

AN  
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED PUBLICLY,

AT BEDFORD, NEW-HAMPSHIRE,

BEFORE THE

Washington Benevolent Society

IN THAT PLACE,

JULY 4th, 1814.

BY ISAAC GATES.

— *O miseri, quæ tanta insania, cives ?*

*Creditis avectos hostes ? Aut ulla putatis*

*Dona carere dolis Danaum ?* —

*Accipe nunc Danaum insidias et crimine ab uno*

*Disce omnes.*

VIRGIL.

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# ORATION.



WHILE many nations meet to celebrate their anniversaries, which serve to perpetuate the deeds of some conqueror or chief; we claim the pre-eminent privilege of celebrating this day, because it was the birth-day of a Nation. But how unlike the golden days which are past, and remain only in melancholly remembrance! How cheerful and how elated have been all classes in community on this anniversary! So splendid and great was the event which happened on this day, that to be silent, and not partake of the usual festivities of the fourth of July, was considered little less than a crime.

So often has the story been told, of the battles, the blood and treasure, which sealed the liberties of this country, that I shall not attempt to recount them. They are well known to many of this audience, and well detailed in history.

From those days which invited gaiety and cheerfulness in every face, and spread joy and plenty through the land, we turn to melancholly and national distress! Why do we behold a general gloom throughout our country? Why do

we not witness those testimonials of joy, which were so usual and frequent for our Nation's prosperity? Is it because, that we are fatiated with good things, and have ~~no~~<sup>no</sup> longer any relish for the pure joys of Freemen? Is it because, that "our flocks and herds have been cut off," or that the "earth has refused to yield her increase?" No, my fellow-citizens, these have not caused this general gloom and distress.

Let us advert to the golden days of America, when our President was WASHINGTON; and take a short view of his policy, and contrast that with the policy of later times; and the causes of the sore and distressing evils, under which we labor, will be sufficiently apparent.

At the adoption of the Constitution of the General Government, our Nation was poor, and involved in debt; without system, without finance. We had only good habits, and an accurate discernment, which selected the best men to office. But by the policy of WASHINGTON, and his companions in counsel, Government was organized, and a financial system formed, which enriched our treasury, and by degrees paid off the public debt, restored confidence at home, and commanded respect abroad. Treaties were made, which protected our commerce, enriched our merchants, and rewarded the enterprize of all classes of citizens. The principle was then, *Do*

*justice to other nations, before you require it at their hands; and in time of peace, make preparations for the contingences of war.*

At the commencement of the French revolution, while so many of our citizens were attached to her cause and interest, and possessing strong antipathies toward Great-Britain from the collisions of the late war, our Chief dared consult the true interests of his country. Amid difficulties, more complicated and weighty than have occurred at any subsequent period, by the observance of a strict neutrality with the belligerent nations, he conducted our political ship in safety: He quelled insurrection at home,† which was stirred up and promoted by some, who are now, under a new order of things, rewarded and paid for treason and rebellion, by the most lucrative and honorable offices which are in the power of the Executive to bestow.

The offices in the different departments of Government were judiciously selected, and the fidelity with which they performed their respective duties remains yet without parallel. For twelve years this good order of things continued: Our revenue greatly increased; a navy was created, and respectable preparations made to enlarge it; so that at no far distant period, by a yearly application of a portion of our revenue to the in-

† *Whisky insurrection in Pennsylvania.*

crease of our naval establishment, there would have been ample protection for "*free trade and sailors rights.*" Our foreign relations were propitious in prospect, and eligible indeed.

But the temper of the people, convulsed by artificial excitements, could not be appeased without a change of rulers, and a change of measures. These changes have been effected.

The third President [Jefferson] came to office under the most propitious circumstances. He found an overflowing treasury, and individual wealth spread through the country; he publicly declared to the nation, that he found us "*in the full tide of successful experiment.*" He soon began a new order of things. He hurled from office all within the reach of his power, the well-trying and faithful servants of the public, and put in their places those who had, with most virulent and unqualified abuse, opposed the twelve years administration of his predecessors. Our naval establishment was wholly neglected. A commercial treaty,\* which in its operation enriched the country, and in no particular derogated from our national honor and independence, expired. Great Britain offered a renewal of it, and this offer was rejected with disdain. Another treaty was made in 1806,† with that nation, highly advantageous and honorable to this country; and this treaty Mr.

\* *Jay's treaty, so called.* † *By Munroe and Pinkney.*

Jefferson refused to lay before the Senate for their ratification.

Our foreign relations were soon clothed in mystery. Bitter complaints were uttered against one belligerent, and an almost fullen silence observed toward the other, without recommending measures to repel aggression, or secure the country from danger. Under a pretence of protecting our rights upon the ocean, the iron <sup>rod</sup> of death was laid upon our commerce, to the <sup>ruin</sup> of our merchants, and the distress of all classes of men in community: and of the same class and nature were the non-intercourse and non-importation laws. The distresses brought upon our own nation by these cruel measures, were ten-fold greater than they inflicted upon the nation against which they were intended to operate. But to doubt of the utility of these measures was a crime, and to express this doubt was a sin never to be pardoned. He was a *tory* and *traitor* indeed, who could doubt of Executive infallibility. For years, these measures claimed as much veneration with a portion of the people, as *Juggernaut* among the self-devoted Hindoos.†—On a sudden, they have been abandoned, and their repeal has been equally considered as a mighty effort of wisdom.

Millions have been lavished upon the structure of Gun Boats, as the most efficient protection of

† For a description of this idol, and the devotion paid to it, see Dr. Buchanan's *Christian Researches in Asia*.

commerce, when in reality their object was only to carry into effect these odious measures, and drive a portion of our citizens from their accustomed and lucrative occupations upon the ocean.

The wrongs done us by the belligerent powers of Europe, we will not palliate or deny. Their decrees and edicts have been a violation of our rights, and called for redress. But have not the counsels of our nation provoked their existence and continued severity for years, by a cringing, a shuffling conduct, wholly irreconcilable with the duty of a declared neutral power? Who will deny, that great partiality, and abject submission, have been manifested toward one, while "mole hills have been magnified into mountains" toward the other? Who will deny, that every artifice has been employed to excite the passions against Great Britain, while the outrages of France have been passed over in mysterious silence? Why have the calls, for information concerning our relations with France, been refused in Congress, while our Executive was lavishing thousands upon a poor wandering miscreant,† to procure excitements against Great Britain? Who can reconcile the repeal of the decrees of France, with the President's proclamation announcing the end of their existence? Mr. Madison declared to the people, that they were repealed in 1810; and

† *John Henry.*

Napoleon himself says, that they continued to 1811, in a decree not made public till 1812; and in addition to all this, our merchants can verify, that these same decrees were in practical operation during these periods! Who has ever heard any serious complaint from Mr. Madison, or his adherents, upon this business? Do you think that such gross deception in Great Britain would have passed off with such silent indifference?—Look back to the time when commerce, at the nod of the French minister, was interdicted between this country and the island of Hayti, whereby a lucrative branch of trade was lost to the nation; when this island was by its inhabitants declared free and independent, and at which time France herself had not a single vessel in any of its harbors, nor a soldier upon its land.—Why did not the President acknowledge Don Onis, a minister sent by the Provisional Government of Spain to this country? Was it not for fear of offending Napoleon, the ally of our Executive, who had given Spain to his brother Joseph, when it should be conquered? Notice the remarkable coincidence of measures, the complete concert of system pursued by our Executive and the Emperor of France. In the mean time we were told, that our measures were intended to operate equally on both belligerents: yet Bonaparte, this “*super-*



*eminent statesman,*" \* (as the now Vice-President of the United States called him) publicly approved of them, and made a decree under pretence of assisting us to carry them into effect!—My Friends, does this look like the policy of WASHINGTON?

In 1794, upon the suggestion of Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Madison introduced resolutions into Congress, proposing a law, the effects of which, in mischief, would have been barely outdone by the new order of things. The same predilection for France was upon the face of them. The object of these resolutions was defeated; and commerce was permitted to visit our shores, and enrich the nation, till her enemies had obtained more strength in the public will.

The immortal *AMES* predicted, with the precision of a true prophet, the evils which have so grievously afflicted our country. He well knew the antipathies and attachments of the men who had usurped public confidence. From avowed principles, he calculated their effects. He warned his countrymen of the impending danger: but his warning was not heeded. To do away the force of his predictions and reasonings, the presses in the interest of the Administration held him up as a political traitor, and an enemy to his country, till the public mind was prepared to disregard his writings, and condemn his principles,

\* See Gerry's Speech to the Massachusetts Legislature.

without examination. This has been the fate of the labors of the best men of the age. In old time, this was the fate of *Aristides*, the celebrated Athenian, who was banished his country for being called "*The Just.*"—*Socrates* was condemned, because he taught a more rational Religion than was believed by the common people. These were done in general assembly. The people never repent of the evils which they bring upon themselves, till they sorely feel the distresses of their own misconduct and folly. The Athenians soon recalled *Aristides*, when common dangers and common calamities had restored their corrupted reason to a correct judgment. They severely lamented the cruel death of *Socrates*, and raised to him statues to perpetuate his name and celebrate his virtues.

The destruction of commerce was not enough under this new order of things. WAR has been added, with all its horrors, and an enormous load of taxes, to lengthen out the catalogue of evils, under a pretence that the British have impressed our seamen, and instigated the savage tribes to hostilities upon our frontiers, and continued in force her Orders in Council after the repeal of the Decrees of France. The former charge has been enormously exaggerated; and in support of the two latter, no evidence has been adduced. If the impressment of seamen had been so great as has

been represented, we should naturally expect that those sections of our country, which furnish our seamen, would be the first to complain: but the case is far otherwise—The people of Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, and Vermont, who have not a single inch of seaboard, and perhaps have not a single vessel that ever swam upon the ocean, “cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war;” for “*our seamen have been impressed!*”—Should the people of Nantucket, or Martha’s Vineyard, complain, and wish to deluge our land in blood, and say, that it is because the savages have committed outrages and murders upon our western frontiers, while the inhabitants on those frontiers declare that they have been in peace and safety: which of them would you believe? those who had every opportunity to know whether these outrages had been committed; or these moon-struck Islanders, who knew nothing of the subject? If the savages had committed these outrages upon our defenceless inhabitants, chastise them, without leaping the gulf of European politics, and a British war.

More than two years have elapsed since the declaration of this inglorious contest. What has our land army done to humble Great Britain, and what has it not done to disgrace the country? But the sinking honors of the Nation have been borne up by our gallant navy. Though small,

Its achievements will long continue the admiration of the world, and the boast and pride of America. But what are we to gain by this war? When will the redoubtable Wilkinson, and his companions in arms, scale the walls of Quebec? Or when will the "hopeless invasion of a wilderness country" be abandoned, and protection given to our defenceless maritime frontier? These are not to be accomplished by the men of the present day. By our suffrages, we must obtain peace, if peace can honorably be obtained; and remove from office those men, who are so weak in counsel, and contemptible in arms. The disciples of WASHINGTON must be restored to power, before our country will be restored to prosperity.

All classes of men begin to deprecate the measures of Administration, and sigh for a change of rulers. But so deeply rooted is party prejudice, and so much higher do men estimate their avowed opinions upon public affairs than they do the happiness of the country, that a change of Administration is precarious. A portion of community had rather cast the blame upon those who have for years manfully raised their voices against rash and futile measures, and warned the people of the common danger. Contemptible indeed must be the energies of our army, if a free and peaceable discussion of public measures

Why our fire-sides can paralyze their efforts! Why have not our naval heroes, by the same means, been arrested in their career of glory? Because they were men of honor, enriched by science, and possessed of a spirit which was not excited only by *pay and rations!*

The great events in Europe furnish subjects of deep speculation to the politician. He who overturned thrones, "led kings captive, and bound nobles with bands of iron," "is humbled to the dust." Nations which have long groaned in abject servitude, are now to be restored to their ancient privileges of self-government; and for a time enjoy the comforts of peace. Shall we not rejoice, and congratulate these nations on their emancipation? Or shall we mourn, that the despoiler of Europe is shorn of his strength! The man of honorable and Christian feelings cannot lament the annihilation of the power of Bonaparte. Yet a hollow murmur resounds through the country, and keen regret is felt, that his power is no more. Some wish that he had continued to help us bring this disastrous war to a close, and for a few years dispense to us his favors. Moral obligation undoubtedly enjoined upon Bonaparte the task of finishing this war. But of what weight was moral obligation with him, who adjusted all controversies with the sword? History,

within the whole compass of her annals, does not exhibit a monster more cruel and remorseless.

That the downfall of Bonaparte may baffle the schemes of Administration, we cannot deny. We cannot say that the unprofitable contest, in which we are engaged, will not be prolonged by it.— But the friend of his country would ask, how would the business be adjusted, with this scourge of man, after the power of Great-Britain should be crippled? From the avowed sorrow of Administration, and its adherents, at this event, much more is acknowledged than we dared even to suspect. We cannot but start with horror at the precipice which we have escaped. So imperfectly did these men understand the character of Bonaparte, that they supposed he would help us destroy the power of Great-Britain, and not require our own subjugation as the price of his favors. Look at Genoa, Switzerland, Holland, and Venice, and there you will see the price demanded for *his kindness!* What nation ever joined him, and prospered? With tears of contrition for their political sins, these nations have come forward and declared to the world their own folly and Napoleon's perfidy. What folly, what madness, must have chained the destinies of this once happy country to the fortunes of him, who for years has drenched the soil of Europe with blood, and clothed her inhabitants with

sackcloth! Has the Genius of our Forefathers departed, and left us the only set of stupid admirers of baseness and crime? Forbid it, Heaven! Our cup of bitterness has been filled, and we have drank of it to the very dregs.

What must the friends of the Constitution and the interests of our country do, when an organized portion of the citizens, and a set of adopted outcasts, labor incessantly to impress upon the public mind a belief, that those, who fought our battles, and spent the prime of life in the "tented field," to obtain our independence, and struggled hard in council to frame and adopt our Constitution, are now striving, at the close of life, to destroy the labors of manhood? When a belief is adopted without reason, no deductions of reason can do it away.

That we may know who are practically and strongly attached to *Republican* principles, it may be useful to examine and ascertain what are their requisite ingredients. Think not that an instrument upon parchment can perpetuate our liberties. The *moral habits* and *religious principles* of the *PEOPLE* must support our Constitution. Temperance, industry, sobriety, and a portion of correct information, are the props and pillars of a *Republican* Government. He who has not these requisites, let his professions be what they may, is practically sapping the principles of our Consti-

tution. How strange, then, that men, who in practice are at war with every principle which supports a Republican Government, should have the impudence to denounce, and load with reproaches, those who possess every qualification the reverse of their own? Their *republicanism* consists in a blind and obstinate attachment to the powers that be, and an inveterate hatred to the established laws and usages of civilized nations.— Can such men be a blessing in their day? Or will they not set an example, and enforce it by negative precept, which will cause our land to mourn by generations yet unborn?

To check the growing evils of the day, the most that the disciples of WASHINGTON can do, is to disseminate correct information among the *People*: and it should be their peculiar care to regard the rising generation, and instruct our Youth in the principles of sound Christian morality—raise in their minds a desire to know what is curious and useful. Let them learn the principles of Government from some elementary work, and not from the licentious and corrupt presses of the present day. In time, the moral habits of the Nation will be improved; and vice, though in high places, will lose a share of its admirers. Never give up the right and the practice of free and manly discussion of public measures; “for this is essential to liberty.” The man who corrects one bad habit



among the people, does more toward the support of our Republican Government than he who writes scores of pamphlets, and delivers volumes of lectures, to keep party men in power. When the public mind is correct, the man in office, who would dare commit violence upon it, must be hardened indeed—he must have a presumptuous rashness to enable him to meet the tribunal of public opinion.

From the licentiousness of the press, much has been lost, and much is to be dreaded. Foreigners come into this country, smarting and bleeding with the stripes of merited justice, exasperated and mad at the inflictions of the law, set up their presses, and control public opinion. They take the lead in politics, and become our official organs. They blazon forth the wrongs done us by Great Britain, strangely magnified and distorted by the mirror of their own *backs*. What contempt must these beings secretly harbor, for the taste, judgment, and stability, of the people of the United States! Some of our native citizens are so strangely ambitious, that they are determined not to be outdone in infamy. The vilest passions in the human heart have been put in commotion, and a poison infused through the body politic; and its deleterious effects have raised, and caused to float on the surface, the most putrid and corrupted bodies: and this poison has become a

kind of *ordeal*, which all must pass to find the way to office.

*My Fathers !*

You have been carried, amid innumerable difficulties, through the sea and the wilderness, and hoped that you had gained a goodly heritage; you have cause to felicitate yourselves, that you have enjoyed a measure of prosperity, which you cannot promise to your offspring. Yet let no effort be left untried, to restore soundness to the public mind. Call around you your children, unfold to them the sacrifices, the price, for National Independence—your labors in the field, and the treasures expended—the great efforts made to establish our excellent Constitution—the great benefits resulting from a wise administration of it—and our Nation's loss by a deviation from the course marked out by our first President. If they will not hear you, you will go to the grave with the self-approbation of having performed your duty.

*Young Men and Youth !*

You have a gloomy prospect before you. Yet you are not left without hope and the prospect of doing good to your country. You have the shining examples of our Fathers to stimulate you, and direct your course. Every thing depends on your exertions to restore prosperity to the country, and prolong the Independence of the Nation.

Listen not to those Absaloms, who sit by the way side to steal away your hearts; but cultivate the social and Christian virtues; venerate the civil and religious institutions of the country: and hearken to the counsels of experience. Soon you will be called to act publicly upon the theatre of life; and it is for you to say, whether you will be Freemen, or *slaves*.—prosperous and happy, or poor and miserable. There is a trust committed to you, which you hold in charge for generations yet unborn! Should you neglect the means of education, and cease to inquire into the nature and supports of the Constitution, posterity will charge you with a crime, the remembrance of which, time can never efface. Cling to the Constitution; as our political ark, and not forsake it, so long as a vestige of it shall remain in existence.

The talents which are given us are not wholly our own: all are bound to contribute a proportionable share for the public good. By a careful attention to the duties of life, and a confident hope of success, our labors cannot fail of their object. The Almighty Disposer of events will not suffer his children “to labor in vain, and spend their strength for nought,” unless “they forget his precepts, and disobey his commands.”—Let us say to the world, that future generations shall celebrate this day with an increase of political blessings, and hand them down till political establishments shall be no more: if they do not, we declare, in the face of Heaven, the fault shall not be ours.