

AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED AT

PITTSTOWN, STATE OF NEW-YORK,

ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY,

1804:

THE TWENTY EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

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ORATION, &c.



FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,

“THE Most High rules in the Kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever he will.”

To this position both sacred and profane history bear a joint and unequivocal testimony : Of its truth the proud monarch of Babylon was convinced by circumstances the most humiliating and extraordinary.— The mighty revolutions, the distracting convulsions, and desolating wars that have in all ages spread calamity and destruction throughout the habitable world, have all been under the controul of an all-wise and unerring Providence. The rise, progress, increase, decline, and final dissolution of mighty empires, inferior principalities, and petty states,

have strictly adhered to that Almighty *fiat*, which says to the boisterous DEEP, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

But no instance occurs, either in ancient or modern history, in which the hand of a Supreme Being is more conspicuous than in those occurrences which gave birth to the growing empire of the United States of North America.

The proud tyrant of Great-Britain, as though *destined* by Heaven, and *inspired* by infernal spirits, as the instrument of an eternal separation between that kingdom and the flourishing colonies of the New World, could not gorge his thirst for domination and gold, with any thing short of the complete and universal controul of the lives, liberties and hard earnings of the loyal and peaceable inhabitants of those colonies. But, while he was madly pursuing his inhuman schemes of oppression and violence, aided, and frequently duped by a corrupt and designing ministry, the voice of Heaven, by various overtures of Providence, cried with majestic e-

loquence and awful emphasis, "GEORGE! beware, Columbia is the destined theatre of liberty, if you attempt to invade her Province you will do it to your eternal *shame* and mortification." But deaf to the admonitions of Heaven, and the repeated remonstrances of his most loyal and faithful subjects, he vociferates, like another hardened Pharaoh—" *Who is the Lord, that I should let those Yankees enjoy their right?*" They are a *base-born swinish* HERD, fit for nothing but slaves—and they *shall serve ME.*"— Poor deluded mortal! lifting up himself against OMNIPOTENCE.

At length the insulted Majesty, who maketh the clouds his chariot, issues the royal mandate to the genius of Liberty, to convoke the patriotic sages of America in one general Congress to deliberate on the best measures to be pursued in asserting and vindicating her authority, and establishing her Empire in this new and happy World.— Let us for a moment, indulge conjecture, and fancy the gentle Goddess hovering over their

venerable heads, and whispering in accents infinitely softer than those of the fam'd nymphs of the Sylvan shades : “ *My children,* you are assembled on the most important occasion ; on the result of your deliberations depend the most important events :—the display of Truth—the establishment of the empire of Liberty—the renovation of the political world—the emancipation of MAN from slavery—the peace and prosperity of unborn millions. Be deliberate—be united. Unappalled by the threats of Tyrants and their ten thousand satellites, display a magnanimity of soul that rises superior to all obstructions or discouragements, and teach the world that virtue never shines with *all* her splendence but in the hour of distress and persecution. To *you*, under the superintendance of the powers above, I solemnly commit the assertion, the vindication, and final establishment of my long rejected and insulted authority. Fear not. Be faithful to your trust. Heaven will protect you—your country will honor you—and genera-

tions yet unborn will rise up and call you BLESSED.”

She ceased. A profound silence characterised a solemn pause. The exquisite beauty of her form—the unaffected solemnity of her address, tempered with majestic sweetness in every accent, fired every breast with a noble enthusiasm, while every bosom glowed with pure philanthropy and patriotic zeal for the cause of Truth and Liberty.

At length they broke silence, and thus addressed the heaven-born princess. “ Illustrious stranger ! We are impressed with the righteousness of your demands—we gratefully acknowledge the infinite honor you have conferred on us, by depositing your cause in our hands—we solemnly swear eternal allegiance to your government, and fidelity in the discharge of every duty connected with the important trust you have deigned to repose in us. Our life—honor—interest—every thing we hold dear or sacred is devoted. But, celestial nymph ! Sensible of the happy influ-

ence your presence may have on us, and the important lessons we may receive from you in this trying moment, we earnestly entreat you to preside over us in all our deliberations." With a smile of benignity and complacence that might have moved the heart of a *Stoic*, she nodded assent; and without further ceremony was placed in the chair.

In their consultations they proved themselves her legitimate offspring; and after deliberately weighing the important question, "Whether the sons of Columbia should be free, or consent to be slaves?" With solemn deliberation, and with a conscientious appeal to the *searcher of hearts* for the rectitude of their intentions, they, on the ever-memorable *Fourth of July, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-six*, declared to the world that "These colonies are, and of right ought to be **FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES,**" &c.

The powers of Heaven approved their declaration—the genius of Liberty rejoiced

at their firmness—the fame thereof was wafted as on Zephyrus’s wings, reached old Europe’s haughty courts, and “thundered an awful presage in the ears of Tyrants.” The haughty despots of the old world took the alarm, the tocsin was sounded—“TO ARMS, TO ARMS, our craft’s in danger,” was the universal cry. Proud Albion’s broad canvas was unfurled—the vassals of Hesse Cassel were set in motion, and soon the fertile shores of North America swarmed with foreign savages. The furious menaces of their proud commanders—the thunder of their artillery, with the rapacious barbarity of their unprincipled mercenaries threatened to deluge our infant country in flames and blood. Rapine—murder—all the horrors of a *worse than savage* war ensued. Our flourishing and populous cities were pillaged and laid in ashes, our virtuous citizens were butchered in the most inhuman manner, our blooming youths, the growing hope of their parents and country, were mangled in the field of battle,

widowed mothers and helpless orphans were multiplied, immolated innocence lay weltering in her crimson gore, while one universal GROAN was heard from every part of our distressed country.

In her distress, *Columbia* cried unto her God: He heard her voice out of his temple, and her cry came before him, even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled: the foundations also of the hills moved, and were shaken, because he was wroth. He bowed the Heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. The Lord also thundered in the Heavens, and the highest gave his voice; hail-stones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered; at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. He sent from above, he took her,

he drew her out of many waters. He delivered her from her strong enemies, and from them which hated her : for they were too strong for her. For he will save the afflicted people ; but will bring down high looks. Therefore let us give thanks unto the LORD among the nations, and sing praises unto his name. Let us exalt him, for he is the LORD OUR GOD.

To retrace the various scenes of a long and arduous struggle would exceed the intended limits of this oration. Suffice it for the present, to say, that under the smiles of a gracious Heaven, and by the instrumentality of our patriotic Sages, and gallant Heroes, we were conducted safe to victory : while the *proud tyrant* of OLD ENGLAND was compelled to *lick the dust* ; and, to his utter chagrin and mortification, acknowledge the truth of the Declaration we celebrate this day. Thus was the foundation laid for us to enjoy in *peace*, what was obtained by the hardships and fatigues of a cruel *war*.

Before we proceed let us consecrate a

tear of sympathetic gratitude to the memory of those gallant Heroes, and worthy citizens who fell in our glorious revolution; whose blood was the price of our liberties. Let us mourn the fate of the brave Warren, the intrepid Mercer, the gallant Montgomery, and thousands of others who freely shed their blood in the cause of freedom:— and while we regale under the luxuriant boughs of the Tree of Liberty, let us teach the laurel to encircle their urn with unfading verdure.

To return. Let us in order to be further impressed with a sense of gratitude on this occasion, turn our attention to scenes more recent, and equally interesting. Our illustrious patriots, tho' impressed with the *principles*, were not adepts in the *science* of Republican government. Besides, in forming our constitution they had to combat passions and prejudices equally hostile, and more unconquerable than the numerous legions of foreign invaders. To form a per-

manent combination of a number of independent States, possessing different interests, and necessarily pursuing different objects, and at the same time governed by different maxims, habits and manners, required at once the exertion of all those exalted talents that ennoble the human soul. But, under the superintendance of that kind Providence that has all along watched over this country for good, a Constitution has been framed which, tho' it cannot boast of perfection, may safely be pronounced the best the world has ever produced. By this masterpiece of human wisdom and magnanimity, the several states are consolidated in one impenetrable phalanx; and their infinite variety of interests and objects of pursuit placed on such amicable terms as to leave no just cause for complaint or uneasiness.

But notwithstanding the point is so far secured there is no time for idleness. Experience has taught us, that restless ambition

can always find, or fabricate a pretext for all those measures that have for their object the aggrandizement of the few at the expence of the many. Occurrences too painful to be recited at this time, have taught us that domestic usurpers are more dangerous to the existence of a Republic than foreign invaders. But thanks to Heaven, the secret machinations as well as the daring outrages of the advocates of Aristocracy have been so over-ruled, that they have served only to rouse the attention of the friends of Liberty, and rekindle the languishing spark of '76; and, within the last four years, a revolution has been effected without war or bloodshed, of equal importance to our common country as well as to each individual State, with that which cost so much blood and treasure. This circumstance ought to be improved as an eternal lesson to ambitious usurpers, not to invade the liberties of a free people.

It ought to be matter of joy to us, that notwithstanding we have passed through

many dangers, yet, blest with men at the helm of our affairs who possess the spirit of our glorious Revolution, whose bosoms cherish the sentiments of peace and liberty, and whose object is to diffuse tranquility and social happiness through every section of our growing Empire, we may at present sit securely under our own vine and our own fig-tree, and with great propriety adopt the language of the royal poet: "He hath not dealt so with every nation! Praise ye the LORD."

While I congratulate you on the happiness and prosperity we enjoy under our present wise and virtuous administration, permit me to call your attention for a moment to an event pregnant with incalculable advantages to our flourishing Republic. I mean the peaceful and honorable acquisition of the extensive and fertile Province of LOUISIANA. This event, whether viewed in relation to the intrinsic value of the acquisition, or the means by which it was obtained, cannot fail to inspire our minds with grati-

tude to the great Director of all events, and at the same time with sentiments of the highest esteem for those by whose wisdom and sound policy it has been achieved. In a commercial view it is all important to the growing wealth of our Western territories ; while it secures to them the peaceable navigation of the Mississippi, it invites enterprize and commerce from every direction. In respect to agriculture, it opens an extensive field for industry, and promises to crown the labor of the husbandman with abundant plenty, and uninterrupted tranquility. In a territorial view, it is a vast extension of the empire of freedom. In respect to foreign relations, it secures us from those innumerable evils inseparable from its colonization by a powerful and warlike nation, whose ambitious views aim at the subjugation of all mankind. The means by which this "EDEN" of the new world has been obtained, are worthy and characteristic of those enlightened and patriotic Personages by whom they were invented and successfully prosecuted. Not by sword

—not by blood and slaughter—not by the lives of our gallant youths, and virtuous citizens; but by peaceable negociation—by fair and mutual contract, giving value for value, and thereby securing the good will of those from whom the purchase was made, and at the same time engaging their strength to *support* instead of *opposing* our claim.

But, notwithstanding the manifest advantages resulting from this important acquisition, there are some who complain bitterly of the bad policy and prodigality of our government in the affair. The various opinions expressed by them at different times, furnish a very striking evidence of the versatility of the human mind: as a proof of this, let us examine their present arguings, and contrast them with their former propositions. Their present arguings are: “The price is too high: It is a poor marshy swamp incapable of cultivation, of unhealthy climate, the greater part of it fit only for the habitation of frogs and tortoise—the Republic will be too extensive, and must eventually crush

beneath its own weight—the French had no right to convey it, consequently our title is not permanent—but, what is worse than all the rest, the method of obtaining it discovers pusillanimity, is degrading to our national character, and calculated to invite abuse.” “Who,” they ask, “will treat us with respect if we thus tamely submit to the most flagrant abuses without showing a proper resentment? Establish such a practice and every power that wishes to pick our pockets will offer us some insult, in order to draw us into an expensive negotiation: and thus, by lavishing large sums to purchase peace, we shall soon be reduced to beggary.”

Their former propositions were: “It is all important to us to secure the navigation of the Mississippi—we must possess New-Orleans—Louisiana is a fertile country—the Eden of America—the French will colonize it—they will be dangerous neighbors—It is worth fighting for—now is the time to

Strike——TO ARMS, TO ARMS !*——

But how truly laughable is the contrast !
And how powerful the effect of negotiation !

Negotiation (according to them) has transformed the most fertile country into a worthless swamp, and yet, see the strange inconsistency. This same untillable Fen is a dangerous extension of territory, and will render the Republic an unwieldy thing.— How dangerous a colony of bull-frogs may be to the existence of a Republic I must leave for the sages of Windham to determine ; and it seems by their late description of the soil, that such must be the principal inhabitants of Louisiana. It is matter of no small

* Nothing more completely develops the wishes of a certain description of men than their anxiety to precipitate this country into a needless and unjustifiable war on account of the unauthorized conduct of a single individual, without enquiring whether there was any occasion for War. It is believed that if they had had no other views than the securing of New-Orleans, they would not have founded the war-whoop with such avidity : But let an army be raised and fired with the spirit of war, and they are fitted as tools for any purpose that promises them money and promotion.

surprise, however, that those who have once been routed from their domestic enjoyments by the *thundering artillery* of those marshy *veterans*, should within less than a century become the advocates of an offensive *war* with them.* It is possible, however, they hoped the *Mantle* of HOUDIN had fallen on some of their intrepid *Chiefs*, who would have led them successfully to the charge. Again, negociation, (by comparing their different statements) has so diminished the value of the object, that what a few months since was worth hazarding all the horrors and expenses of an unjustifiable WAR, that would unavoidably have drawn upon us the vengeance of a powerful and ambitious nation, is not, at this time worth purchasing at the most reduced price. But let us put on patience for a moment, and *examine* before we give our judgment. The whole Province

* It is storied that the people of Windham, (Con.) once quit their houses and fled in the utmost distraction at the croaking of the bull-frogs.

is supposed to have cost about 15 millions of dollars, including the contingent expenses of negotiation: Let us calculate the probable expense of obtaining it by war. Let it be remembered that they pretend their views never extended any farther than the Island of New-Orleans. The unavoidable expence of the war, admitting it had been never so short in its continuation, would not have been less than five millions of dollars: The lives of our citizens who must have fallen in the contest are worth something. Perhaps it will be difficult to fix the data by which to estimate their value. If we fix it according to the price of slaves, either in Europe or America, it will be rating our citizens too low.* In my estimation, the life of each free citizen in the United States is worth as much as

* The price of slaves in Europe at the commencement of our Revolutionary War, was set at thirty pounds sterling, (see the contract for the Hessians.) That of slaves in Virginia and the neighboring States, perhaps is somewhat higher; but either is too low for Freemen.

the life of **GEORGE THE THIRD** on the throne of Great-Britain : His salary is said to be one million sterling per annum, equal to more than four millions of dollars : If his life is not worth one year's salary they certainly give him too much ; but if it is, then, according to this estimation, if three of our citizens had fallen, the price would have been higher for the island of New-Orleans than it now is for the whole Province. Add to this, if it had been obtained by force, it must have been maintained the same way, which, instead of compensating for the first expence, would have been a continual *source* of expence ; and what is still worse, would have formed a pretext for a *standing army*, the ready engine of Tyranny, and favorite tool of Usurpers.

But the object is encompassed without any unjustifiable or dangerous measures ; and from every view of the subject, we cannot form too high an opinion of the philanthropy—the wisdom—the sound policy that have

characterized all the measures by which so important an object has been obtained : and it would be a departure from every principle of justice as well as gratitude, to withhold our encomiums from those worthy statesmen and negociators who have been the principal agents in the contract.

The result of our late election in this State affords incontestible proof of the triumphant prevalence of sound principles, the same may be said of the rapid progression of Republicanism in our sister States. It cannot fail to afford us matter of joy and festivity on *this* day, to realize that our Brethren in New-England are bursting the chains of superstition, emerging from the mists of delusion, and rallying to the standard of Liberty. We ought in justice, to make a distinction between the bulk of the People in those States, who are habitually honest, and industrious, possessing the very soul of Republicanism, and only need proper information to be its most substantial advocates :

And their leaders, who labor incessantly to keep them in ignorance, and dupe them into their impious measures : While we despise the one we ought to extend the friendly hand to the other ; and rejoice that light is prevailing among them.

But, while we rejoice, let it not be the joy of intemperance : Let us remember that every step beyond the limits of reasonable hilarity is unjustifiable, degrading to the dignity of Man, and insulting the God of all our mercies. Let us, while we rejoice, remember the source from whence all our blessings flow, and use them in such manner as not to be guilty of the basest of crimes : Ingratitude.

Let us realize, that gratitude as well as duty calls upon us to be nobly tenacious of the high privileges we enjoy under a free and righteous government—let us realize that the lawful defence of those privileges is a post at which we are placed for life, to desert which would be to deserve slavery—let us be deaf to the voice of seduction ; Our politi-

cal opponents tell us that a Republican form of government cannot be maintained—that it will sooner or later dwindle into a monarchy, or something worse; and as a demonstration of this, all ancient Republics, especially that of Rome are brought into view, and the conclusion is to be, that ours cannot stand. But hark, fellow citizens! Is it not true also that *all* former governments, monarchical, aristocratical, democratical, or whatever, have all had their decline, and met their final dissolution? Where are those mighty empires of antiquity? Syria—Babylon—Persia, &c. &c. Alas! their names only live in history. Not a vestige of them is to be found. Where once their famous cities rose with towering splendor, is now the habitation of dragons, and the places where they stood cannot be ascertained. So that if the fall of ancient Republics is to be improved as an objection against that form of government, the same objection will lie equally against all others. What then? Shall we be

guilty of political suicide? and because all governments are subject to dissolution, conclude we will not try to support any? We may with as much propriety come to such a conclusion, as to conclude because the Roman Republic is dissolved, that therefore we will not use our best endeavors to support ours. But, fellow-citizens! Let us not run mad at phantom, but let us determine, since some kind of government is unavoidably necessary, to select that which is the most righteous, and use our utmost exertions to support it through life, and transmit it uncontaminated to posterity.

Before we conclude, let us take a concise view of the character and manner of the Romans, and enquire into the causes of the ruin of their Republic.

The Romans were a warlike people, very little acquainted with, and less habituated to the arts of agriculture. Their chief study or employment was war. They were inured to it from their infancy. They were a proud, haughty people. Their boundless ambition

aimed at universal conquest and domination, and while they held out the specious pretension of giving liberty to the nations they undertook to conquer, their sole design was to rifle them of their treasure and make them slaves. They were a blood-thirsty Republic—an overbearing unrighteous Republic; and consequently could not stand. Their conduct was calculated in every respect to draw upon them the vengeance both of God and man. But let me ask, is this the true character of the citizens of the United States? Are you willing, my friends, to be compared to those blood-thirsty cannibals? No, your indignation rises at the thought. The American Republic is, at present, a peaceable Republic; and such every Republic ought to be, or it cannot stand. I cannot give you a more comprehensive view of the downfall of the Roman Republic, than by a citation or two from the celebrated Millot, speaking of their decline, he says, “War, which has been so ruinous to modern nations, always

enriched the Romans. Should we then be surprized when we see that their ambition commonly concluded one war only to begin another ? But we are now approaching the period in which the spoils of the world were only to serve as food for civil war, when the desire of tearing it from one another made the people the greatest enemies of the Republic, and when Rome at last was to be punished by the wickedness of her own children, for the many acts of injustice she had done to mankind."

Again, speaking of their final dissolution by Cæsar, he says : " This revolution must be ascribed to the vices introduced by opulence, Every thing was set to sale, when every thing could be purchased by a few individuals, and their excessive riches increasing the poverty and wretchedness of the multitude, the fundamentals of the constitution gave way to corruption, integrity disappeared, self-interest was the only rule of action, and the depravity of manners infected the springs of government. The spirit of pa-

triotism was stifled by a thousand discordant passions ; luxury, voluptuousness and debauchery broke the bonds of duty, and ambition forced every barrier sword in hand : In a word, the weak necessarily became the slaves of the strongest. When we see the people seduced by boundless profusion, the soldiers sold to the general, who fills their purses, the magistrates forming cabals to support themselves in office, and the generals refusing to lay down the command at the legal period, we may without hesitation conclude that liberty is at an end."

Distressing picture ! Grant, gracious Heaven, its original may never be seen in this now happy country.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

While the faithful pages of history present to our view the errors of antiquity, and their consequent evils, let us profit thereby. Let us endeavour to avoid those rocks on which they split, and those impassable gulfs in which they foundered. Let the innume-

rable evils the Roman republic experienced from standing armies and successful generals, be an everlasting admonition to us. Let the factious rebellion of a Cataline, the profusion and bribery of a Jugurtha; by which the most atrocious crimes were committed with impunity in full view of the senate, warn us to be ever on the alert, that we may seasonably discover and prevent the success of similar measures. Let the usurpation of a victorious Sylla, and the established despotism of a triumphant Caesar, by which every vestige of the former liberties of the people were consigned to oblivion, teach us never to give similar opportunity for ambition to exalt itself above the people. Let us realize also, that it is not enough to watch over fraud and ambition in others, but let us learn the noble science of self-government, and live in strict obedience to the laws of our country. Permit me to mention the exalted sentiment of Judge Rush, of Pennsylvania; speaking of the importance of obedience to

the laws, he says, " If I were asked what is the *first* part of the duty of a good citizen, I would say *obedience*. If I were asked what is the *second* part ? I would say *obedience*.— If I were asked what is the *third* part ? I would reply *obedience*.—In short it is the very essence and consummation of the character of a good citizen in a Republican government." Let us then pursue the path of virtue and obedience and there is no danger of our falling. Let us remember that those who are endeavoring to bring our principles into contempt, are often haranguing us with the pitiful suggestions that " large republics cannot stand ;" but all such assertions are false, and come from those who are striving to establish the principles of monarchy and aristocracy on the ruins of Republicanism : But let such take warning, they are building up what God has decreed shall be pulled down, and however sanguine their hopes may be, if they pursue such a course, they *must* come down—they *will* come down.—the powers above have said they *shall* come down !

But let it be remembered that it does not depend on the extent of a Republic whether it stands or falls. Pray, if the power or *virtue* of all the people is not sufficient to bear up a large empire, how is it possible that a single individual should be thought capable of supporting so top-heavy a structure? Is a part stronger than the whole? Or an individual a better foundation for a large territory than all the people! why should we calculate that addition to our territory is dangerous? Is the cause of Republicanism weaker because there are many Republicans, than if there were but few? Shameful arguing! The truth is, wicked, cruel, unjust republics cannot stand; but let us be a righteous, a peaceable, and a virtuous people, and though our republic should extend from the frozen mountains of Greenland to Cape Horn. there is no danger of her falling. So long as we pursue the maxims of peace and justice, the nations of the earth would interest themselves in our favor; and should any proud tyrant invade us, the powers of *Heaven*

and *Earth* would be on our side, and guarantee to us the enjoyment of our liberties, so long as we dont abuse them. Let us then pursue such a line of conduct as will teach our enemies and the world that A REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT CAN AND WILL STAND.

Impressed with these sentiments, let us consign the remainder of the day to grateful joy and festivity ; and while we are partaking of the bounties of Providence, let our hearts rise with gratitude to that beneficent Being under whose infinitely perfect *government* we enjoy PEACE in our borders, and PLENTY in our habitations.

To conclude. While “amidst the carnage of war—the revolutions of empires—the spasms of contending parties—the jarring interests and turbulent passions of infuriate *man*,” we enjoy peace and prosperity, let us remember it is because the LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH.