

AN ORATION,

COMMEMORATIVE

OF THE

Anniversary of American Independence,

Delivered at the Filature, in Savannah,

BY

Captain James Marshall,

OF THE SAVANNAH VOLUNTEER GUARDS,

On the Fourth of July, 1808,



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An ORATION, &c.

ONCE MORE, Fellow-Citizens, are we assembled, in common with thousands, and tens of thousands of the Sons of Freedom, to pay the tribute of respect to that day, which forms the brightest era in the annals of history, the day, on which the unconquerable head of Liberty, triumphing over the efforts of tyranny and oppression, raised the glorious trophy of success, to an admiring world; the day, which in announcing our Independence, registered the States of America, amongst the empires of the earth.

In detailing the causes, events and effects of our Revolution, let me hope for the candid indulgence of my auditors, for any defects arising from want of habits, in composition and delivery.

The causes, which led to this great revolutionary struggle, present a striking contrast, to the origin of Revolutions, both in ancient and modern times; in the former, by inflaming the minds of the people, some popular ambitious demagogue, easily stimulated them, to hurl one tyrant from empire, and with as much facility, persuaded them to wear the chains of another—while in the latter, superstition and bigotry, with all their train of evils, have desolated the fairest countries of the world.

The contest between Britain and her Colonies, did not originate in a popular delusion, excited by the wiles of ambition, but in the sound dictates of reason and reflection.

DRIVEN from the country which had given

them birth, by bigotted intolerance, and religious persecution, our hardy fore-fathers, with that daring enterprize, and love of liberty, which has characterized their descendants, boldly encountered the dangers of a long and perilous voyage, to secure to themselves, in a distant, inhospitable and unknown region, that freedom of religious practice and sentiment, which the illiberal policy of their countrymen, had denied to them in the Eastern World.

As their Barks approached these western shores, it is easier to imagine, than describe the emotions of joy, with which these wandering pilgrims, descried their long sought asylum—with transports of pleasure, they hail the auspicious land, and with bended knees, and uplifted hands, proclaim their gratitude and adoration of that Divine Power, which had protected them from the perils of the “ vasty deep.” In reverting to the horrors of their situation, thinly scattered over a country, inhabited by aborigines, of the most warlike and ferocious disposition, exercising a new and peculiar savage mode of warfare, often suffering under the severe pressure of famine, and without laws, except such as immediate necessity and circumstances required—the melancholy retrospect, while it wrings the heart of humanity, impresses on the mind, the most sublime admiration, of the fortitude and virtues of these bold and persevering adventurers. Lest like an unprotected plant, to blossom in the desert, they grew under their hardships and thrived under neglect. Agriculture flourished under their industry, and their never failing enterprize, laid the foundations of more extensive settlements.

The prosperity which had crowned their exertions, and the liberty which resulted from them, induced large emigrations from England; and the government of that country, in contemplating this rising and advantageous addition to its empire, now discovered the policy, of protecting their hitherto

neglected children, and of appointing governors to rule over them. It would vastly exceed my limits, to detail the progress of their improvement, and the rapid extension of their commerce. But it would seem, that the revenue which had flowed into the British Exchequer, from the Commerce of the Colonies, and the exclusive monopoly of an highly advantageous trade, had only awakened a greater cupidity in the British Ministers, to shackle this rising people, with more harassing extortions. The ever memorable Stamp and Mutiny Acts, followed by other internal taxes, and burthens, roused a spirit of liberty and opposition, which animated the Colonies from their northern extremity, to their southern boundary. Thus, the energy and enterprize of an industrious yeomanry, were designed to be cramped and enfeathered, by the most odious system of taxation; a system, adopted without their consent, or that of their representatives. This departure from the acknowledged principle, of all *free* governments, that Taxation and Representation are inseparable, could never be tamely submitted to by the colonists:—With firm hearts, and determined minds, they resolved to maintain its inviolability, at the risk of life, fortune, and all that was dear to them.

In this effervescent state of the public mind, when acts of moderation, might have abated the heat of popular phrenzy, the rash and ill advised measures of marching a military force into the town of Boston, and stationing an armed soldiery, in the hall of their Representatives, fanned the fury of an exasperated people into a rage, which at no distant period, was to be hurled upon their oppressors.

The enthusiastic spirit which now animated all America, led to the call of a general Congress, for the purpose of uniting, and directing their efforts, to the attainment of their object. The address of this august body, to the people of Great-Britain, strongly evinces the talents, by which it was compo-

sed.—“ When” say they, “ a nation led to greatness, by the hand of liberty, descends to the ungrateful task of forging chains for her friends and children, and instead of giving support to freedom, turns advocate for slavery and oppression, there is reason to suspect, she has either ceased to be virtuous, or been extremely negligent in the appointment of her rulers. In almost every age, in repeated conflicts, in long and bloody wars, as well civil as foreign, your great and glorious ancestors maintained their independence, and transmitted the rights of men and the blessings of liberty to your posterity.”

“ ~~Be~~ not surprized, therefore, that we, who are descended from the same common ancestors—that we, whose fore-fathers participated in all the rights, the liberties, and the constitution you boast of, and who have carefully conveyed the same fair inheritance to us, should refuse to surrender them to men, who found their claims on no principle of reason, and who prosecute them with a design, that by having *our* lives and property in their power, they may with greater facility enslave *you*.—Are not, say they, the proprietors of the soil of Great-Britain, lords of their own property? Can it be taken from them without their consent—will they yield it to the arbitrary disposal of any man whatever? You know they will not.—Why then, are the proprietors of the soil of America, *less* lords of *their* property, than you are of *yours*, or why should they submit it to the disposal of *your* parliament, or any other parliament of the world, not of their own election? Can the intervention of the sea, that divides us, cause disparity in rights, or can any reason be given, why subjects who live 3000 miles from the Royal Palace, should enjoy *less* liberty than those who are 300 from it. After a solemn appeal to the justice of their countrymen, they conclude with this firm expression of their unalterable determination.—But if neither the voice of justice, the dic-

tates of the law, the principles of the constitution, nor the suggestions of humanity, can restrain your hands from shedding blood, in such an *impious* cause, we must then tell you, that we will never submit to be hewers of wood, or drawers of water, for any ministry or nation in the world."

THIS masterly appeal to national feelings, as well as one to the King; instead of appeasing, seem- ed only to urge a misguided ministry, to further acts of violence. In vain did the splendid talents of the venerable Chatham, attempt propositions of harmon- y—In vain was the bold and manly eloquence of a Burke displayed, to divert the impending storm, which with an awful gloom, hung over our political horizon, and soon with "explosion vast" burst over it.

PLACES, inconsiderable in themselves, often derive importance, from having commemorated the scene of some interesting event: Thus the mention of the town of Lexington, will ever vibrate on the feelings of Americans, with peculiar force. 'Twas here, that the blood of the martyrs of patriotism, first flowed: 'Twas here, that Britons were taught the first lesson, that even an undisciplined militia, warmed by the impulse of liberty, could successful- ly oppose a mercenary regular army.

THE battle of Breeds Hill, which soon follow- ed, fully confirmed our countrymen, in the confi- dence, with which they had at first been inspired— soon convinced them, that without bravery and ex- ertion, they could never hope to obtain the prize for which they contended.

O! Happy! Thrice happy America! 'Twas the finger of Heaven, directed thy guardian genius, in selecting Washington, the immortal Washington, to lead thy armies to victory. The military fame, which this distinguished chief, had early acquired under Braddock and others, stamp'd upon the Pro- vincial Army, a confidence in the conduct and abil-

ities of their commander, which misfortunes could not shake. No man, could be more peculiarly adapted to such a command, than our beloved Washington—to the activity of an Hannibal, and the valor of a Cæsar, he united that “first of moral excellencies, Prudence, the director, regulator, standard of them all; the corrective of virtue herself—for *even* virtue, like the *sun*, has her solstice, beyond which she ought not to move.” But here let me pause: the exhaustless themes of eloquence, can never do justice to the Hero of America—vain would be my efforts to pourtray them.

UNDER all the disadvantages of short enlistments, and want of proper arms, often destitute of clothing, to resist the rigors of inclement seasons, bare footed and pressed by hunger, did our brave soldiers, with more than Spartan fortitude, enduring every fatigue and hardship, face a well provided foe; an army, veterans in military skill, and commanded by generals of the most consummate experience. But even skill and experience are unavailing, when opposed to the enthusiastic ardor of freemen. Their spirits, superior to misfortune, like Anteus of old, rose invigorated from every fall. The war had hitherto been prosecuted with the utmost vigor, with the view of obtaining redress of those grievances, with which the Colonies had been oppressed—But the passions of the Americans were now irritated to the highest pitch, by the operation of war, and the cruelty of hostilities, and they could not reconcile to themselves a return of allegiance to that government, which had caused the miseries of their country. The Rubicon had now been past—to recede was impossible, and principles of Republicanism and Independence, were every where manifested.

At length, the great, the important step was decided on, and the liberty of which we now so justly boast, was this day, thirty-two years ago, announced to Britain and the world, in that master piece of

composition and style, the Declaration of Independence.

The proud and dignified stand, which America had assumed, could never be relinquished with honor; she had pledged herself for the maintenance of its principles, and this consideration added a yet more energetic force, than had hitherto been displayed to her exertions.

In viewing the attainment of objects, of your dearest solicitude, our minds are seldom disposed to analyze the principles of the causes, which have produced them. Whatever might have been the motives or policy of the Court of Versailles, which dictated an union of their arms, and an offensive and defensive alliance with the United States, yet have the good effects of them never been doubted—altho' irritations and jealousies often appeared between the American and French forces, the splendid advantages gained over the common foe, were attended with the happiest effects. Conciliatory propositions were made to Congress, by the British Administration, who anticipated the compleat overthrow of their wishes and intentions—But the United States, now stood pledged by the most solemn obligation to their allies, the French—in obligation, which forbade them, without a derogation from national justice and gratitude, to accept of any terms, but those which were bottomed on a general peace, and the compleat and unequivocal recognition of their Independence by Britain.

The people of England, who had been led to the belief, that a Regiment of their Regulars, could traverse the continent without resistance, had received the most striking proofs of its fallacy. The unpopularity of a war which had exhausted so much blood and treasure, without the most distant prospect of success, compelled a full acquiescence in these requisitions. A general peace took place, and fame sounded to the world, the full and absolute acknow-

ledgment by Britain, of the Independence of the Thirteen States of America.

THUS, after years of contention and suffering, Americans once more hailing the blessings of freedom, beheld the olive of peace shooting forth its blossoms, and the rich treasures of Ceres, waving their golden heads, over that soil, which the best blood of their citizens had manured. Through an extensive vista of years, they again beheld the glowing prospect of happiness. On those ensanguined plains, which lately had been the theatre of war, where contending armies had been marshal'd in dread array, and where carnage had stalked around, the happy farmer, forgetting wars alarms, "seized the plough, and greatly independent lived." "Again the sons of art renewed their labors," and "trade and joy in every busy street, mingling were heard.—Commerce loosened every sheet, and resigned her spreading vessels to the wind."

BUT while we indulge in the pleasing emotions, which are excited in our minds, by the happy effects of our independence, let us not forget a tribute of grateful recollection, to the manes of those departed Heroes, who contributed to its acquisition. **Ye shades of Warren, Mercer, Laurens, Montgomery, Greene;** and ye host of martyred patriots, of illustrious dead, look down with complacency from the mansions of bliss—view the gratitude of your happy countrymen, and read in their hearts the indelible record of your virtues, which time cannot erase.

THE mind of man, in contemplating the accomplishment of a favorite object, often imagines compleat happiness, will attend its possession—But this was a delusion, of which in a little time, America had to experience the fallacy. The Republics of America, now afloat upon the ocean of experiment, were soon convinced, that although their confederation, a compact formed by reciprocity of sen-

iments, and principles, was adequate to the defeat of their enemies, and the attainment of their liberty, yet, that it was not competent to allay the billows of party and the distraction of state jealousies. The talents and patriotism of the union, were again called into action, and to their influence and perseverance, are we indebted for the blessings, which, as the freest people of the earth, we now enjoy, under our excellent **FEDERAL CONSTITUTION**.—To this wisest of all institutions, this palladium of our liberties, this glorious charter of our rights, this temple of American freedom, our Washington had laid the corner stone, and his admiring and grateful country, again called him from his calm retreat, to preside over its destinies. Our American Cincinnatus, whose "breast with all the sage, the patriot and the hero burned," who had devoted his best days to the service of his country, who had led her to independence, and the pulse of whose patriotism did not cease to beat, but with life, could not resist the ardent wishes of his fellow-citizens, and the acclamations of three millions of freemen, hailed him as the first **PRESIDENT** of the **UNITED STATES**.

His military talents of Washington, had been the theme of universal admiration, but his policy as a statesman, has gained him immortal renown.—During an administration of eight years, by a strict and impartial adherence to the most rigid neutrality, with a steady and masterly hand, he guided our political bark, through the turbulent waves of party contention, and preserved to the United States a continuance of that peace, which during a struggle of belligerents, would so eminently conduce to their prosperity.

After serving his country faithfully for forty-five years, the weight of declining age, admonished Washington, of the repose which nature required; but in retiring from public life, his anxiety for the welfare and prosperity of his countrymen, which

still remained unabated, was expressed in his valedictory address—A rich legacy of paternal precepts, which every American should treasure up in his memory as a political chart, the strict observation of which, will preserve us from splitting on the rocks of party, from being engulfed in the tide of foreign influence, or being wrecked on the strand of despotism. But I am again attempting a task to which I am unequal, the illustration of the character and virtues of Washington—He has descended to the silent tomb, and a lapse of ten years, has not weakened the vibration of sorrow, which beats on our hearts—The chords of our affections, will be ever attuned to his praise, and unborn ages will glory in his example.

BREAVED by the high dispensation of Heaven, of the directing hand of a Washington, yet had our highly favored Republic, in the two succeeding administrations, happily progressed under the mild influence of peace, in the attainment of all those advantages which can tend to the prosperity of a nation. The demon of party discord, and the monster treason, had reared their hideous heads amongst us in vain.—While manufactures were daily encreasing, commerce wafted our ships to every part of the globe; laden with the rich products of a fruitful country; and an overflowing treasury, proved us to be in a state of prosperity, which the belligerents could not but view with jaundiced eyes.—“Base envy withers at anothers joy, and hates that excellence it cannot reach.” Too long, had Britain, the proud tyrant of the ocean, feeling power and forgetting right, been in the habit of impressing American citizens from our merchantmen; and long had her jealousy been excited, by the splendid advantages derived by an extended commerce, from our neutral situation. While our ministers at her court, were occupied in friendly negociation—while her ships were partaking in our waters of the sacred rights of

hospitality, in the moment of unsuspecting confidence, was our sovereignty violated, our citizens murdered, a frigate of the United States attacked, and oh! shameful debasement, surrendered without resistance, to the British Leopard.

GREAT GOD! has then that daring valor and persevering American spirit, our proudest boast, so degenerated? Can the inheritance derived from our fore fathers, their bright example, be so soon lost? No, my friends, while we consign to the infamy, which they merit, men, who have so tamely resigned, the high trust committed to them, the honor of their country, let us not do injustice to the bravery and patriotism of our countrymen, by supposing for a moment, that the dignity of the American character, will ever again experience a similar degradation.

The wounds inflicted by Britain, are yet open, are yet unatoned for, and the instrument of her vengeance, Berkley, basks in the sunshine of Royal favor. This insult to our national feelings, added to the injury we have received, and the deadly blow, aimed at our late flourishing commerce, by her Orders of Council, illy accord with her insidious professions of amity—Professions, which our government must reject with indignation, unless accompanied by the substantial reparation, which is due to the injured honor and interests of an independent and spirited people.

ALTHOUGH natural enemies, yet have France and Great-Britain, exhibiting a phenomenon in politics, united in every measure of hostile aggression, against our unprotected commerce, in the endeavor to annoy each other. But independent of these motives, for the destruction of an enemy, whose sea-girt coast, and powerful navy, present a barrier to his ambition.

NAPOLION, the tyrant and oppressor of Continental Europe, whose every ascending step to power, has been marked with blood, and whose more than

regal pomp and splendor, have been erected upon the ruins of liberty, cannot dissemble his hatred, to *this*, the only remaining Republic of the world— A free and republican people, are as a basilisk to his eyes, and their happy form of government, a silent reproach to his ambition.

CONTENDING for universal domination, he has declared that we shall no longer remain neutral; and that we must adopt the alternative of fighting for, or against him—Until this choice is made, he has taken *into safe keeping*, the property of our merchants, and has given us the most *blazing* proofs of his determination to coerce us to his imperial command. And will America, who has so long drank of the cup of liberty, now dash it from her lips at the command of a despot? No, her sons, nurtured in the lap of freedom, and breathing the inspiration of '76, will exclaim—We and our fathers fought for, and obtained the independence, which secures to us, the liberty of thinking and acting for ourselves; we will not now relinquish this dear earned privilege—“ We will never seek the battle, nor shun it when it comes.” The same unanimity, which erected the standard of freedom in our land, will enable us to resist the aggressions, of either the Leviathan of the Deep, or the Mammoth of the Land.

VOLUNTEERS! an awful cloud of the most threatening aspect, hangs over us, and “ furcharged with wrathful vapor, unusual darkness broods.” We stand, as upon a precipice, viewing the gathering storm, and knew not how soon, we may be precipitated into the dreadful abyss of war. This unexpected change in our situation and prospects, like the mutability of all sublunary things, is the work of one short year. On the last celebration of this day, sacred to independence, we were sacrificing to pleasure and conviviality at the festive board—“ The song and the catch went round,” and our souls were attuned to harmony—It was announced to you that

the national character of our country, had been fulfilled—that the flag of America had been struck, to the superior force of British aggression. Mirth fled from our hearts, and indignation for the insult, succeeded. With an unanimity and promptitude, which will ever do you honor—with a patriotism, which will ever recall to your minds, the most pleasing emotions, you offered your services, and pledged your lives and fortunes, at the altar of your country.

VOLUNTEERS! the storm has not passed over us—the thunder yet rolls over our heads—Let us be still prepared to meet the high expectations of America, to rush into danger at her call, to fulfil the solemn pledge which we have given, and to exert our utmost energies, in defence of our beloved country.

NATIVES of America! the soil which gave you birth, has a natural claim upon your exertions. Your families and dearest friends will look up to you for protection; for the support of your honor and character, as soldiers.

ADOPTED sons of America! you have partaken of the freedom of this happy land—evinced your gratitude, by firm attachment to its cause, and by devoting your lives, if required, to its service and protection. Bound by the endearing ties of sociability and harmony, which unite us as citizens and soldiers, and by a sacred love of our common country, let us convince the most sceptical, that the Volunteer Militia of the Union, are its best defence and safest bulwark.

When the word of command is given, let us repair to our standards, and prove ourselves Soldiers of the American Republic.



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