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O R A T I O N,

DELIVERED IN PORTLAND, ⁷¹⁴809

JULY 4th, 1793,

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
INDEPENDENCE of the UNIT-
ED STATES of AMERICA.

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AT the desire of many of the numerous audience, and at the particular request of the respectable Committee, appointed to conduct the affairs of the joyous Festival of the 4th day of July, 1793, the following Oration, delivered before them, is submitted to the inspection and candour of the public.

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A N
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Friends and Fellow Citizens,

REVIVED from the ashes of our ruinous conflagration, can we behold the anniversary of that important day, when we escaped from our subjugation to a transatlantic government, without singular pleasure, or without triumphant joy? Or can we be devoid of a heart felt gratitude to *him*, who, with respect to nations as well as individuals, has the power, and the right, to create and to destroy?

Seventeen times has the globe on which we tread measured its annual orbit, since our worthy Delegates, in Congress assembled, after detailing the intolerable grievances we suffered, under a foreign domination, declared these United Colonies of America free and independent States. The return of the fourth day of July shall, therefore, ever be hailed as the birth day of freedom, in these American climes.

How illustrious was that band of patriots? how worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance? firm was their courage—sublime their wisdom. The pertinence, the weight and energy of the addresses of their excellent predecessors to men of different countries, while they had the highest influence on the colonial sufferers, had convinced mankind of the righteousness and importance of our cause; those only excepted who were blinded by their imaginary interest. We rewarded them with our sincerest praises. But in them was not placed all our confidence. While we strove to prepare for an arduous and dreaded conflict, we devoutly cried to him for aid, who is infinitely superiour to all terrestrial monarchs. We trusted that the justice of Heaven would not see us crushed by the sword of vengeance, drawn by pride against the weak and helpless; nor our equitable claims confounded.

What indeed, on this side heaven, had we, on which we could place any rational hope of succour? Almost totally destitute as we were of the implements of war, and more destitute of men who had experience in martial service; do we not look back with astonishment to the season, when this people dared to engage in the unequal conflict? Awfully were human probabilities thought to be against us, when we rose up in opposition to that nation of Europe, which was most inured to battles and conquest; whose bur-

nished arms have seldom had any considerable respite from the horrid scenes of war. These we presumed to oppose in the field, although they were seconded and assisted, by a formidable host of the mercenary Hessian murderers, and by the blood thirsty savages of the American wilds. Great was the enthusiasm which flamed in the breasts of the oppressed colonists ; and next to miraculous the unity of all ranks, in opposition to arbitrary and tyrannick rule.

Heaven commiserated our distress ; inspired our citizens to rise in arms ; and in mercy provided a generous and illustrious leader to our armies, no less eminent in council than intrepid in the field. Provident of the lives of his troops, and anxious to promote their happiness ; he knew how to annoy and weary our invaders, without risking too much. May his vigorous, persevering, patient and successful services be written in indelible characters on the hearts of grateful Americans. And, at the head of this nation, may he worthily preside, till he shall behold it no longer in its infancy, but one among the most flourishing and opulent in the world. This he will consider as his sufficient reward.

I must not dare to shed a damp upon the joy of this festal day, by calling your attention to any of the mournful tragick scenes which the war presented.— But may the dear memory of those numerous patri-

ots long live in our breasts, who watered the plant of Liberty with their richest blood. And may the warm gratitude of the nation be manifested, by the most substantial tokens, to their dearest connections, so long as they are not beyond the reach of our beneficence.

Rich and manifold are the advantages and blessings attending our liberation and independence: of some of the principal of them you will permit me to remind you.

Instead of being bound by laws enacted by a legislative body on the eastern side of the broad atlantic, where the people are necessarily ignorant of our local circumstances, and who were fond of alleviating their own burdens by increasing ours; we are taxed and governed, by rulers of our own electing, who naturally care for our welfare, and who must expect to bear their part of the public charges, in proportion to their comparative ability. Laws will be accommodated to the exigencies of the whole Union, and of the distinct Commonwealths. Government will be administered, not by those hungry harpies from Europe, put into office by a foreign monarch, to stop their importunate solicitations, without regard to merit or demerit: but by those who are well known and approved by the people, and to them responsible. In cases of dangerous invasion, our defence will not be the secondary concern of a court separated from us by

an ocean of a thousand leagues ; but the primary attention of the most approved politicians and defenders selected from the midst of ourselves.

When we speak of our advantages, that important one should not be forgotten, our being a nation so locally detached from every other civilized part of the world, and from all the powerful nations, that we can perceive little danger of ever being annoyed by their forces. The difficulty of carrying on the operations of war at a great distance from home, may be considered as our safety.

While connected with Greatbritain, the miseries of war were often our lot ; because they were often the lot of that kingdom. In our new situation, we may already observe the advantage of being unconcerned in the police of Europe. Scarcely a nation in that quarter of the world can navigate at all, without danger of falling a prey to their declared enemies ; while the thirteen stripes can traverse the ocean with perfect security, as we are not at war with any nation.

We may add, that the immense duties and incumbrances on our trade, were formerly severe deductions from the gains of industrious Americans ; and impositions unjust, and scarcely supportable. But similar duties, now more wisely and equally laid ; are comparatively but little felt ; and are the means of supporting our excellent form of national government.

The time is arrived, when the sons of Columbia can glory in a national character, respected by mankind. Instead of being afflicted colonies, despised and insulted by their parent state; we are a people as much enlightened, and perhaps as wisely governed, as any now existing on the globe. Our liberties, civil and sacred, are perfectly exercised. These rights of men were never before so happily understood and enjoyed by any nation.

Devout gratitude to heaven should burn within us, while we commemorate these blessed advantages.— And doubtless we ought with pleasure to recollect the friendship of that powerful nation, and of that unfortunate monarch, who made our cause their own, in our late struggle for our rights: who generously made us important loans, at a time when our need was greatest; and when it was uncertain whether we should ever be able to repay them; who furnished formidable fleets and armies gratis, to cooperate with our feeble arms; and to whom we owe, if not our independence itself, yet, at least the shortening of the calamities of a horrid war. Their ships and troops assisted at the taking of the second whole British army which fell into our hands; the consequence of which was a speedy peace. If animosity against the people of a neighbouring island was a motive to this extraordinary beneficence, it was not the less serviceable to us; nor does it less demand our gratitude to heaven.

O Louis! Little didst thou realise what was foretold by some, that thy subjects, fighting by our side to obtain for us the rights of men, would imbibe the spirit of Americans; and so be led to conspire to strip thee of thy despotick rule. Happy had it been for thee—happy, perhaps, for themselves, had they been content with their first revolution. Though degraded from the highest seat of arbitrary power, to the condition of an officer at the head of the executive department; still thou hadst some chance for happiness; which ought by thee to have been more wisely cultivated. But, like Haman's, thy fate was feared, when thou hadst begun to fall.

Not that we mean to justify the bloody measures machinated against thee, and many others, by a self-created assembly; a club which has had, it seems, too much influence over the delegated rulers of France; contrary to the dictates of conscience; contrary to those of political wisdom, and of common sense.

Unhappy Republick! thy sufferings excite our deep commiseration. If it were possible, how gladly would we deliver thee from persecution, confusion and blood! But alas, thou hast not had the wisdom, or else not the power, to follow those entirely who have afforded thee a good example in changing their government. While we execrate the hostile conduct of despots around thee, and highly approve thy design of gaining and securing;

the rights of men ; we blush at the sanguinary and barbarous proceedings of some of thy citizens. Could nothing appease their rage against thy ci devant King, nor against others who were suspected to be averse to thy noble design ! Nothing short of the lamp iron and the guillotine ? Are they aware how this furious conduct, shouldst thou finally prevail, will weaken the hands of those nations, which, in future, shall wish, and groan, to be freed from the galling fetters of tyrants ? Having thy history before them, will they not be tempted to hug their chains, rather than risk such horrible scenes as attend thy emancipation ?—— But I forbear. Whatever we say of individuals, the faithful historian must, in future, enable us to judge how far we may safely censure, or applaud, thy national conduct.

The introduction of a new government in this country ought to be reflected on with the greater satisfaction, as we did not, so much as in one instance, stain it with the blood of our fellow citizens. Needless and useless severities against enemies ought ever to be avoided. Nor ought political heresy in sentiment, any more than theological, to receive capital punishment : nor perhaps any other.

Behold, ye citizens, the genius of Columbia standing triumphant—“ fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” Justice and

clemency are in her train—her motto this, *Parcere subje-
ctis, et debellare superbos.** She holds the land of liberty—
the glory of the western hemisphere—the asylum and
resort of the persecuted sons of freedom through the
world.

But what will avail our excellent plan of govern-
ment, our freedom, and our boasted privileges, if we
have not the wisdom and the virtue which are requisite
to secure and perpetuate them? We must not expect
to enjoy political happiness in spite of ourselves.
That which is born must be carefully nursed, if we wish
it to arrive to maturity and masculine vigour.

Our form of government, is said, and not without
reason, to be fit only for an enlightened and virtuous
people. Then, while we sedulously court the Muses,
and encourage erudition, be it the ambition of each of
our citizens to cultivate in himself and others every
virtue, which strengthens and adorns humanity.
Let the laws be religiously obeyed, though they are
ordinances of man, for the Lord's sake; and in every
respect, that universal righteousness, which exalts a
nation, steadily pursued and practised.

Instead of adopting the dissipated and enervating
customs of older nations, it is our wisdom to strive to

* Forbear the humble and subdue the proud.

excel in economy, industry and fruga'ity. Thus shall our fair inheritance continue unimpaired, and improving by time, be handed down with advantage remote posterity.

If we glory in our independence, surely it becomes us to conduct ourselves like an independent people. Does it need to be said, that this is not to pursue the insipid fashions, and ape the follies, of those distant nations who live in comparative thraldom? It is not to neglect the advantages given us by God and nature, and strive to shine and glitter in those plumes, which are the marks of slavery.

We should rather be content with the products of our native country, and even glory in arraying ourselves in manufactures of our own. Our various soils should receive a more judicious and spirited cultivation; which will be found capable of producing, not only the necessaries of life in abundance, but most of those curious fruits and luxurious productions, to procure which we imprudently transmit too much of our wealth to remote parts of the globe.

But how are we completely prepared to support and retain our rights, unless care be taken, that our respectability and prowess, as a martial people, be not exchanged for pusillanimity and contemptible weakness? Such debility in our nation would invite the

continued hostilities of the savage aboriginals, from whose incursions our ancestors, in former times, and many of our nation of late, have so severely suffered, And if any thing could, this would tempt some of the transatlantick nations to insult or invade us.

The use of arms should, therefore, be encouraged, and the military art learned by the young. I flatter myself there is not at present a total neglect of this, in any of the States. There surely is not in that, of which we are a part. The officers of our regiment of militia enjoy the pleasure of observing, that at least one of its companies are laudably and zealously improving themselves in military skill. As in honour of the day they are present, it is presumed the audience will not take it amiss, if we bestow on them a word of congratulation and applause. Struck with the uniformity of your neat and brilliant appearance, and pleased with your exact manœuvres, we cordially wish prosperity to your band. While others consume too much of their time in mere trifling and play, we trust you will proceed with your manly exercises, in your hours of leisure, till you arrive to the greatest perfection. We anticipate for you, in our expectation, the character of Ancient and Honourable. Animated by the noblest patriotick motives, may you be prepared for important service, that if providence should ever call you to defend your country's rights, you may acquit yourselves with ability and honour.

But, while we contemplate and celebrate those temporal good things, with which we find ourselves or our nation blest; we are to remember, that there are blessings to be had, which are far more worthy of our ardent pursuit; as far superiour as heaven is higher than this humble clod of earth; blessings which stand in the nearest connection with our endless felicity. The means of grace and salvation are of incomparably greater importance to us, than the best means and prospects of political happiness. What then shall we say of salvation itself? — While, therefore, we conduct ourselves in life as good citizens of a free and flourishing nation, let us seriously consider that it is from the father of lights that all temporal favours come down to us. And as for these our praise ascends to his throne, let us principally strive to secure to ourselves a citizenship in the new Jerusalem above. So, when all terrestrial things shall pass away, like the clouds after rain, we may hope to possess that building of God; the house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.

