

AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED

AT

KENNEBUNK, MAINE,

ON

THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1809.

BY JOSEPH DANE, Esq.

KENNEBUNK.

JAMES K. REMICH, PRINTER.

1809.

KENNEBUNK, JULY 5th, 1809.

MR. DANE,

SIR,

A copy of your Oration, delivered yesterday before the citizens of this place on the anniversary of American Independence, is requested for the press.

JACOB FISHER, PER ORDER.

ORATION.



FELLOW CITIZENS,

THE FOURTH OF JULY shall never be forgotten. This anniversary finds us in possession of those unalienable rights and chartered privileges, for which in SEVENTY SIX the nation faced danger and death. When our forefathers interwove the threads of their lives with the destinies of their country—and swore in the presence of GOD to preserve the web entire; or fall by the same sword, that should sever it in twain.

Shall we turn our attention to those times, when the mother country claimed to hold her offspring in perpetual bondage, although she had repeatedly broken the *Indenture*—when she demanded the birthright of our ancestors, for less than a mess of pottage—when she attempted to strangle our infant liberty in the cradle, or smother her under the pillow of concession—when every State in *Columbia* volunteered in defence of the child, and every village had TEN righteous sons to “gird on the sword, and fearless rush to war.”

But what can be said in commemoration of these events, which has not been often repeated? Should we gather all the flowers of ~~the~~ rhetoric to deck the deeds of the *Revolution*—the nosegay would disfigure, rather than beautify. We could not serve up any thing new for the public taste, should we even glean the field of metaphor. At short notice we present a few thoughts in a garb, wonderful neither for the fineness of its threads, or delicacy of its workmanship; and will fall, like the sensitive plant, when touched by the finger of the critic. But the *Spirit of Seventy-six* has those features, which, like the fairer part of creation, may appear beautiful in a homespun attire—in this dress we shall clothe it.

Many of you, my fellow citizens, can recollect the æra, when Great Britain first threatened to usurp these fundamental rights, which our fathers brought with them to Plymouth, and *must stand*, because *literally* founded on a rock. First on the list was trial by jury. The issue between an offending citizen and an offended country had ever been decided near the place, stained with the blood of wounded law--spotless innocence required that the verdict of justice should be rendered promptly—and not by the law's delay have the span of her life shortened in the bastille of caprice—Freedom of religious opinion would suffer no restraint. Conscience claimed the privilege to wash out the stains of sin, by sprinkling or immersion—that every flock of Christ might

follow the shepherd of their choice—May the privileges of conscience be claimed and enjoyed, while one exists to enjoy them.—Patriotism would not give up the right of her sons to bear arms—to hang their faithful rusty muskets over the cottage mantelpiece.—Representation and taxation had ever trod the soil hand in hand, and refused to be separated—The press was free, and refused to recognise to keep the peace toward oppression. Equality had entrenched herself in the doctrine that “every man’s house is his castle,” and refused to negotiate for a surrender. Liberty would not yield a feather in her cap.—*The people* protested against engrafting the scions of hereditary titles and exclusive privileges on the republican oak. Congress exiled the friends of our foe, who endeavoured to introduce those exotic plants, which, ere this, would have rooted out those native virtues, which have “grown with our growth, and strengthened with our strength ;”—and declared the vineyard the inheritance of a **FREE, SOVEREIGN, AND INDEPENDENT NATION**—Is there one in this assembly, whose pulse does not beat high, when he recollects the commencement of the contest? Who can behold an infant country struggling in the grasp of tyranny, with as much cold indifference, as *apathy* views the agonies of torture? —No—The *descendants* of those, who lived at the birthday, will ever welcome this anniversary, as “it rolls round in the year”—will fondly cherish its principles, as engraven on the hearts of our

institutions—whose impression can never be tarnished, while public virtue takes rank of the treason of Cataline or Burr. On this day we will ever add something to the fund of gratitude, to redeem the debt due the memory of him, who sleeps in the shades of Mount-Vernon. Eloquence, perched on the highest Andes, has trumpeted his name to every place, where the winds blow. We could not do justice to his character, should we commit burglary on the temple of fame, and purloin every laurel from its tenants. We could not add a new idea of his excellence, should we plunder the wardrobe of originality to its bare walls.

Long could we dwell on the matchless achievements of our revolutionary heroes ; trace them from the plains of Lexington to Bunker's heights—thence through the scenes of various success, over the high-roads of Saratoga, to the capture of Cornwallis. When the King of the Isle, who had put his hand to the plough of slavery, like Lot's wife, looked back, and the American Eagle, then unfledged, snatched the fairest jewel from the British diadem. The order of nature was reversed ; and the world witnessed the novel spectacle of *the parent asking forgiveness of the child*. Long might we dwell on the dauntless resolution of proscribed statesmen, in collecting an army, and preparing for battle, with scarcely a ball or a cartridge ;—even before the springs of our resources had found their outlet. We might narrate the indescribable sufferings of soldiers, who fought till

their country's freedom was acknowledged ;—then revisited their homes with nothing for their wives but a tear. Perhaps, if the roll of veterans should now be called, some in this house might answer, who left the field of victory, rich in scars, honors, and *honorable* poverty—to return and embrace their breadless children with a penniless purse. But this is touching the *apple of the eye* of our country's glory. May the sponge of the historian dry up this blot on her page.

Thus was the SUN of our Independence first seen through the twilight of doubt ;—then slowly rising above the horizon of opposition—sometimes enveloped in clouds of darksome hue, and then shedding a mild ray, which warmed, and nourished our hopes ;—sometimes going back *ten degrees*, to prolong the life of trouble—then *standing still*. But our JOSHUA could always behold his fair face without a spot on his disk ; till finally he burst out in meridian blaze—when with his name he ushered forth a summary of those principles, for which he had fought ; and presented to our view that splendid Constellation of rights and privileges—THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION.

Union is the soul of liberty—liberty is the soul of government—and government is the soul of society. This trinity of principle is admirably united in the Federal Compact. To fully understand it, let us daily read our POLITICAL BIBLE—WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS—Place it on the shelf next that

book, which is neither to be added to—nor diminished;—and “indignantly frown upon the first dawning “of every attempt to alienate” our faith from its wise precepts—If there be a system, on whose altar eloquence may pour her purest incense, in whose praise hyperbola can never soar beyond the bounds of truth, it is the American. It has none of those despotic principles, which cripple the exertions of industry—It takes its departure from that *meridian* of common sense, which is equally distant from the *torrid zone* of theory, in which the liberties of France were consumed, and the *frigid zone* of aristocracy in the British Constitution, whose icy blast freezes the blood, and palsies the limbs of individual enterprize—while the freer parts of her system have been entangled in the toils of a corrupt treasury. It has none of those lawless features of the other European governments, which must be placed *beyond the North Pole* on freedom’s map. This eulogium on our national compact is amply justified, if we consider the effects produced by its operation.—Our population has doubled---furnishing sixty thousand seamen, who have furlled the American canvass in every port on the globe---who have anchored the American oak in every cove on the map of the world. Our navigation has increased from a few thousand to twelve hundred thousand tons—Manufactures have taken root, and will continue to flourish with a little artificial heat--Our exports and imports have increased from trifles to al-

most countless millions ; in their circulation filling the veins of finance with that abundance, which has produced such sound health in the body — politic ; but which will ever sicken, when these vital fluids are dried up.—Here would we draw a veil around the late period in the annals of our ~~prosperity~~^{prosperity}, when commerce lay almost breathless at our wharves—when French Decrees and British Orders in Council were ready to entomb her in the grave of confiscation.—Agriculture sighed—Silence usurped the dominion of the forest—and the music of the hammer, the anvil, the axe and the adz ceased to charm the anxious ear of listening echo. But the day of adversity has past. The bulletin of the nineteenth of April proclaimed commerce convalescent—that of the tenth of June announced her lungs free to inhale the gales of the ocean. Let us unite, one and all, to preserve her health—to protect her, and her rights against every onset ; considering commerce as the *sheet anchor* of our prosperity ; which if lost, our national greatness may *go adrift* ; considering “the unity of government, which constitute us “one people, as a main pillar in the edifice of our “real independence.” Let us, “as a band of brothers” join to expand our commerce, by giving elasticity to her springs ; to preserve our union by *binding up our morals in the silken bands of religion*. Imitate the example of those eminent worthies, who have lately attempted to *blend* the different shades of opinion .

rather than dip them in a deeper dye. For opinion cannot, like a galley slave, be chained to the oar of uniformity. Nature herself delights in masquerade. In Winter she dresses in her long white robe. In Spring and Autumn she appears in dishabille—and we now behold her in the chequered plaid of Summer. But in all this variety her object is the same. Providence always guides her to the temple of happiness. Would to heaven the path of every opinion led to the same sanctuary.

Our happy situation will not appear the less enviable, should we cross the Atlantic, and contrast our security with the various fortune of Europe. Go with me to Constantinople. Behold a Grand Seignior elevated to power by the poniard of sedition ; trembling lest its point should next be buried in his own breast. Enter a Turkish Divan—there behold men in the character of magistrates, like Aaron's rod, when cast before Pharaoh, becoming *devouring serpents* ! View the Emperor of the West, trampling in the dust the government of Spain ; while his generals are nursing the liberties of her people on the point of the bayonet. Imagine him driving the steeds of war along the banks of the Danube. Yes—perhaps on this day entering Vienna, and alighting from the car of conquest upon the steps of the Austrian throne. *Behold that Northern light* !—It is the flames of Copenhagen reaching to the skies, and recording the authors of her unhallowed con-

flagration in the concave of heaven—while her blaze reflects on the isles in the Baltic ; and may illumine the dreary prison of the Swedish King, as he reads his sentence pronounced by his country—But scenes like these shall be excluded from the hilarity of the day.

Before we close, let us revisit our native shores, and view the FEDERAL CONSTITUTION, just from port with her new Commander at the helm. The *owners* will not turn him ashore at the end of his first cruise, if he steer according to the plain sailing laid down on Washington's Chart—if he *economise the disbursements*, and end his first voyage without a *bottomry-bond*—If, when he send his *lieutenants* to Europe, he look well to their *instructions*. The ship is now tight, staunch, and strong. Let him not *leave her down* too often for repairs ; lest the carpenters may remove some of her *sound timbers*. *The people* will keep an eye to the hands on *Congress deck*—and every sailor that has a *false protection*—that cannot repeat every point in the *Compass* of our Bill of Rights, or sleeps in his watch—we, *their sovereign*, will mark in the *log book* of election. This will spread the oil of unanimity, which will smooth the raging surface of the ocean of party spirit, on which the *Federal Constitution* will ride safe in every storm ; and never have her colours *half mast* on the FOURTH OF JULY.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

The fate of our beloved country is written on that page of futurity, which is seen only by

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HIM, who penned it. But, as we turn over the *leaves* of time, should we find the destruction of her independence decreed—let our prayers be, that the recording angel may write FINIS to her existence.

FINIS.

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