

1749:9:
A N
O R A T I O N,

**DELIVERED IN THE
EPISCOPAL CHURCH,**

**ON THE
Fourth of July, 1802.**

**BY ALFRED W. GRAYSON,
A MEMBER OF THE ALEXANDRIA DEBATING
SOCIETY.**

Alexandria:
PRINTED BY COTTON AND STEWART.

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1802.

ALEXANDRIA

Debating Society,

July 5, 1802.

RESOLVED, *That the thanks of the SOCIETY be presented to Mr. A W. GRAYSON, for the Oration delivered by him this day, and that he be requested to furnish a copy of the same for publication.*

By Order of the Society,

JOHN HOOFF, *Secretary.*

O R A T I O N.

FRIENDS & FELLOW-CITIZENS.

IT is so much the fashion of the present day, to make apologies for inability in speaking, that I should deviate from a precedent, universally established, were I not to mention, that my reluctance to appear before you, is

heightened by the consideration of my talents being inadequate to the discharge of the duty which your partiality has assigned. Perhaps, there never was a time when there was greater necessity than the present of claiming your indulgence. The importance of the subject and a just and thorough conviction of the incompetency of my abilities, are sufficient motives, with me, to approach with diffidence the performance of a duty, gratuitously conferred on me by the members of an infant, though flourishing institution.



WHILE, with sentiments of profound respect, I return you, gentlemen of the society, my grateful acknowledgments for this mark of your favor, I cannot but reflect, that the honor you have this day conferred on me might have been bestowed on many of your number, who could have done more ample justice to the subject.

WHO can but hail with gratulatory welcomes the returning *natal* day of American independence? This was the day on which our progenitors, unmindful of the dangers that awaited their determination, ushered into political ex-

istence, a great and enlightened nation. The return of this day, brings to our fond remembrance, the hardest struggle in the cause of liberty, recollected in the calendar of time. In recurring to the cause which produced this memorable aera of American emancipation, we see on the one hand a brave and industrious people injured and oppressed, resolving to throw off the ignominious yoke of a foreign despotic power, and determining to enjoy the inherent and invaluable immunities of human nature. On the other hand, we see the nerve of action strung to oppress, by a *nation*, which anterior to that unfortunate period, had been uniformly celebrated for justice and magnanimity.

The vices and turbulent passions of mankind make governments necessary. But it never was intended by a beneficent creator, that one nation should rule another, at the distance of three thousand miles; much less that it should govern in an arbitrary and tyrannical manner. The accumulated wrongs sustained by the American colonies, pointed out to them the necessity of either obtaining a mitigation of their grievances, or renouncing all connection with the British nation. The right of representa-

tion had been denied them ; and their imports had been charged with exorbitant duties, which, in the end, amounted to almost an entire prohibition of the conveniences of life. Envy, nurtured in the bosom of despotism, saw our rising prosperity with jealousy ; and revenge, originating from opposition and aided by power, prepared to *hurl* destruction on our devoted country ! Sure if calm deliberation and undaunted fortitude are necessary in any affair of importance, in none could they have been more so, then to our fathers in the instance before us. Pourtray to yourselves, fellow-citizens, the unfortunate situation of your ancestors, branded with the opprobrious appellation of rebels, and denounced enemies to their country. Yet, with courage commensurate to the uprightness of their intentions, they bravely determined to resist tyranny and defend the rights bestowed upon them by their creator. This determination, dictated by reason and sanctioned by the approbation of freemen, drew upon America, the dire vengeance of Great Britain, Where were the means which could enable the Americans to support a long and bloody war ? Here, fellow-citizens, was an explicit manifestation of the fortitude of your forefathers. Oppo-

sed in the conflict to the public credit and riches of Great Britain, the contest, we must confess, was unequal. But with a perseverance which well deserves the appellation of magnanimity, they met the impending storm with undaunted bravery. Determined to live free, or die in the glorious cause of liberty, they prepared to devote themselves to the good of their country; confident that whatever misfortune might befall them, it was better to die as martyrs to freedom, than to live in a state of oppression and servitude. Whilst this struggle for liberty was advocated by the philanthropists throughout the world, with the fervency of enthusiasm, it was unjustly stigmatised by many, as a measure proceeding from, and supported by rebellion and faction. The Americans had indulged themselves in the illusory hope that the contest would not have been so lengthy. Anterior to the commencement of the revolution, they wished, by a candid exposition of their grievances, to get them redressed. But visionary were their expectations. The British nation, long accustomed to the passive obedience of her transmarine dominions, could not brook the supposition, that the Americans were to be conditional slaves. Unconditional servitude, or extermina-

tion were the alternatives offered to a brave and faithful people. 'Tis unnecessary for me to inform you, fellow-citizens, that our fathers determined to meet the latter, rather than accept the former.

A war of extermination followed. Our country was invaded by men experienced in military tactics;—our ports were shut up by the nautical superiority of our opponents;—our commerce languished;—our manufactures were destroyed;—our large and flourishing cities were burnt to the ground;—our fertile fields were desolated by fire and devastation;—our churches were polluted by the sanguinary excesses of the British soldiery :—Those places, which had been considered as sanctuaries for the public exercise of religion, were approached by persons, who had just embrued their hands in the innocent blood of their fellow-creatures. Our enemies, influenced by an infatuated zeal to establish the domination of Great-Britain over America, endeavoured, by a mixture of feigned lenity and shameful severity, to convince the latter, that by not acknowledging the superiority of the former they acted diametrically opposite to their interest;—But a just sense of

the wrongs which our forefathers had sustained, urged them to persevere :—Their all was at stake ;—they had passed the Rubicon ;—it was too late to recede—Successful ;—happiness and liberty awaited them and their progeny :—But on the contrary, had they been defeated in their expectations of liberating their country, ignominy and disgrace, the constant concomitants of misfortune, would have been the portion of men, whose strenuous exertions, in the cause of liberty, called forth plaudits of admiration from the friends of humanity throughout the world ! Such, fellow-citizens, was the unfortunate and forlorn situation of your ancestors at the beginning, and for a long time after the commencement of the American revolution.

It will not be necessary for me to enter into a trite recapitulation of the historical events connected with the revolution. You all know the issue of the different battles fought between those emissaries of despotism and American freemen. You all recollect with exultation the fortitude of your countrymen in the hour of danger. You have not forgotten their magnanimity in the hour of victory. By the influential assistance of France, the infant republic,

weathered the storm. The French nation, commiserating our calamitous situation, uniting its interest with the feelings of humanity, afforded us such aid as enabled the American armies to oppose with more success the well disciplined troops of Great-Britain. The splendid and brilliant advantage gained by the coalesced powers of America and France, put at length a fortunate termination to hostilities.—Great-Britain, defeated in her expectations of subjugating the colonies, was tired of a war from which she gained nought but defeat.—Her treasury was exhausted—her armies defeated. The British nation was disgusted with the problematical notion, of enslaving a people, who had manifested such determined resolution in defending their liberties. A war, which although it had terminated so advantageously to America, was in some measure inconvenient in its consequences. The coffers of the United States had been drained in gaining liberty and independence; and by a long and expensive war, the public credit was injured. Those veterans who had fought the battles of their country with honor to themselves and glory to the nation, were disbanded, without receiving the pecuniary compensations stipulated for

their services. But with that magnanimity, the prominent characteristic only of freemen and patriots, they disdained exciting commotions in the country they had just liberated from bondage.

It was not to be expected, that Great Britain would manifest any partiality for a country, that had just emancipated itself from the inglorious thraldoms of foreign servitude. Nothing could have been more mortifying to a proud and aspiring nation, than the being defeated in a calamitous contest, in which she had sacrificed on the alter of national folly, thousands of her inhabitants, and squandered millions of her treasure !

THE advantages gained, by the American revolution, have not been exclusively confined to the people of the United States. The different nations of Europe which before the revolution had been excluded from our country, had after it, a participation in the inexhaustible resources of this immense empire. The arts, which before were blighted by the noxious breath of tyranny, now flourished under the genial auspices of liberty. Sciences, which be-

fore had benefited none, now that liberty afforded them protection and assistance, became of service to all.

CURIOSITY, one of the great springs of human action, had long lain dormant, but now aided by reason, it led the human understanding to investigation, and men wondered how they had so long remained in ignorance and slavery. The science of government, which had been but partially understood by the people of this country, now received ample elucidation; and each individual learned, for the benefit of all, what rights to give up, and what to retain. Oppression, which before had thwarted the views of our forefathers, was now no longer felt; the film of fear and superstition, dropped from their eyes, and the genial sunshine of liberty and independence shone with resplendent lustre on them. The human mind, whose springs had been wound up to the highest pitch of ignorance and fear, by the poisonous influence* of monarchical principles, now

* *It is a well known fact, that monarchies are not governed by the same generous motives that republics are. While it is the policy of the*

burst asunder the fetters which in chained it, and received unbounded expansion. Agriculture, which before had languished, now revived from that lethargic state which oppression had placed it in. The honest husbandman, who had drawn his sword to defend the liberties of his country, now that his end was gained, exchanged it for the sickle and pruning-hook ; domestic felicity, the reward of his services, now crowned his happiness. He, who had departed from his family, divested of the immunities of a freeman, now returned, not a slave, but as one who was entitled to join in the formation of a government that would protect, and not oppress him.

COMMERCE and manufactures have been rapidly encreasing since the declaration of Ame-

one to depress a diffusion of useful learning, it is equally the interest of the other to encourage it. The fear entertained by those persons who reside under the former, enslaves the mind, the generous liberty of the latter expands it. King Charles II. established the Royal Society, to turn the attention of his subjects from the investigation of the principles of government to the study of natural philosophy !!

rican independence, and will, in all probability, as soon as the number of inhabitants permits, be carried on with greater advantage than at the present time. With inexhaustible internal resources, and a large extent of uncultivated territory, the United States will, in time, be an agricultural, a manufacturing and a commercial nation. The aera is not far distant, fellow-citizens, when we shall be enabled to live independent of foreign assistance.—Commerce and manufactures, which are founded on, and exist only by an excess of population, cannot prosper as much now as they will at some future period. The people cannot engage in them, to such advantage now, as they will when their numbers encrease; for at the present time we have a paucity, not a superabundance of inhabitants in the United States. But estimating the number of inhabitants in this country at upwards of five millions, and calculating the progressive encrease of population to be doubling once in twenty years, as has hitherto been the case, the consequence will be, that in that time, there must be upwards of ten millions of inhabitants in the United States. This, we must confess, is a short period, in calculating on our greater ability for engaging in extensive commercial

connexions with foreign nations. But it will not appear unreasonable, if we reflect on our means now, and our probable resources then; that it would be more politic to remain in our present comparative passive situation, than to engage in an extensive commerce, until that period shall arrive when we can do it with safety to our persons and advantage to our country. No longer, then, fellow-citizens, would it be necessary for your vessels to remain moored in their havens;—their canvass could be unfurled to the fleeting winds, to waft them to the shores of distant nations, where the *American Eagle*, which has hitherto been too young to venture with safety from its *nest*, would be received with gratulatory salutations, by the nations of the world! No longer would a nation, actuated by envy and revenge, attack your infant and unprotected commerce. No longer would a petty and insignificant power dare to trample on the laws of nations, or detain your fellow-citizens, in an ignominious bondage. No longer would haughty and imperious demands be made by a nation intoxicated with success, on your government, to purchase peace at the expense of national honor. No! our numbers, wealth and influence would at that period protect us, either from the inte-

rested and barbarous policy of the former, or the machinations and ill-covered artifices of the latter.

It is a truth, which carries conviction with it, that European countries cannot do without many of the productions of America, we have the articles of necessity and convenience, they, those of luxury. But the latent sources of wealth are daily opening themselves to the people of this country, so that the period will soon arrive when our country can supply our wants of luxury, as it does at present our wants of necessity and convenience. In a country having the different climates of almost the known world, we have every reason to believe that this supposition will not differ materially from the event. Independent of the disadvantages which our commerce and manufactures have labored under, they have made rapid progress in the United States. The Eastern States, possessing rather an excess of population, have been engaged in an extensive carrying trade. But, it may be questionable, whether it would not be better for that excess of population, to be engaged in the settlement of our large extent of interior uncultivated territory, than to be employed in the

carrying our overplus of staple commodities. 'Tis true, the Temple of *Janus* is once more shut in Europe, and it may with some semblance of plausibility, be surmised, ought not the enterprising spirit of our citizens to be encouraged?

BUT corruption has taken too deep root in the despotic states of Europe to let nations of different interests, of different religions, and different prejudices remain for any length of time in a state of tranquility. The powers of Europe, when operated on by self interest, will endeavor to find plausible pretexts to commit depredations on our commerce. Great Britain has more than once injured it, and it was not extraordinary to see France imitate the example. Yes! Americans who view the conduct of other nations towards the United States through the medium of impartiality, will consider those two powers as *Sylla* and *Charybdis*, in endeavouring to avoid the one, we have run foul of the other!—But, altho' our exertions have been cramped by the injurious conduct of other governments towards us, we shall teach the nations of Europe in process of time, to respect those they do not at present fear. Even at the present time, our navy, although in its infancy, com-

mands the respect of many of the secondary powers of Europe. Recollect, Americans ! there is a natural force of things, which governs all in politics as well as in physicks, which in spite of the sumptuary laws and prohibitory regulations of despotic governments, raises one nation by a regular gradation to the summit of human grandeur, whilst, by its influence, the liberties of others are swallowed up in the vortex of political misfortune !

OUR country is rising rapidly in political consequence ; and although the interested manoeuvres of European cabinets may for a while retard the advancement of our prosperity, still, we look forward to the day, when America will hold a primary, not a secondary rank among the nations of the earth. With a government lenient and a people virtuous and enlightened, it would baffle all political calculation, was this not to be the case. Our government, although complex, possesses all the advantages and none of the inconveniences either of monarchical or popular institutions. The several state governments, revolving as it were, in their different orbits around the general government, affording assistance to, and receiving

protection from it, presents an astonishing spectacle to the politician, of the mechanism and excellence of this immense and complicated fabric. With lenity sufficient to be respected, and energy enough not to be oppressive, our government justly commands the admiration of the world, and while we venerate it for its equity, we may, with exultation, hold it up to other nations as a criterion worthy of imitation.

WHILST almost all the nations of the world are ruled by despots, palmed upon them through necessity and against their inclinations, we have a government of our own choice ; and there is a probability amounting almost to a certainty, that that government will exist longer than any other. We have only to judge of its comparative excellence, by contrasting it with those of other nations, and we shall see that we have abundant cause to condole with them on their misfortunes, while we have sufficient reasons to congratulate ourselves on our own felicity.

GOVERNMENTS founded in force, may exist for a great length of time ; so also may those which are founded on the free consent of a virtuous and enlightened people. The former suppose

the people vicious and corrupted, the latter, enlightened and capable of governing themselves. The people of Europe, have long since given up the supposition as chimerical, that they are capable of governing themselves. The inhabitants of America wish to demonstrate that virtue yet exists in the world.

CORRUPTION cannot, at least, for a great length of time reach the interior parts of America ; and if the people of the United States give into that rational and equitable maxim in politics, that “ a majority ought to rule,” we may indulge ourselves, in the pleasing belief, that a republican, form of government will exist in this country for ages to come.

'Tis here under the auspices of a republican government, we enjoy uninterrupted, the free exercise of our religion. Here no religious persecutions disgrace humanity. Religion, which has been shrouded by hypocrisy and superstition, in almost all the countries of the world, is here only known by its benign influence on the hearts and actions of men, not by the excesses of fanaticism. Here our persons are safe, while we demean ourselves properly to the com-

munity. Here, illiberality in judging the political tenets of others, which is as great a crime as any we know of that has not a severer punishment annexed to it than the disapprobation of the well-meaning, is only the characteristic of a few.

It is not surprising, fellow-citizens, that we should think different on subjects which have raised the passions of mankind, and which in many countries has undermined governments and disturbed the good order of society. The judgment of man is fallible.—Some men think right, others wrong—though we ought to have the charity to believe that all, some few excepted, mean well.

AMONGST the various passions which agitate the human race, none, when not properly regulated, is more destructive to the peace and harmony of society, than ambition :—It is to this that all governments owe the misfortunes which have befallen them. Faction, under its auspices, rears its gigantic head, and some individual, more daring than his cotemporaries, grasps at universal power, and triumphs over the liberties of his country! Such is the me-

lancholy picture which faithful history presents to our view.

CITIZENS of America—although the means you employ may be different, yet recollect, you all have the same end in view. In all countries and at all times have there been ambitious and intriguing men found, who are willing to advance their own interests by sowing the seeds of dissention. Hence the downfall of the best governments has been portended by speculative theorists, who wish to aggrandize themselves by building their fortunes on the misery of mankind !

BUT as members of one great family, we shall always recollect that our interests are the same ; and while we reward *virtue* with confidence, we never shall forget that *vice* merits disappointment.

Is there any in this assembly so uncharitable as to believe, that a country, the nursery of freemen, the asylum of liberty, the residence of enlightened patriots, could give birth to overbearing aristocracy, or licentious jacobinism.—Forbid it Heaven! that we should be exposed to the infamous tyranny of the one or the licer-

tious depravity of the other. If there is a contrariety in the political tenets of the people of this country, it will eventually be the efficient and operative means of preserving their liberties. For we all believe that a difference of opinion leads to enquiry, and investigation opens the door to knowledge.

REMOTE from the murderous and sanguinary scenes, which to the disgrace of human nature, have been exhibited by the nations of Europe; scenes, which cannot be recollected without detestation, and the melancholy reflection that mankind have so degraded themselves in the perpetration of such enormities, we have, while we lament the cause that gave rise to them, to offer up unfeigned thanks to an omnipotent Creator for the blessings he has bestowed upon us.

But in casting our eyes over the advantages which surround us, we all perceive a *cavity* and immense *blank* in our national felicity—Can we but lament the loss of a man who, while he claims gratitude for his services, will ever be recollected as the friend of humanity, and the ornament of his country!

MOURN, Alexandria!—your illustrious neighbour has gone, never! never! to return! But while with unutterable sorrow we lament his loss, we may with national exultation exclaim, **WASHINGTON!** thy virtues live fresh in the faithful recollection of a grateful people!

F I N I S.