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ORATION

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BY

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ORATION, &c.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

WE are assembled to commemorate the birth of our country. At no period since America assumed a rank among the people of the earth, has it been more important for her sons to review the principles upon which the Constitution is founded.

The wrongs and oppressions which led to the revolution, have been redressed by the valor and firmness of our fathers; and the triumphs of their arms have so often been detailed, that to dwell on them might argue a spirit unworthy the moderation of Christians, or the magnanimity of Freemen. We reap their fruits: we are independent: we have sacred duties to perform to our God...to our country, and to our families. Let it be our task to en-

quire how we may best fulfil these duties—how best preserve that independence.

Sensible that I do not possess powers adequate to the investigation of subjects so momentous—fearful lest the freedom of opinion their nature requires may prove offensive to those from whom I differ, I should shrink from the task assigned me, did I not hope that many of you know me too well to believe me desirous of wounding the feelings of any virtuous citizen—were I not confident, that none of you will suspect me of wishing to excite any but the purest American sentiments—did not my heart tell me, that what I am about to say proceeds from a sincere love of our common country...is supported by the sentiments of WASHINGTON, and would be approved by those who thought and acted with him.

In a free government, a sense of the importance of religion, and of the obligation we are under to observe the moral law, should be the moving principle of its citizens. This observation will hold good:

whether applied to their individual or national interests. The occasion requires that we should consider it in the latter point of view.—The admirable adaptation of the principles of christianity to the concerns of men, is a strong proof of its Divine origin ; and the strict justice, love of truth, and regard to the rights of others, which it inculcates, tend so greatly to inspire public confidence, that prosperity must ever dwell with the people who love its practice. There are times when, for eminently wise purposes, the Almighty sends war, pestilence, and famine to visit a nation : then no arm of flesh is able to save...no earthly wisdom to counsel. Nothing can avail but the mercy of that Being who inflicts the woe ; and that mercy must be obtained by penitence and prayer. Religion is the only secure basis of society. Deprive the mind of it, and you rob oaths of their sanctity...open a door to public villany and private fraud....introduce perjury into the sacred halls of justice, and expose the lives of the innocent

to the machinations of the revengeful.

Our independence is to be maintained only by a firm adherence to the Union...a zealous attachment to liberty...an observance of strict justice to foreign nations, and a cautious fear of foreign influence.

However the states composing the Union may, from geographical situation, or other causes, appear to differ in interest, there is no truth more evident than that they mutually depend on each other for aid and assistance. On one hand, the industry and hardy enterprise of northern commerce is employed in transporting the products of southern agriculture; while, on the other, this agriculture would lose its value did not commerce distribute its fruits. As a mean of defence, surely the collective force of the whole body will prove more efficacious than divided powers. To unite in the joint expense of a general government is certainly more economical than to support the charges of two civil lists. But there is another and a more important reason for union: it is,

to prevent the animosities which will arise among powerful states bordering on each other ;—animosities which other nations will foment, and ambitious men inflame, till, wearied by wars, oppressed by taxes, lacerated by internal commotions, we sink under a foreign yoke, or yield our liberties to a domestic tyrant. “ With such powerful and obvious motives to union, affecting all parts of our country (says the illustrious Washington), while experience shall not have demonstrated its impracticability, there will always be reason to distrust the patriotism of those who, in any quarter, may endeavour to weaken its bands.”

To animate you to a love of liberty would be to spend time in vain. For who that bears the name of freeman would resign but with life that sacred legacy of our fathers? Your liberty can never be in danger from direct attacks: it is against the slow, insidious workings of secret enemies that I would warn you—against that influence which, under the guise of a love

of liberty, lulls watchfulness to rest....flatters the passions....excites the prejudices ...poisons the minds of a people, till, hurried on by an excess of zeal, they break down the barriers against licentiousness, and neither life, nor property, nor friends, nor the authority of law remain sacred : the whole presents one scene of anarchy, and tyranny erects her throne on the ruins of republicanism. Did the time permit, I would call your attention to those great republics which were the terror of the ancient, and are the admiration of the modern world. I would bid you behold, them “at one time, with a hundred thousand hands, plucking down, with infuriate rage, their best and wisest men ; at another, with a hundred thousand necks, bowing in submission to worthless demagogues.”—Conquerors of the world, they were vanquished by their liberty ! Such scenes are engraven on the sacred page of history, for our instruction : may we profit by them !

As all power emanates from the people,

and is by them delegated to their Representatives, it is not only the right, but it is the sacred duty of every American, on all important occasions, to enquire strictly into the conduct of his rulers. This investigation should, however, be conducted prudently, calmly, and dispassionately. Party feelings, personal prejudices should be laid aside—the railings of the violent disregarded—the accusations of the discontented believed with caution. Amidst all our jealous watchfulness, we should never forget that even WASHINGTON has been accused. If we act thus—if, whenever we assemble to exercise our elective franchise, we remember that we are Christians, entrusted by our God with greater privileges than any other people—that it is our duty to transmit that trust unimpaired to our descendants—that we are bound by that duty to select none but men of integrity and ability for our rulers—a world armed against us will not prevail, and posterity will bless and revere us as their benefactors. But if we give way to

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prejudice and passion——Shall I go on? No! I will not describe the results of a wickedness of which you, my beloved townsmen, are incapable.

The conduct of our first administration will best teach how to preserve justice to other nations—and the happiness which resulted therefrom, afford the most eloquent comment on its propriety. The period to which I advert was one of no common difficulty. The confederation had been abolished: the new constitution was to be tried: a large portion of citizens, deluded by the aristocratic advocates of state supremacy, were discontented with the change: the treasury was exhausted: public creditors cried for relief: commerce was nearly destroyed, and agriculture languished: foreign nations, not having learnt to respect, infringed our rights: the factions were clamorous: every thing was gloomy, and clouds and darkness threatened to obscure the brilliant stars of America, when the voice of the people called on him who gained, to pre-

serve their liberties. He considered the situation of the country. Convinced of the necessity of union for the revival of public credit, and the establishment of a government of laws—concerned that the honor of America should be preserved from the blemish of submitting to foreign aggression, and of faithlessness to her creditors, he resolved to sacrifice all personal considerations...to risk a reputation already canonized, and to undertake a task to which he alone was equal.

The selection of proper ministers was his first care ; and we find him concentrating a blaze of distinguished talent and approved patriotism around the presidential chair. Any other Chief Magistrate than Washington would have feared a rival in each member of the Cabinet. But he thought for his country ! If the President and heads of department were illustrious, Congress was worthy to be their companion in power ;—and America had every thing to hope, nothing to fear, from such rulers.

The rights of the country were maintained with firmness, public credit re-established, the majesty of law preserved—commerce was cherished, and agriculture flourished. A strict neutrality was preserved between the belligerents, even at a moment when a noble but misguided gratitude urged the United States to espouse the cause of Republican France.—The insolence of a foreign minister, who dared to appeal from the government to the people, was repressed with calmness. In defiance of public prejudice, a commercial treaty was made with England, from which the greatest advantages have resulted to the Union : and America and her Washington were every where honored and applauded.

It were a delightful task to depict scenes like these, and, with powers adequate to the subject, to delineate the glories of America ! But the situation of the country calls on me to dwell on a far less pleasing theme.

We have, for many years, enjoyed the

blessings of peace : we have revelled in its sweets : most of us have not known the troubles, the dangers, the hardships of war. Those troubles, dangers, and hardships are about to afflict us : The declaration of government has made it our duty to meet them with manly fortitude and noble resolution. For that declaration government is alone responsible to you ; and your voices must, on a proper occasion, pronounce whether you approve its measures : But for the honor of your country, you are responsible to the shades of your fathers...to your wives...to your dear little ones, and to the world. It becomes you, then, as you revere the memory of those illustrious freemen—as you love the companions of your bosoms—as you would protect your helpless offspring—as you respect the opinion of nations, to strain every nerve for the defence of our shores.

On us, my fellow-soldiers, this duty is doubly incumbent ; blending as we do the citizen and soldier, we must support the rights of the one, the dignity of the other. In order to do this effectually, that lax disci-

pline which has pervaded our militia meetings must be laid aside. Obedience and subordination must be revived, else that courage, which has ever been the characteristic of Jerseymen, will exert itself in vain. Restraint, we may say, is irksome; but when we consider that from this restraint will flow a system of harmony and order, calculated to save thousands of lives, and millions of treasure, we will submit to it cheerfully. Let us employ every leisure moment in military improvement. Remember we must prove we are able to defend ourselves—nay, to avenge our country, ere we can hope for an honorable peace.

War is at all times a calamity deprecated by every good man. But the present war, with all the ills it may entail on us and our survivors, does not appear half so terrific as an alliance which may spring from it. My countrymen, I have no disguise—I mean an alliance with France. When I think of this alliance of liberty with despotism....of freemen with slaves ...of christianity with irreligion...of mag-

unanimity with perfidy, my blood curdles,
 and I tremble for my country. Should
 the ruler of that nation succeed in inveig-
 ling us into such a measure—should ad-
 ministration, under a hope of humbling
 the enemy, consent to receive assistance
 from Bonaparte, our blood will have been
 spilt...our treasures will have been ex-
 pended in vain.—Do you doubt?...Let the
 history of Holland...of the Italian Repub-
 lics...of Switzerland (once the land of hap-
 piness and liberty!) speak: They were
 prosperous...they were independent: they
 trusted to France, and they are miserable
 slaves!—Do you still doubt?...Let Spain,
 invaded in the hour of security, while her
 armies were fighting the battles of France,
 warn you of our fate. If America forms
 an alliance with France, she will add an-
 other to the catalogue of nations that have
 fallen a prey to Napoleon. “Then will
 ensue a scene of woe, the like to which
 no eye has seen, no ear heard, and which
 no tongue will adequately tell.”—Our
 happy shores, where peace and plenty
 now reign, converted into a “battle plain,”

will resound with the roar of cannon and shrieks of distress! while we, condemned to fight the battles of the Tyrant, and to assist in extending his iron yoke, will sigh in vain for liberty—die for struggling to regain it—or, harder lot, be forced to drag out a life of servitude and chains, amidst scenes of desolation; and with minds tormented with the consciousness of our own folly, weep for the sufferings of our insulted wives and injured offspring!

WASHINGTON has gone to the mansions of rest! The tongue that could have counselled, the arm that would have protected us, are palsied by death!—His better part remains: the memory of his virtues is engraven in our hearts....his precepts have taken root in our minds. WASHINGTON still lives in us, and bids us beware of foreign influence: His Spirit cries from the grave—“My Sons, protect yourselves....trust to your own right hands, and to that God who alone is able to save.”

Listen to his voice! Imitate his example! and you will be more than happy—You will be great!