

The Hon<sup>ble</sup> *Q. Wolcott*  
from his home Serv.  
*Jeru Hill*



*Mr. KING'S ORATION.*





Wolcott 15:5.

A N

O R A T I O N,

PRONOUNCED AT BIDDEFORD,

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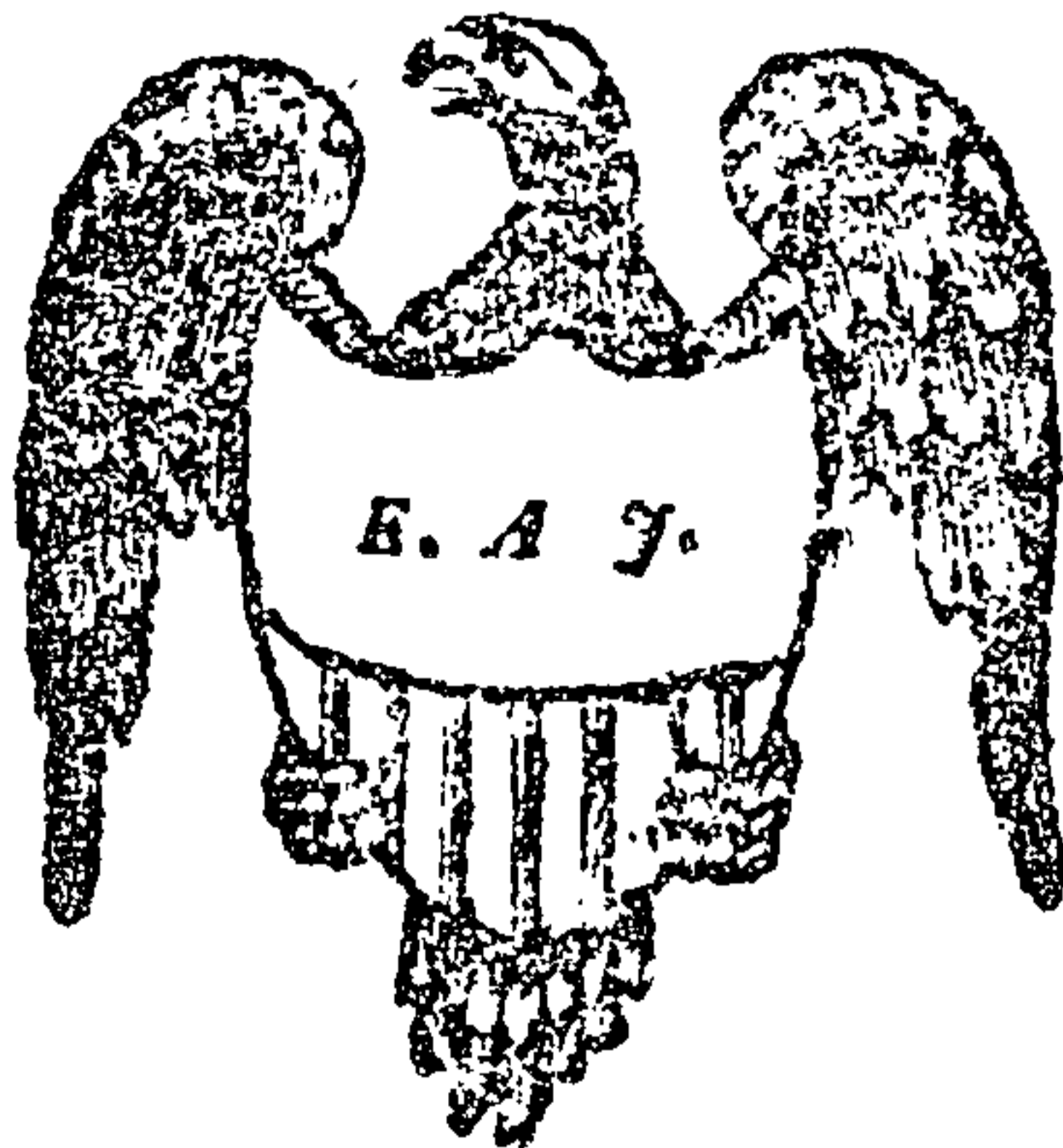
*Fourth of July, 1798;*

THE ANNIVERSARY OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

AT THE REQUEST OF THE GENTLEMEN OF THAT AND  
THE ADJOINING TOWN OF PEPPERELLBORO';  
BY WHOSE DESIRE THIS HASTY PRO-  
DUCTION IS SUBMITTED TO  
THE PUBLIC.

CYRUS KING.



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# O R A T I O N .

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*AMERICANS !*

AMONG the days which have been distinguished for memorable events, that on which the Independence of America was declared, ranks high in the calendar of fame. The affecting scene of an infant people, bursting asunder the bonds and shackles of despotic rule and foreign power, and rising into existence and importance, is a sublime spectacle, which the God of Heaven must view with complacency and favor. Twenty two years have now elapsed, since the rulers of America, appealing to the supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of their intentions, declared the then colonies of America, free and independent. Ours

be the pleasing task, my fellow citizens, briefly to recapitulate the events, which preceded that declaration, and those of importance which have since transpired : And by thus taking a general survey of the important occurrences recorded in the annals of our country, and bringing fresh to your recollection, the collected wisdom, undaunted firmness, and ardent patriotism, of our renowned forefathers ; and some of our cotemporaries, the sun of whose age is fast declining, may you thereby be animated to a vigorous and manly conduct, at this perilous period ; and show yourselves the worthy descendants of the illustrious founders of America.

BUT what events, from the thousands which have occurred, shall I select for your emulation ? Shall I commence with the infancy of Massachusetts, and open to your view, that unequalled example of perseverance, under every embarrassment, exhibited by our ancestors ? Driven by the intolerant spirit of persecuting bigotry, from the ease and enjoyment of civilized society, we behold them boldly encountering the perils of an unfrequented ocean, and confidently seeking an asylum in the lonely desarts and wilderness of America ; then the eternal haunts of savage beasts and still more savage inhabitants. But the God of Hosts

guided, supported, protected them; and by a virtuous course of hardy industry, under the kindest influence of Heaven's blessings, their posterity became a numerous, wealthy, and happy people. But America never was designed to be subject to any nation on earth. This envied state of prosperity and happiness was soon interrupted: And by a system of measures on the part of Great Britain, the most corrupt, iniquitous, and oppressive, that ever disgraced the annals of her history, an attempt was made to reduce the most free and enlightened people on earth, to the despicable state of slavery and subjection.

YES, fellow citizens! they claimed a right, unheard, unrepresented, to bind America in every case whatever! A position so monstrous and unjust, even if advanced by majesty itself to the hirelings of the throne, would have raised them in mutiny, against the cursed betrayer of their country's rights. What then must have been its effects upon the free born sons of America? Like the deep mouthed thunder, through the vault of heaven, it shook our creation. Union was the desire of our hearts, and liberty or death, the resolve of our souls. That desire was first realised, and this resolution evidenced on the ensanguined fields of

Lexington: And the virtues and patriotism of a WARREN, in the heights of Charlestown, paid a monument, more durable, than the most conspicuous Pyramid, that ever was erected by Egyptian magnificence. But why do I select the crimsoned fields of Lexington, or celebrate the virtues and death of a WARREN? Where is the situation in which America encountered her foe, and the intrepidity and valor of her sons has not been signalized? Or show me the soldier, who engaged from principle in the cause of humanity and America, who has not proved himself a patriot and a hero? The name of WASHINGTON suggests every thing that is great and heroic in arms, or humane and benevolent in peace. And while the sun beams forth his glories in the firmament of heaven, and Almighty God continues to humanity the perception of the sublime in action and in virtue, the illustrious WASHINGTON, and his renowned companions in virtue and in arms, shall enjoy a glorious immortality, in heaven of happiness, and on earth of praise.

I HAVE thus, my fellow citizens, glanced at the events which preceded, and rendered indispensable, that declaration of Independence, which we have this day assembled to celebrate.



THAT kind and beneficent being, to whom the rulers of our country appealed upon that important occasion, still continued to support the cause and arms of America, through a most arduous conflict, to the glorious termination of our troubles, in acknowledged liberty and independence. Yes! that haughty and imperious nation, which arrogated to itself uncontrouled dominion and power in America, was finally obliged to acknowledge the sovereignty and freedom of that people, whom they had been pleased to stile, ungrateful, and rebellious. Thus beholding their exalted hopes of aggrandizement and power in this western world, extinct forever.

BUT this happy termination of our arduous conflict, was far from restoring domestic tranquillity to America. That stability and strength, which are the glory of a nation, were still to be acquired. America, it is true, possessed every part and member of a perfect body, into which freedom had breathed animation, but in unity of parts, and grace of symmetry, she was unfortunately deficient. War, among its thousand calamities, had introduced into society a general depravity of manners: Disorder had crept into the several departments of our government: Crimes too often escaped with

impunity ; while innocence in vain sought protection from the law : and faction and rebellion began to rear their formidable heads. At this critical, this alarming juncture, the genius of America pointed to the road of happiness and prosperity. Yes ! She influenced the adoption of that Constitution, which forms the basis of the grandeur and glory of America. Under the virtuous administration of the Federal Government, before America was severely afflicted by the dreadful calamities which distract the nations of Europe, our country rapidly advanced in greatness and renown. All nature contributed to her celebrity and importance. Our hills and our vallies, smiled with luxuriant plenty ; and the Genius of Culture, delighted to inhabit our plains. While from the depths of the ocean, our hardy citizens drew mines of wealth ; others, more enterprizing, pursued, uninterrupted, the monsters of the deep, to the regions of the Pole. All climates, seas, and océans, witnessed the enterprize and industry of America. Commerce, with its ten thousand wings expanded to the gales of heaven, wafted riches and greatness to our favored land. These are among the blessings, which the God of heaven showered down on America, and which the friend

of his country delights to acknowledge. But, alas ! what have we now to contemplate, but the sad reverse of this pleasing scene ? In vain do we demand the hard earned reward of our virtuous industry. In vain does the enterprising merchant hazard his property on the ocean. In vain does America demand that justice from other nations, which she is solicitous to grant. Under the Gallic law, imperious necessity, the wealth and industry of America are sacrificed. Our Government, actuated by the most impartial and righteous policy, has been grossly traduced and insulted : And attempts have been made to alienate the people from their rulers, and to corrupt the integrity of the officers of Government. The neutral flag of America has been treated with shameful indignity ; our commerce plundered, and seamen tortured by pretended friends. Yes, fellow citizens, an American freeman, one like yourselves possessing the conscious dignity of independence, within view of this land of freedom and humanity, has been basely scourged and tortured ! Yes ! shamefully scourged, and barbarously tortured ! Calling in vain upon the sacred names of liberty and America, to shield him from the foul disgrace. Yes Americans, upon you he calls for protection,

from you he requires that vengeance which the prostrate honor of America demands. In vain have you sought reparation and justice, by appealing to the magnanimity of France. Your offers of negotiation are rejected with scorn; and your envoys treated with insolence and contempt. When you ask for justice from the great republic, they demand concessions : When you require indemnification for the immense depredations on your commerce, they exact contributions : Nay they extend their arrogance still further : They insist on concessions which would annihilate our liberty, and imperiously demand acknowledgments, which would inflame America. They claim what they are pleased to style “ a well earned ” influence in our country ; and are offended that we do not admit it. Having appropriated our property to their necessities, they call upon us to acknowledge their justice and magnanimity. Having deprived our merchants of more than twenty millions of dollars, they have the extreme politeness to request our government to discharge that sum themselves ; and will doubtless give us unexceptionable security, in scourges, thumb-screws, and guillotines : Thus answering the sycophancy of our infatuated fellow-citizens, as an imperious master repays the

caresses of a fawning spaniel, with castigation and contempt. But their extortionary demands rest not at the paltry sum of twenty millions of dollars, on their own security ; but they modestly request a loan of thirty millions, and offer their lately subdued friends the Dutch as security for the payment. And all those acts of friendship and modest requests, no doubt proceeded from their excessive partiality for their dear American ally. And should they receive those trifling loans, and thus deprive us of the nerves and sinews of our *defence*, they certainly intend our country a still higher honor, by kindly receiving into their holy keeping and protection, the liberty and independence of America ; politely giving the fair and blooming daughters of Columbia, the fraternal embrace ; and decreeing to our worthy fellow-citizens the honor of a sitting under the national guillotine.

HAD these injuries to our property, and insults to our citizens, been committed in the first enthusiasm of their great and sanguinary revolution, the intemperance of the times would have palliated the enormity of the crimes. But deprived of this plea for their actions, what can they allege in justification of their rapacious and insolent conduct ? Will France justify under the promptitude of our

government, to discharge upon the first request, that debt of pecuniary gratitude contracted during the American revolution? Yes, fellow-citizens, that debt of gratitude was calculated to a mill and discharged with honor. Or will she plead in extenuation, the partiality of our government in permitting the transports of France, during a general embargo, to sail from our ports; and rescue from disease and death their famished dominions? Or will France appeal to the ingratitude of America, in receiving with open arms, and supporting with every convenience of life, the distressed, the wretched fugitives from her West-India territories; flying with famine and death in their train, from the crimsoned sword of barbarous persecution.— Yes, benevolent America kindly received those houseless wanderers, pressed them to the glowing bosom of her unbounded humanity: Little, ah! little suspecting that she cherished the benumbed serpent, or fastened on her veins the leeches of destruction. Not sufficiently justified by these allegations, she will doubtless resort to the coldness and apathy of our enthusiastic fellow-citizens: And to these unfortunately she may, with the appearance of justice, appeal. Not because our ardent patriots did not at the commencement of the French revolution, participate in their glories, but

because this ridiculous and hostile partiality, has not been continued, or proved productive to America of more fatal effects. France, in the meridian splendor of her conquests, was the idol of our worship, the toast of our clubs, and envy of America. But now alas, when she grasps at universal dominion and enjoys in imagination the conquest of the world ; no national hymns are sung, no patriotic carmagnoles are bellowed in our streets ; no societies are self-created to cherish and preserve the darling influence of France, or superintend the operations of our own government ; no tri-coloured ribbons and cockades grace the fair daughters of America—Nay, so insensible are we grown, that we can hear of conquest after conquest achieved ; nation after nation falling on the sanguinary sword of French Liberty and Equality ; nay more, we can see them victoriously domineering over our country, generously plundering our property and humanely torturing our citizens, and no effigies of our worthy citizens are burnt on our commons—no neutral huzzas of “France forever” are heard in our streets—No feasts of reason are celebrated in our halls, nor roasted oxen followed in procession through our streets.—Great God ! Is it possible that this ever could have been a true picture of America ; of free, independent, neutral America !

No never—never—They who have thus conducted, must have been foul fiends of darkness, who assumed the glorious appellation of Americans, to screen from contempt their vileness and deformity. But praises to the God of heaven, those days of folly and delusion are passed—the eye of reason is open to the danger of our country—the ardent fire of patriotism is enkindled in every breast—and the spirit of Liberty and of America pervades our land. Cherish the blessed flame—let its blaze consume the base remains of party spirit and foreign influence; that the American name and character, like gold seven times refined, may burst upon the world in their native purity and splendor.

AMERICANS, we know not the extent of the dangers which threaten our country: We know not the hidden vengeance which is prepared for our destruction. Look at Venice; consider the fate of that ancient and respectable republic; which by France itself is held up in terror, to frighten America into unconditional submission. After surviving for more than fifteen centuries, the storms and tempests of European climates, we behold the noble ship of their constitution wrecked and destroyed on the sunken rocks of French duplicity: Their country conquered, their constitution



annihilated, and the free-born citizens of Venice, by their humane victors, basely bartered away and sold into eternal bondage. Is there an American present, who does not prefer his country to all the world; who is not in heart, soul, and conduct, a free, unbiaffed American, let the wretch receive the reward of his baseness, depart our country, and not traitor Arnold like, prey upon the vitals of America! But you the friends of my heart, whom the noble spirit of patriotism animates, who are resolved never to be slaves—Upon you: America calls to save her from the destruction with which Venice is overwhelmed. Behold Switzerland likewise! there contemplate the desolation intended for America! Switzerland like every other free country, at the commencement of the French revolution was the pretended idol of France. The same professions of esteem, the same expressions of fraternity and friendship, bestowed on America, were lavished upon the unsuspecting Swisses: A destructive influence was thereby introduced into their country, divisions among their citizens, and distraction in their councils—and when the awful period of their calamity arrived, and destruction had knocked at their doors—whan the eternal night of their extinction seemed far advanced, and the alarming cry “our enemy cometh” was re-

foundered in their streets—alas, unhappy people! too late they fatally experienced that the lamp of vigilance was extinguished and the oil of wisdom exhausted.—Hark! methinks I hear the voice of murdered Switzerland, in friendly accents saying, America, “your enemy cometh”—rouse from your fatal slumbers—be vigilant, and revenge my fall!

AMERICANS, if a spark remains in your breasts of that ethereal flame, which has immortalized the defenders of our country's rights, it now must blaze forth in deeds of valor and renown! If a drop of patriots blood still circulates in your veins, it must boil with indignation, at the dastardly insults, which our country has received. Vigorous measures have been adopted by our government, but it rests with American freemen to give them stability and effect. Now is the time for manly exertion: the door of accommodation is closed; and though we deprecate a war, still ought we vigorously to prepare for that dreadful calamity: It is in vain for us to hope to better our condition by any expected change of affairs. We ought not to expect that justice from the mercy and clemency of other nations, which we can be in a situation to demand. But it will be objected, our preparations for war may excite the jealousy, may rouse

the indignation of France—and it may not be their intention to make war upon America? What, must we tamely wait till she pleases in form to declare herself our enemy? Do not her actions speak louder than any declaration? Is not her hostile temper declared by every capture on our heretofore defenceless ships, by every measure of her arbitrary government? Did France in form declare hostility against Genoa, Venice, Switzerland, or did she not fasten the leeches of her baneful influence upon them and suck the vital blood from their citizens? Yes this is the insidious policy of that crafty and ambitious nation: and this is the system which they have attempted in America. But never will I believe that the free-born sons of America will submit to be slaves; or sacrifice without a noble struggle, that liberty and independence, in the attainment of which the richest blood of America freely flowed. Yes fellow-citizens, I have the fullest assurance in the union and patriotism of our countrymen, confident that they will rally magnanimously, round the standard of Liberty and America, and bravely repel the ambitious foe who dares invade our rights. Yes, though our deadly enemy, by the infernal thirst of blood and rapine hurried on, should throw their rapacious legions on our coast; drive and expel us from our towns and

cities, and the flower of our strength should fall in the conflict, still with liberty in our train, like our exalted ancestors, we would seek, beyond the cloud capped hills and in the deserts of our country, an independent and glorious retreat! But though earth and hell should fiercely combine their powers and rise in arms against us, still encouraged by liberty and supported by independence, we should rise superior to their base assaults and bid defiance to their sternest vengeance! What though these mortal bodies should crumble into dust, still the immortal soul would spring aloft to regions of eternal freedom; and at the throne of Almighty God, amidst the departed spirits of our virtuous ancestors, with fervant supplications would plead the cause of suffering America. — O God of heaven! look down in mercy on our injured country! and shield, O shield America from impending ruin!

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