excites sentiments of exalted patriotism; and in a congregation of the pious, it awakens sublime devotion. Thus the golden chord, which unites mankind in affection, becomes the means of uniting them to their country and to their **GOD**.

In the exercise of these affections, we have assembled to contemplate the great political events of our country, to impress our minds with the principles, and to cultivate the virtues, which form the only permanent foundation of civil liberty and national independence. Motives to the performance of these duties cannot be wanting to those, who either honor the memory of their illustrious ancestors, participate

in the happiness of their fellow citizens, or regard the welfare of posterity. May it never be said, that the descendants of the American pilgrims grew cold in the cause of religion and liberty, nor that the sons of heroes and patriots wanted knowledge to discern, or spirit and courage to defend their rights.

In reviewing the political events of our country, let us remember, that the affections, principles and virtues, which gave success to the struggles of our ancestors and political fathers in the cause of liberty, are the same, which must now support and protect our national and individual rights. Political virtues and vices are not altered by time, nor changed by opinions. Unless we inherit the spirit, virtues and discernment of our ancestors, we shall not long enjoy the fruits of their wisdom and valor; and to recount their deeds, without adopting their principles and emulating their virtues, is with unhallowed hands to disturb their ashes, while we proclaim our own degeneracy.

America was nursed in the cradle of chaste and pious liberty, and was educated and grew to manhood in the school of sound republican principles. The bigotry and superstition, which obscured the divine light of christianity in Europe, induced our pious ancestors to seek its clear, but gentle rays, in a foreign country. In pursuit of religious freedom, they did not forget their civil rights. They obtained a charter, by which the crown retained a very limited authority over them. At the time of their emigra-

tion, England enjoyed more civil liberty, than any other nation of the world. Our ancestors loved and admired the civil institutions of their native land, and transplanted them into the soil of their adopted country. The wilds of America, at this time, did not allure the dissolute, the unprincipled, nor the ambitious. This secured our ancestors from the vices and delusions of modern philosophy, and preserved their civil and religious institutions from being subverted, under the pretence of giving civil and religious freedom. They were not restless and turbulent under legal and just restraints; but every attempt to encroach on their rights met with spirited and uniform opposition. From the infancy of the country, they did not submit to aggressions from any nation, and probably for more than a century after their emigration, they did not even wish for a total separation from their mother country.

The ambitious and unjust attempts of the crown of Great Britain, to encroach upon the ancient rights and privileges of America, were the causes of that war, which terminated in the establishment of the independence of the United States. The objects of this war were the defence of known and established rights, and security against aggressions. Our political fathers never adopted the unsound doctrine, that insults and injuries may be quietly submitted to from one nation, which must be resisted, when received from another. They considered, that every encroachment on rights must be promptly resisted, or that they

should soon be degraded to the rank of slaves. They did not hesitate to draw the sword against their former brethren, rather than submit to arbitrary and unjust demands.

The revolutionary war has given rise to partialities and prejudices, not less disgraceful in themselves, than dangerous in their tendency. The endeavor to excite perpetual hatred and animosity towards any nation, can originate only in corrupt hearts and darkened understandings. Principles of honor, religion and national policy forbid the exercise of these cowardly and malignant passions. They precipitate nations into the vortex of destruction. Remember Carthage, and be warned by her fate. The father of Hannibal, the Carthaginian General, took his son to the altar of his country and compelled him to swear perpetual hatred to the republic of Rome. From this hatred originated those wars, which laid Carthage in ruins.

Blind partialities towards any nation are still more dangerous. They expose a nation to "the insidious wiles of foreign influence," against which "the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake." An open enemy is less to be feared, than a false and treacherous friend. Remember the little republics of ancient Greece, and learn wisdom by their fate. They were not enslaved by the arms of the Macedonian tyrant; but by the snares, which he concealed under professions of national friendship, and pretended concern, lest they should not protect their rights against a foreign power.

From the close of the revolutionary war, to the adoption of our present system of government, was a period dangerous to the liberties of America. A spirit of opposition appeared to the most salutary restraints of civil government. The licentiousness of the camp had contaminated the morals of the people, and threatened to subvert the principles and institutions of our ancestors. It was said, that men who had fought for liberty ought not to be under the restraint of laws, and that, in a land of liberty and equality, there ought to be neither poor nor rich; but that all property should be divided among the citizens:—in other words, that the assassin ought to have liberty to execute his malicious intentions, without fear of punishment, and that the idle and profligate ought to be rewarded out of the earnings of the industrious and frugal.

The wisdom of our political fathers led the American people from the slippery paths of anarchy, into the road to happiness and prosperity. The common fate of all ancient republics did not deter our assembled patriots and sages from forming and recommending a system of government, which secures equal rights and privileges to all the citizens, and which constitutes the citizens the guardians and protectors of their own rights and privileges. The federal constitution is justly admired by every friend to rational liberty. It was designed for an enlightened, a moral and religious people. The dangers attending a popular government were well known to the framers of our constitution. They trusted, for its defence and

support, to the political principles, virtues and institutions of their ancestors, and to that sacred regard for the precepts and institutions of religion, which had always been the distinguishing characteristic of the American people, and without which, every free government will totter to its fall. We ought to consider every attempt to weaken the restraints of religion, or to subvert its institutions, under whatever name or pretence, as an attack upon the liberties of our country.

The dangers attending a republican form of government arise from the intrigues of foreign and domestic ambition. Liberty is seldom destroyed by the conquering arms of a tyrant, until it has been first undermined. This is never done by destroying the love of liberty ; but by destroying the principles and virtues, which support it. Ambitious and designing men are always the loudest in praise of liberty and the rights of man. They pamper the vanity, passions and prejudices of the people, while they deceive their understandings, and lead them to destruction. Such are the delusions, to which mankind are exposed, that nations have assisted to rivet their own fetters, while they supposed, that they were contending in the cause of liberty.

Among the rights secured to the people by the federal constitution is the freedom of speech. This is the barrier of our liberty. The exercise of this right does not consist in propagating wilful falsehoods ; but in speaking the truth respecting our rulers with good intentions, and expressing our opinions of the

tendency of their policy and measures. In exercising this right, let us distinguish between the constitution, and the administration of it. The constitution is the rock of our political safety, which if undermined by the insidious arts of demagogues, or broken by the power of foreign tyrants, will leave us to sink into the gulph of destruction. The men, who compose the administration, are accountable for their official conduct to the people, from whom they receive their power. Unprincipled and ambitious men are generally the most desirous of obtaining offices, and often succeed by using abject flattery and mean deceptions, to which the noble minded patriot will never descend. How shall the people know their real friends, from these flatterers and deceivers, without testing them by their official conduct?

All opposition to constitutional acts of government will meet with the most pointed disapprobation from every real American. Opposition to government consists in refusing to obey the laws, and in forcibly resisting their execution. Nothing of this kind exists amongst us, except in the bugbear stories, circulated with a design to excite animosities in the minds of peaceable citizens. It is not opposition to government, to raise loud the warning voice against dangers arising to our country, from the imbecility, prejudices, or delusions of any administration of government. It is not the right only, but it is the duty of every citizen so to do. Should this right be destroyed, or the exercise of it rendered dangerous, the sun of liberty

would be obscured by the clouds of ignorance, and the thick and silent darkness of despotism would cover our country.

The first administration of our present system of government was composed of those brave and wise men, who had fought our battles and guided our councils during the contest for independence. Their patriotism and discernment had been fully tried during the distressing scenes of a sanguinary war. Washington was the sun, around whom the American planets revolved, and which enlightened and cheered our political heavens. The modest diffidence, with which he ascended the chair of state, was a pledge of the wisdom and firmness of his administration. The principles by which he regulated his official conduct, were founded on the soundest dictates of reason, and were such, as have stood the test of ages. He had no capricious whims, nor favorite theories to be indulged at the expense of the safety and prosperity of the people. His affections for his country, like those for his friends, had all the ardour of youth tempered with the tender solicitude and caution of age. His virtues, like the lustre of a diamond, could not be tarnished by the breath of flattery, nor reproach.

The prosperity, which attended the United States during the administration of Washington, and that of his immediate successor, for they were substantially the same, was such as will always attend our country, when governed by correct principles, spirit and discernment. No nation ever rose so suddenly to wealth,

honor and happiness. The American people, during the convulsive and sanguinary struggles of Europe, *sat under their own vines and fig trees, enjoying the fruit of their labors, and having none to molest, or make them afraid.* Commerce filled the public coffers, with riches brought from the remotest seas; generously rewarding her benefactors for her protection and defence. From a situation bordering on national bankruptcy, public credit was restored, by making appropriations to pay the national and state debts; those debts of honor, the price of our liberty and independence. The ordinary expenses of government were then defrayed, without loans, or paper currency. Washington never boasted of economy; he was content with the practice of it. Experience has often proved, that those, who make the greatest professions of this virtue, have never governed themselves by its principles.

The spirit, wisdom and firmness displayed by the federal administrations, in their transactions with foreign powers, preserved the United States from being involved in those desolating wars, which have so long been the scourge of Europe. Their maxim was, and in their practice they conformed to it, "that to be prepared for war is the most effectual means of preserving peace." While they observed a strict neutrality towards all nations, they did not quietly submit to insults and aggressions from any. They did not hastily rush into a war; but while negotiating for peace, they gave foreign nations explicitly to under-

stand, that America was able and prepared to defend her rights. The thunders of Truxton were more powerful negociators with the republican pirates of France, than Pinckney, Marshall and Gerry.

By the same means, by which our country was saved from impending ruin, Washington and his political disciples lost the confidence of a majority of their fellow citizens. Washington's proclamation of neutrality, by which the country was saved from becoming an ally of the bloody republic of France, and his signing the British treaty, negociated by Mr. Jay, by which we were saved from an impending war with Great Britain, our plundered property restored, and our national rights respected, were the causes of the gross calumny and abuse, which determined that illustrious hero and patriot to withdraw from the cares of government, and which probably hastened his descent to the grave. The wisdom of these measures is now acknowledged, even by those, who then ungratefully planted daggers in the bosom of the father of their country.

It is now twelve years since the principles of Washington have been abandoned, and his councils disregarded, by the administration of our general government. The places of honour and sacred trust, which were filled by him and his political friends and followers, have been given to those, who were his earliest and most inveterate opposers. Never, in any age or nation, did a fairer opportunity offer, to compare the effects of opposite measures adopted in the

administration of the same system of government. We are not obliged to form our opinions of their different merits from conjectures, nor from their professions of economy, wisdom and patriotism. You have eaten of their different fruits, and "by their fruits ye shall know them." Recollect the circumstances, under which these administrations began; the one, when the country was distressed, embarrassed, without revenue or resources, amidst the wild phrensy of the French revolution, and having to encounter all the difficulties attending the organization of a new system of government; the other, when the country was "in the full tide of successful experiment." Compare the present condition of the United States with what it was twelve years ago. Compare the situation of your treasury, your navy, your commerce, your revenue and resources now, with what it was then. Compare your own situation, and that of your neighbours, whether farmers, mechanics, or merchants, at these different periods. What do you possess now, which you did not enjoy under the Washington administrations, except a boundless tract of land inhabited by Indians, and wild beasts, which cost you fifteen millions of dollars, a fleet of contemptible gunboats built on the ruins of a gallant little navy, and a plot to assist elections, bought of a foreign spy and traitor, for fifty thousand dollars of your money? You then enjoyed profound peace, although prepared to encounter any nation, which should dare attack your rights. You are now plunged in an

unnecessary war, without the means of prosecuting it with effect.

The situation of our country with respect to foreign powers is such, as to fill our minds with gloom, and fearful apprehensions. We have rushed into that desolating war, from which no nation has ever returned to enjoy the blessings of liberty and independence. All the once free and sovereign nations on the continent of Europe have fallen prostrate before the shrine of the goddess of delusion, and have there been crushed by the iron hand of despotism. How can we hope to escape their fate, if we follow their example?

Ambition is the fell destroyer of nations. It is cruel as death, and unrelenting as the grave. In its approach, it wears the smiles of an enchantress, and speaks with the voice of a syren; but its feet are encrusted with the blood of its victims, and it is followed by desolation and despair. It first appeared on earth, in the humble form of a serpent, and saying in the soft accents of persuasion, eat, and your eyes shall be opened. The eyes of the deluded victim were opened, and on the walls of paradise appeared the ghastly image of death.

Have we escaped the fascinations of this monster? Have we avoided the delusive snare, which he has spread over the abyss, prepared for our reception? Or does he even now, secure of his prey, smile upon us, while he prepares to give us the grasp of death? Let us not be deceived, the smile of a tyrant is the harbinger of destruction. The great object of the

Corsican usurper is universal dominion. This is the purpose of his life, and forms a part of each bloody dream. But it is said that Bonaparte loves America. Yes, he loved Spain, Portugal, Prussia, and his dear brother, Alexander of the North, and they now enjoy the fruits of his love. It is said, that he is contending for the liberty of the seas. Yes, he has contended for the liberty of the oppressed nations of Europe, until he has chained them to his blood-stained throne, and made them the supporters of his usurpation.

How shall we escape his wiles, and the destruction, which will follow delusion? Shall we fall down and worship him, and become the humble instruments of his mad ambition? If we fight *his battles*, will he respect *our rights*? Ask the Spanish patriots, and receive an answer, which will add horror to the gloom of our present situation. Alliance with him is the path to the gulph of perdition; nay, not the path, it is perdition itself.

The present embarrassed, disgraceful and dangerous situation of our country is not the consequence of any new disposition of either of the belligerent powers towards America; but because *she* has not shewn *spirit* and firmness to resist the first encroachments on her rights. Submission to insults and aggressions, from one nation, invites them from others. Had the first wanton and cowardly piracies of France met with the same spirited and firm resistance, which their plunders received fourteen years since, we should now have enjoyed peace, and our rights would

have been respected by foreign nations. But “restrictive energies” and a temporizing policy have compelled us to bear the insults and robberies of France, for more than five years, during which, other nations have followed her example, and the very fountains of our prosperity have been dried up.

To find the origin, and trace the progress of evils, are the means, by which we may ascertain and provide a remedy for them. We have had Washington administrations, and we have had Jefferson administrations. We have had national prosperity, and we have had national adversity. May the American people consider the dangers, which hover over our country, and elect men to guide the national councils, who adhere to the maxims and principles of Washington, and who possess a portion of his spirit and discernment ; lest the return of this day, which has so often been cheered by the voices of freemen, should find America drawn into fatal snares spread by a foreign tyrant.

