

M. Stiles

AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED AT BROOKFIELD, (MASS.)

UPON THE ANNIVERSARY OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1807;

BEFORE A NUMEROUS ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLI-

CANS OF THE COUNTY OF WORCESTER.

BY LEVI LINCOLN, JUN. ESQ.

WORCESTER:

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AN ORATION.

ILLUSTRIOUS in the annals of time are epochs of National Independence. History, in her tale of ages, impressively dwells upon those periods, when man rising from the servitude which oppressed him, has vindicated the dignity of his nature and become *free*. Memory is faithful to the achievements of patriotism, and eulogy keeps pace with the acquisitions of glory!

FELLOW-CITIZENS. BROTHERS IN PRINCIPLE.
REPUBLICANS! Thrice welcome be this our meeting. Assembled to commemorate an event the most honorable to our nation, to consecrate anew the day of our Independence—again to plight our faith to posterity in the temple of our God, let the *spirit of liberty* fill our hearts with rejoicing, and the *fervor of enthusiasm* give currency to the language of our

lips. *On this day*, let no voice of discontent sound a note of discordance, let no breath of repining give a sigh to regret. Let there be but one pause of reverential feeling to the memory of the deceased heroes of our country, and *all the residue of this hallowed day*, be animation, harmony, and joy.

For nearly one third of a century have the United States of America existed a *free, sovereign, and independent nation*. The story of events, which preceded and which ensued the fourth of July '76, which led to, which enforced, and which justified the declaration of Independence, have since been the constant and consecrated subjects of anniversary celebration—Yet the theme does not tire, nor has language become exhausted. The Genius of Freedom enlivens forever. Words flow by inspiration, and interest and animate by expression. The heart beats and the soul expands at the name of *Independence*. The honor of the patriot becomes engaged, the pride of the citizen is excited, *Liberty* is in discussion, and the station of man in issue. The grandeur of the object admits of description unceasingly and endlessly varied. Orators and Poets have already attempted its perfect picture, but some new scenery must ever remain to be added, giving dignity to the design and novelty to the exhibition. The extreme of humiliation and the extent of greatness furnish infinite materials for the labor of ingenuity, and to contemplate a nation in these opposite attitudes is the noblest, proudest exercise of the human powers.

WONDROUS have been the fortunes by which we have arrived to the present moment. A handful of Pilgrims from a land of oppression are the lowly ancestry of this powerful people. Poor and penniless they left the country of their kindred, and weak, and feeble, and exhausted, arrived on the shores of a rude and inhospitable wilderness. The howl of beasts was here their greeting, the war-whoop and the death-song their pastime. They labored, and God blessed their industry; they persevered, and God rewarded their exertions. The soil yielded to culture, the savage to civilization, and through trials and hardships almost incredible, they acquired an easy and enviable possession. Their arms became nerved to manhood, and their strength was fast ripening to maturity. Where stood the tents of the Pilgrims, now smoked the villages of Inhabitants; where lay the hunting grounds of the Indian, now blossomed the improvements of the Husbandman.

Thus much had enterprize accomplished, undisturbed and disregarded. But the Parent, who unnaturally had abandoned the Infant to destruction, viewed the vigor of youth, and claimed the exercise of authority, and the deference of submission. Filial feeling admitted the demand, and with the humble name of *Colonists*, our "pious ancestors" were registered in the family book of the house of Hanover.

PARENTAL government was at least to have been expected. It was to be hoped, that power would have

been tempered by affection, that interest would have qualified exaction. The strength and weight of the colonies, for a long time, contributed to the grandeur of the British empire. America was a diadem, the finest brilliant, in the crown of England. Her productions were the sustenance of the nation, the life-spring of her commerce, the support of her manufactures, ministering equally to her wants and her enjoyments. But in proportion to the value of the prey was the rapacious appetite of the spoiler. The colonies were yet comparatively helpless. They had flourished, but their growth was of the morning; they were vigorous, but their strength was not perfected. A genial sun was still requisite to their maturity. Yet a little while, and they would have escaped danger. Opposition would have been idle, and hostility unheeded. A corrupt, and profligate, and unfeeling ministry watched their opportunity. They saw that quickly the bird would be fledged, and once flown, would mock their pursuit. They saw, that the restraints of slavery were the surest guarantees of submission; that dependence and poverty would offer the least resistance to despotism. They saw too, in the progress of the country the opening prospects of a rival, and in the *spirit of the people*, a determined enmity to *TYRANTS!* To blight and destroy these prospects, to curb, and break down, and subvert this spirit, the work of imposition was begun. *Taxation*, that necessary burden in civil society, was aggravated to a *curse*. Oppression stalked through the land. Articles of subsistence were made subjects of

excise, mechanical ingenuity and manufacturing enterprise were interdicted, and when, at last, forbearance was exhausted and loyalty yielded to remonstrance, war was commissioned to enforce obedience to the requisitions of relentless power.

THE events which succeeded are familiar to the acquaintance of every American. The places of their action are marked for eternal memorial.—Where were entombed the victims of valor, over their graves are erected monuments of glory. The plains of Lexington and the heights of Bunker present the first records of Independence, and the stone and the marble which rise upon their surface, are cemented with the best blood of patriots. Armies of mercenaries, for eight years, ravaged our country with every species of brutal and hellish outrage. Plunder was their pioneer, and waste and ruin followed in their footsteps. Cities were depopulated—villages pillaged and burnt—houses of public worship profaned—private hospitality abused—infancy tortured—the chastity of females polluted—and every social, and moral, and manly virtue violated! Nor was the contest less unequal. America had engaged at *fearful odds*. Without numbers, without weapons, without internal resources, and without credit from foreign alliance, her attempts were regarded as the imbecile struggles of childhood, resisting parental correction. The nations of Europe were the amazed spectators of the conflict, and more than one half the object was accomplished, ere they accorded to our entreaties the countenance of their power. The policy of Louis

XVI, stimulated by the ardor of his more gallant subjects, at length, enlisted in the cause, and followed by the aid of the loaned money of Holland gave certainty, promptitude and splendor to the issue. To these friends in adversity, associates in labor, in suffering, and in glory, let gratitude on this occasion pay a deserved tribute. Yes, FRENCHMEN ! We owe to you a debt incurred by generosity, and which feeling only can liquidate. Your blood was mingled with ours on the fields of battle, and the bones of both people now moulder, where valor first heaped them together. May liberality forever cherish the remembrance, and honor and equity permit permanency to the obligation ! And to the States of Holland may the punctuality of repayment, with the reciprocal interests of both nations, mete out a liberal reward. They risked an adventure in a perilous enterprise—may the return cargo compensate for the hazards they incurred.

A MORE minute detail of Revolutionary efforts will not, at this time, be expected. Vain and useless would be the labor. From the blockade of Boston to the surrender at York-town, no incidents have escaped the tradition of our Fathers. The tenderest infant learns them at the breast, and the sachel'd school-boy makes them the lessons of his earliest recital. Age dwells upon them in rapture and impresses them with virtue. They will be to posterity subjects of admiration, when the moral they inculcate shall be lost to instruction.—But the characters of the Heroes of those days demand higher notice. Each acqui-

tion of glory was at the price of blood, each combat added to the dominion of death. Where WARREN fell hundreds of like spirit were numbered beside him, and the graves which yawned for MONTGOMERY and MERCER were glutted with their companions in arms. Illustrious shades ! Be at peace—for the sacrifice of life was the salvation of country ! If it were permitted thee to wander from the tombs, the present prospect would be thy sufficient reward. Patriotism has been just to thy honor, and affection sensible to thy fall. Sorrow has yearly visited the depositaries of thy remains and gratitude made fresh inscriptions to the remembrance of thy services ! Nor is the meed of merit less due to those, who survive. Already has one generation risen and hailed them blessed. They will leave to their children a rich legacy of principle and virtue. They will instruct them in sentiments of integrity and in the value of Independence. They will enjoy while here a noble result to their labors, and bear with them to Heaven an assurance of the happiness of their latest descendants.

THE war successfully terminated, and the sovereignty of the States acknowledged ; a task no less arduous remained to be accomplished. A community of suffering had hitherto secured harmony in effort, and a singularity of object coincidence in the means of attainment. But a variety of prospect was now unfolded, and that magnanimity which had given energy to the "old Confederation" was found inefficient to the further regulation of the sys-

tem. The tie, which had bound us together, became loosed. The immediate danger of division was not contemplated, and in the first attempts at a redress of embarrassments, which a long state of violence had occasioned, confusion and anarchy well-nigh ensued. But patriotism was again on the alert, and again demanded her sacrifices. A Convention of Sages was assembled, and our present Constitution of Government prepared for adoption. This Instrument, the most majestic display of the ingenuity of Freemen, the result of compromise and mutual accommodation, after delays and difficulties and cavillings from the yet half-converted subjects of Independence, the lingering-hankering-parasites of power, as well as the arrangements for additional articles, which wisdom and foresight extorted in greater security for the people, met the seal of popular approbation, and was ordained and promulgated the fundamental law of the land. To the head of its administration was elected the first citizen in the Republic ; he, who through the conflict had directed our armies, who had been first to dare the danger and last to dread the issue. WASHINGTON ! To thy memory a thankful country has paid its highest honors. Greatly useful was thy existence, deeply regretted thy decease. Tears have bedewed the urn where thy ashes repose, and incense of love ascended to the place where thy spirit dwells. If profanation has polluted thy name, thy *character* it could not sully. The virulence of party has made mockery of thy merits,

but intelligence and patriotism will be forever just to thy worth !

THE force of our government was now to be experimented. Of novel and daring construction few could predict its operation. The sovereignty and independence of the Nation and the free and equal rights of the people, were the objects designed to be secured. The Constitution was made the chart, by which the vessel of State was to be guided. The courses and the bearings were every where described. The shoals and the quick-sands, where shipwrecks in ancient times had been suffered, were here distinctly laid down—Each cause of deviation was explained, each chance of ruin calculated. For a while, the winds and the waves were propitious and treasures of happiness poured in upon our country. The anticipated fruits of liberty were in gathering. Pride feasted on the present, and hope reached onward to the future. The administration of WASHINGTON was generally distinguished for those mild and temperate, yet dignified and independent measures, which stamp a wise and magnanimous policy. During this period, the credit of the nation was established, commercial intercourse was acquired, advantageous foreign alliances (with one memorable never to be forgotten exception of national degradation*) were contracted, and at home, even the face of nature brightened, harmony was cultivated ;

NOTE.—JAY'S treaty, deservedly the regret of the friends of Washington, and from whence has resulted most of those mischiefs which have since perplexed our negotiations with that country.

peace, industry, intelligence and integrity prevailed. Another golden era seemed advancing, From slavery, Americans had risen to self-command ; from being tributaries to the English Crown to an equality with the most powerful people. Freedom, unrestrained in expression, unawed and unlimited in action, chaste, conscientious, intellectual freedom was enjoyed. The political sky was uniformly serene. The few spots, which occasionally appeared in the horizon, neither *materially* obscured the prospect nor diminished the splendor.

But the advances of time consigned to retirement our first illustrious Chief Magistrate, and to succeed him, a distinguished revolutionary compeer was designated by the suffrages of his Fellow-Citizens. The admirers of the virtues, talents and public merits of a WASHINGTON were not unmindful of the pre-eminent services of an ADAMS. New-England, all America had witnessed his daring efforts, his proud predilections for the rights of man, and anticipated their support from the hands of a champion. But alas ! Times had changed, and men had changed. A system of force, of patronage, of favoritism and of parade approached the Chief of the nation and surrounded with its *great works* the chair of State. Over the *closing* scenes of the ADAMS ADMINISTRATION, generosity, at this period, would draw a veil. *Sufficient for those days were the evils thereof.* Army encampments, sedition imprisonments, taxes, oppression, and prodigality were their most striking features. An Inquest

of the country has passed upon them, and with a verdict of conviction, entitled them to oblivion.

THE Presidential election of 1800 finished the career of delusion and restored the Government to the hands of its friends. A Patriot and a Statesman of the revolution, the sublimity of whose mind first ken'd American Independence and whose pen impressed the solemn Declaration, was happily inducted to the Chair. His inauguration was marked with the promise of glory, and the principles which on the *fourth of March 1801* he proclaimed at the Capitol, echo repeated from the remotest parts of the Union. The measures, which followed evinced, the sincerity of profession. A redress of grievances was the necessary prelude to an extension of enjoyments. To this effect, enquiry and intelligence, labor, fidelity and perseverance successfully contributed, and ere one year was noted in the calendar of a Republican Administration, each occasion of disquiet was removed. Nor was the vigilance of the Executive thus satisfied. The acquisition of an incalculably valuable territory, the civilization of our Savage neighbors, the encouragement of useful geographical research and of philosophic enterprize are subjects, which most honor the discernment, and will give highest lustre to the fame of JEFFERSON. To him, to those he has so wisely associated with him, and to a virtuous, enlightened and inflexibly *Republican* majority of the Congress of the United States are we, Fellow-Citizens, most probably indebted for this day's association in festivity and rejoicing. Why differs our

condition from the ravaged countries of Europe ? Because no system of aggrandizement provoked us to conquest ; because no " entangling alliances " involved us in European conflicts. More fortunate has been our lot. The *wisdom* of our government has preserved us from war—its *justice* has given to us credit—its *liberality* has secured us freedom—and its *economy* has left us " plenty in the basket and abundance in the store."

Yet has the happiness of this situation had its alloy. Against our most beloved President the harpies of malice have drawn their talons. They have assailed him, in every shape of violence, but more shielded than ACHILLES of old, he is found, *no where*, vulnerable. His virtue baffled their acts and his character defied their pollution. They see the fruitlessness of their attempts, and humbled, abashed and confounded, in silence subscribe to a conviction of their infamy. But this pursuit was in subservience only, to a further and a greater object. It was hoped to connect *measures* with *men*, and by exciting odium against the private reputation of the Executive, to create distrust in the integrity of his Administration. For a while indeed, faction seemed organized and opposition collected. *Federalism* had numbers in her train, and boasted of *States* under her banners. She shewed herself formidable in credit, and daring and confident in expectation. But the recurrence of the Presidential election in 1804 proved the fallacy of her *expectations*. From this moment, ruin was her only prospect, despair her only sentiment. Thousands were reclaimed from the

wanderings of deception and gathered to the fold of the *people*. NEW-HAMPSHIRE abandoned the Standard of the enemy, and as if the *fiat* of Fate had not yet received its sanction, MASSACHUSETTS, the only remaining fortress, the STRONG hold, was compelled to surrender at discretion !

FELLOW-CITIZENS ; REPUBLICAN BROTHERS ! Great cause have we, *this day*, for mutual congratulations. Our country presents an aspect as flattering as it is unprecedented. Its foreign relations are advantageous and honorable—its domestic arrangements salutary and prosperous. Still fair is the promise of continued enjoyment. Our negotiations with England it is true, have met a temporary suspension,* but neither the dignity of our Government will bend to unequal terms of accommodation, nor its vengeance long slumber over *murderous* aggressions. Treason too, of late, reared his Gorgon head among us, but the monster was early detected, and his infatuated followers are now passing the ordeal of Justice, to whose decision we most cheerfully submit them. And regarding our own State, *most* highly becoming are expressions of exultation. Yes, REPUBLICANS ! we will exult in this, that slander has had its measure, and delusion its end, that principle triumphs and virtue is rewarded—And

NOTE.—It is now understood that the President's objections to the Treaty were, that it contained no provision against the impressment of American Seamen, and that it was accompanied by a declaration from the English ministers, that the King would claim a delay of ratification *on his part*, until satisfied with the conduct of the American government in reference to the French Imperial blockading decree—a proposition alike inadmissible unequal and unjust.

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while respect shall pay its tribute to the character of our *first Magistrate* may confidence repose in his integrity and patriotism rely on his truth. Be we guarded against the *hypocrisy* of our enemies. Subtily disposed are their designs ; treacherously contrived are their measures. They now hold the language of acquiescence, and practice the arts of conciliation—But as *the Ethiopian cannot change his skin nor the Leopard his spots*, neither can the once advocates of royalty become sincere converts to the faith of REPUBLICANS !

F I N I S .