

AN
O R A T I O N,

PRONOUNCED

ON THE 4th JULY, 1805,

AT

P E M B R O K E ;

AT THE REQUEST OF A

CONVENTION OF REPUBLICANS,

FROM VARIOUS PARTS

OF THE

COUNTY OF PLYMOUTH.

BY JOHN DANFORTH DUNBAR.

BOSTON:

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1805.

SIR,

AGREEABLE to a Vote of the respectable meeting assembled at Pembroke for the celebration of our National Festival, the 4th July, we have the honor to present you the thanks of the Convention, for your spirited, elegant, and appropriate Oration, delivered on that occasion, and to request a copy thereof for the press.

July 6, 1805.

ALBERT SMITH,
SETH SPRAGUE,
JESSE DUNBAR.

JOHN D. DUNBAR, Esq. *Plymouth.*

GENTLEMEN,

AGREEABLE to your request, I send you a copy of the Oration pronounced at Pembroke, the 4th July instant. At a time when the severity of criticism is embittered by party spirit; and when the best established facts, the fairest deductions, and the purest intentions, are most liable to malicious misrepresentations, nothing short of the deference I owe to the opinion of my fellow citizens, could have induced a compliance.

I have the honor to be your humble servant,

JOHN D. DUNBAR

July 10, 1805.

To Hon. ALBERT SMITH, SETH SPRAGUE, }
and JESSE DUNBAR, ESQRS. }

AN

O R A T I O N.

IT has been the custom of man from the remotest ages, to commemorate great events by annual festivity and rejoicing. Before the invention of letters, it was the only sanction to the lore of tradition. The monuments of the ancients, their pillars of stone and brick soon crumbled to dust ; the mausoleums of their heroes were soon forgotten ; but annual festivals and appropriate ceremonies perpetuated their memories.

This is the birth day of our nation, and it again finds us celebrating the joyous event. Nine and twenty times has the earth performed its annual revolution, since the Charter of our Independence, penned by Jefferson and subscribed by Hancock, announced freedom and sovereignty to this western world. The heart felt joy and unfeigned pleasure excited by that auspicious occasion will not be for-

gotten while our planet continues its motion—Our lips shall tell them to our children, and they to succeeding generations.

It was then a new era commenced in the history of the world; a nation was born in a day:—thirteen colonies scattered over an immense extent of territory: peopled by the oppressions of the old world, with different nations, tongues and languages, united as a band of brothers, become actuated by one spirit, and, by the permission of Heaven, form a sovereignty by the appellation of the United States of America.

Suffer me, fellow citizens, to congratulate you that this anniversary has returned without a single misfortune to mar its joy. Happy at home and respected abroad, peace and plenty are our companions; an unanimity, too great to be disturbed by opposition, directs our councils and pervades our country. While conscriptions and impressments drain the vital energies of the old world, our militia is a sufficient bulwark: instead of oppressive burthens, our external taxes are equal to the necessary expenses of government. The pillars of our national constitution are erect on their pedestals; one, originally weak, has been amended and strengthened, and the edifice now defies the whole force of its

enemies—Jefferson guards its portals, supported by the love and energy of the good, the virtuous, and the wise.—Enjoying a state of prosperity beyond example, we must not forget the principal military defenders of our rights, who hazarded their lives in the field of battle. The patriotism and bravery of Warren ; the exalted merits of Montgomery ; and the valor and victory of Gates and Lincoln will not be forgotten, while the heights of Charlestown, the plains of Abraham, or the fields of Saratoga, retain their existence. The fame of Greene cannot be excelled ; with the same means, no General, ancient or modern, ever achieved more ; with a handful of men he wrested the Carolinas from the conquering arms of Britain. Cornwallis and Rawdon soon fled the country, and buried themselves in their entrenchments. The God of Battle had decreed to raise his deathless fame above his competitors ; and crown the Hero with distinguished praise. The fame of Washington needs no description.—The victories of Trenton, Princeton, Monmouth, and Yorktown, are the smallest trophies of his glory. He was the soul of battle, and the guide of his people ! all the world knew his worth, his country knew it well ! The pen of the historian will do justice to our Generals and our revolutionary armies ; whose astonishing patience and fortitude under circumstances the

most distressing, have been the admiration of the world.—Fellow Citizens, we yet enjoy all the privileges and immunities of freemen, that were acquired by our soldiers and statesmen.

It is proper on this occasion not only to rejoice and be thankful for what we possess ; but to call to mind the principles on which those rights were established ; and the means by which they may be preserved ; the dangers (if any) which threaten their existence ; and to contemplate that political character, which influenced us as a nation to the acquisition, and without which they cannot be continued. The principles for which we contended, were our natural freedom and equality. The right to worship God as conscience dictates—the right of self government residing in the People—the accountability of all vested with authority to the People—the right of the People to reform, alter, or change their government when their happiness requires it—the right to free and frequent elections—the right to a trial by jury—security from unreasonable searches and seizures—the liberty of the Press—the right to keep and bear arms, and—the right of assembling and consulting for the public good. These are all of them rights of which Britain sought to deprive us : they are the rights which this country

fought to defend, and which were maintained at the point of the bayonet. These principles are totally inconsistent with monarchical, and aristocratical power, of course they are objects of hatred to those who are ambitious of those powers. We must not be surprised to find in this happy country a junto of men adverse to these principles. There is, says the celebrated Marquis Beccaria, "in every human society an effort constantly tending to confer on one part the height of power and happiness ; and to reduce the other to the extreme of weakness and misery." The adventitious influence of wealth, when increased to excess, has as invariably produced that pride and hauteur, that disdain of equality, and that itch of arbitrary power which constitutes the first principle of aristocracy ; as an excessive richness of soil produces rank, noisome and destructive weeds. As it is the business of a wise cultivator to eradicate those destructive weeds, and destroy the very nests of those insects and reptiles which feed upon them ; and to compel this excessive luxuriance to contribute to the support and comfort of life : so it is the object of every free government to counteract the effect of excessive wealth, and compel its too rich possessor to contribute to the public weal ; to discountenance those pimps and parasites who for ever attend the levees of wealth and grandeur, and to

prevent that corruption which none but the wealthy can practise.

Various have been the measures of different Republics, to counteract this propensity so natural to human ambition ; but one fate has attended them all : wealth and corruption have always prevailed, and virtue and republicanism have fallen before them. Neither Lycurgus nor Solon could find a remedy. The attempted equality of property among the Spartans, and the ostracism of the Athenians, both failed of the desired success. All the Republics, ever established, except our own, have fallen victims to this corrupt principle. It extinguishes the principles of piety, virtue, temperance, moderation, industry and frugality, without which, freedom cannot be maintained. Ancient Republics were chiefly confined to cities ; few of the electors were the owners and cultivators of land. When the Roman arms extended their limits, they reduced the conquered countries to provinces. The plunder of those countries accumulated in the hands of a few individuals : corruption prevailed, and to such a degree, that Pompey, Cæsar and Crassus, and their rich connections, were able to purchase a majority of the votes in Rome. Even Cato himself descended to this practice, and publicly purchased the votes

of the people. Rome then afforded an example, never to be forgotten by a free people. Luxury and debauchery were prevalent among all classes of citizens : every favor was to be purchased with money : and the priests of Rome prostituted the rights of religion to the purposes of faction. Amidst this universal corruption of morals, monarchy arose as a necessary appendage of wickedness. After those three men, that Roman junto, had divided the empire of the world ; they quarrelled among themselves. Cæsar prevailed and became sole master of the republic.

Thank Heaven the great body of the people of our Republic are farmers : not only farmers but enlightened and independent farmers : in full possession of the free elective franchise established by our constitutions, with sufficient knowledge to understand those instruments, and appreciate their value. One of our best writers* observes, “ that there is something elevating to the soul in the consciousness of being lord of the soil. It converts the farmer into a species of rural philosopher, by inspiring an honest pride in his rank as a freeman, flattering the natural propensity for personal independence, and

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nourishing an unlimited hospitality and philanthropy in his social character.”

Our almost unlimited extent of territory promises an inexhaustible supply of farms to our encreasing population. The ease with which land is acquired, and the profits of their cultivation has raised the price of labor to such a degree, as almost to invert the obligations of master and servants. A hired servant, in a short time, is able to purchase a farm and live independently. This will prevent those born without a patrimony from becoming the tools of some rich employer.

These observations do not apply to large seaports ; where the extreme inequality of wealth renders one portion of men subservient to the other ; but their weight is too small to be felt in the national scale.

The yeomanry of this country are generally well instructed. Our town schools equally open to the rich and poor, diffuse knowledge so generally to a certain degree, as keeps the people from being their own enemies through ignorance ; and so long as knowledge is generally diffused, tyranny will show his head only to lose it.

The universal freedom of religious sentiments, established by the several state constitutions, and by the constitution of the United States, will always remain an insurmountable barrier to the introduction of arbitrary governments. The priests of an established religion, where the dictates of conscience are silenced by the terrors of human laws and punishments, have never failed, in any country, to assume the attributes of Deity. The power of forgiving sins is claimed by the English clergy. When superstition has so far intralled the mind : when that piety due to God only, is conferred on a fellow worm : when a superstitious reverence of the priest is substituted for the homage of Deity ; then in the language of scripture they worship the creature more than the Creator, who is, over all, God blessed forever. Then the human mind is just fit for a subject of monarchical tyranny ; then the timorous soul, trembling under the joint terrors of *church and state*, loses the fear of God, through fear of man. Base indeed is that mind, that can enjoy an external show of reverence excited by terror. That voluntary respect which is so generally paid to the purity and virtues of our American clergy, must be infinitely more pleasing to a benevolent heart. We can say with Cowper, “we venerate the man whose heart is warm, whose hands are pure, whose doctrine, and whose

life coincident, exhibit lucid proofs, that he is honest in the sacred cause." No proposition is better substantiated than this, that human laws concerning matters of faith may make hypocrites (and of course monarchists,) but never yet could make a christian. One attempt has been made, and that recently, to make religion the stalking horse of junto politics. Robison's Proofs of a Conspiracy, in Europe, to destroy religion and government, were most industriously circulated and commented upon, in this country, by Dr. Morse and others, and spread an alarm little inferior to that of ancient witchcraft. Whether the propagators of these false alarms were seriously ignorant, or maliciously wicked, is uncertain ; but the terror excited was certainly great. The assertions were, that republicans were atheists ; that they propagated their doctrines and principles through the agency of masonic lodges ; that the magic secrecy of the craft covered their diabolical plans from the public eye ; that unless something was done, religion, property, law, liberty and life, would certainly loose their security. In less enlightened times, persecution and tortures would have been the consequence. The steady habits of this country withstood the delusion. The people rejected the calumny as false and unfounded ; and

evinced the truth of that observation of Washington, "give my countrymen time to think and they will determine right." It was not the ignorant alone that were affected by this alarm, it reached our courts and became the subject of a charge to a grand jury.

At this period, those of the junto, who were never even suspected of having much religion, appeared extremely zealous, became the apostles of christianity, and were constantly declaiming against the infidelity of the times; and some of the reverend clergy forgot, or seemed to have forgotten, that *the church was founded on a rock*. This play upon religious feeling and sentiment, like the other measures of the junto failed, and passed off with the occurrences of the day. They well know that hierarchy is an essential pillar in the monarch's palace, and it is to be hoped have learned, that, for this very reason, the palace cannot be built in this country. Some who sacrificed to the Trojan image may have dreamed of the mitre, but it was only a dream.

Another bar to tyranny is our military system, which must be totally changed before our republican constitution can be overthrown. The patriots of '75 considered the right to keep and bear arms

as one of our dearest privileges. The enemies of free government have not been inattentive to the effects of this system ; they tried an experiment to see how the spirit of this country would bear the appearance of standing forces. Under the specious pretence of invasion, they authorised the raising 10,000 men, and volunteers without limits ; well knowing that if the people could endure the sight, and acquiesce in the measure, it would soon supercede the necessity of militia arrangements.

Some of them were so candid as to say that they wanted an army as a rallying point in case of insurrection. The junto could not have tried a more unfortunate experiment. The expenses of this armament, added to the expenses of our infant navy, rendered the 8,000,000 loan, and land tax indispensable. Economy roused, and enquired from whence the invasion was to come ; France and England were busy at home, and neither of them disposed to attack us. Carolina was, indeed, invaded by an old woman or two, but that did not seem a sufficient emergency for supporting an army : public sentiment prevailed, and the army was disbanded, with high encomiums on their patriotism ; for stepping forward on so dangerous an occasion for the defence of their country. Let every friend to his

country encourage the militia, assist and support them ; and they will always remain the dread of tyrants at home, and invaders from abroad. These advantages, peculiar to our own country, will prevent the destruction of our liberties, so long as we are vigilant, and so long as we enjoy the favor of that Almighty Being who has. hitherto, constantly interposed in our behalf.

If it had been possible to have dispensed with party names, on this occasion, it would have been very desirable ; but the manners of our political enemies renders them unavoidable. The word federalist is so indefinite, as not to be a proper name for any party. Eight tenths of those who act and vote on the federal side in this Commonwealth, I believe, are genuine republicans.

But they are not yet convinced of the views of those they follow ; and they are loth to withdraw their confidence from those they have once trusted ; but they have no views but of supporting the freedom insured to them by the constitution.

That class of men, that I have called the junto, are the leaders of all who are called federalists : they point out their measures and direct their motions.

Their object has been to invest the chief magistrate with kingly power ; and to give the senate aristocratic permanency. To accomplish this, the measures hinted at have been pursued ; but fortunately for us they have not been attended with success. William Cobbett, a secret agent of the British in this country, and, as he declares, most intimately connected with those in favor of monarchy ; asserts, that the merchants and speculators constituted, what he calls, the British party. (Whether the votes of our sea ports corroborate this statement every one will judge.) That Gen. Hamilton, whose openness and candor never disguised his sentiments, was looked to as the head of this party no one can doubt. The last words that Hamilton wrote are clear evidence that he never relinquished the hope of his favorite system till the fatal ball destroyed the hope of life, and prevented the expected crisis. But as those who call themselves federal republicans deny the charge made against their leaders ; I will quote a passage from Cobbett's sixth number of the *Rush Light*, published in England since his return to that country. Cobbett relates the proceedings of the junto at the time of the black cockade. He says that they instigated public addresses and persecution : that they invented the stories of tubs with false bot-

toms, ladies' toilets, and taylor's shops, to alarm the country : that the objects of the Hamilton party were an alliance offensive and defensive with Great Britain, and war with France ; the president to be continued for life, and the senate empowered to appoint a family in which that dignity should be hereditary.—To accomplish this, a council was called at Trenton.

“ To that assembly (says Cobbett) unfortunately for us was called a certain cautious chief, whose approbation was by some, thought absolutely necessary, he was, as usual, for slow circumspective measures and could not be brought to see the necessity of an immediate rupture with France, a coalition with Britain, or the propriety of their introducing an hereditary chief magistrate against the sense of the republicans.”

“ Among those who attended this celebrated council not one joined with him in opinion ; but the old gentleman, and some others, thought it absolutely necessary to yield to it, because no scheme, of such magnitude could be accomplished, without his approbation.”

If these are facts, who is there that can doubt that a conspiracy once existed to destroy the most repub-

lican features in our constitution? That Cobbett was in habits of intimacy with the Hamiltonians, and their confidential printer: that his paper was eagerly sought for and read by them, in all parts of the union, is not to be denied. Well was it, for this country, that Washington the cautious chief, could not be brought into their measures. If those projects had been attempted, foreign and civil wars, with all their horrors, would have been the consequence. The necessary deduction from these facts are, that the federal leaders are not friendly to our constitutional government: that they are and have been acting in direct opposition to the advice of Washington; and if the author I have quoted, is to be believed, they were exceeding glad to have him resign; and we know that their practice has been in direct hostility to all his political maxims. Nor do they agree any better with the injunctions of our state constitution.

The constitution establishes a liberal suffrage to protect the rights of the people.

They wish to confine suffrage to a few, the better to control the many.

The constitution establishes a militia.

They want a standing army.

The constitution directs economy that the people may be happy.

They wish for excises lest the people should be too happy.

The constitution declares the people sole guardians of their own rights.

They declare the people their own worst enemies.

The same party have asserted an almost exclusive claim to the title of being christians. Shall we gather this from their political writings, and do they breathe the spirit of charity and brotherly love? do they believe that book which forbids them to speak evil of the ruler of the people? do they believe that the Most High ruleth, that it is he that putteth down one and setteth up another? do they believe that the powers that be, are ordained of God; and that they that resist the powers, resist the ordinances of God? Let them recollect what they have said of that great patriot and statesman, the worthy, the virtuous and amiable Jefferson, and then let them examine if the poison of asps is not under their lips.

Ever since they lost their influence in congress, the last hope of monarchy rested on the Eastern States ; the dissolution of the union was necessary to effect this project. No tale, however false and malicious, has been left untold, that could excite a heart burning jealousy between the New England and Southern States.

The Delaware was already designated as a boundary. Washington foresaw and foretold this attempt : he charged us, as we loved our liberty, to frown indignantly on those, who should make it : and to distrust their patriotism, who in any quarter should attempt to weaken the bands of our union.*

In pursuance of this plan, the popularity of Jefferson was an obstacle that must be surmounted ; they accordingly bent their whole force against it.

On a luminary so resplendent, every speck is easily seen. To the distempered eye of faction every object appears discoloured : no wonder then that they should think they saw blemishes even in the character of Jefferson ; especially, when viewed through the foul glass of a Callender. But, not-

* Vide Washington's Farewell Address.

withstanding all the deceivers and deceived can say, Jefferson, by the wisdom and moderation of his measures, has united the affections of his countrymen to a wonderful degree. The cup of conciliation, filled with the nectar of charity, has constantly been offered to his enemies : the wild savages of the wilderness have yielded to its balm^v influence.

If any are not able to enjoy themselves in this land of liberty ? If they cannot be happy because others are happy ? If an economical administration displeases them ? they are not without a remedy. By only visiting Spain or England, they may pay excises to their full satisfaction, and tythes into the bargain ; and taste the sweets, feel the energy, and see all the beauties of monarchy, aristocracy and hierarchy. If they wish to find the freedom of the press strictly regulated ; the imperial court of Napoleon will be perfectly to their taste ; and besides they may learn to speak respectfully of the ruling power. In fine ; they will find all the blessings, they wish to bestow upon their country in such rich abundance, and so well established, that their desires must be inordinate, if they are not satisfied. Further, they will leave us to our deserved punishment : to all the plagues of freedom ; the plague of

governing ourselves, of light taxes, of speaking and writing freely, of thinking and believing freely ; of reaping the fruits of our own industry, without the help of an excise master ; and of pursuing our own happiness, and enjoying all the good things that Providence may bestow. Though deprived of their company, we will still exult in our own situation, and exclaim thrice happy is our country, her laws are the laws of kindness administered by the wisdom and mildness of an angel.

May the union of this Nation be preserved ; may her prosperity be continued, and may the harmony of mutual affection unite ALL her sons as a band of brothers. May that heartfelt, tender sympathy, which once knit together the souls of David and Jonathan, soften and melt their hearts, and supercede the rancor of party spirit. Remember that united Columbia is the “ last hope of the world.” Here freedom has fixed her habitation, and here she shall dwell. She shall not be lost through sloth and drowsiness : the Philistines shall neither shear her locks, nor bind her hands. She shall not grind to the mighty : she shall not “ add to the number of bad examples.” Her liberty shall be perpetual. She shall remain a sanctuary ; to which

the oppressed of all nations may flee and be in safety : till that period shall arrive when oppression shall cease : when the lion and the wolf shall lose their fierceness ; the asp and the cocatrice their poison, and universal benevolence govern mankind.

FINIS.