

A N
O R A T I O N,

**IN COMMEMORATION OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,
PRONOUNCED AT THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING-HOUSE,**

IN SUTTON,

IN THE AUDIENCE OF THE INHABITANTS,

**HONORED WITH THE PRESENCE OF MANY
RESPECTABLE CHARACTERS FROM THE TOWNS
IN THE VICINITY,**

ON TUESDAY, JULY 4th, 1809.

By EDMUND MILLS.

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1809.


SUTTON, 5th July, 1809.

DEAR SIR,

THE Committee, chosen by the Gentlemen who attended the celebration of our American Independence yesterday, return you thanks, for your truly elegant, patriotic and impartial Oration, pronounced before them, and request a copy for the Press.

With the highest respect,

We are, Dear Sir,

Your Friends, and Humble Servants,

CALEB BURBANK,
AMASA BRAMAN,
DANIEL TENNEY, JUN.

REV. EDMUND MILLS.

SUTTON, July 5, 1809.

GENTLEMEN,

I RECEIVE with very pleasing sensibility the favorable opinion, you have the complaisance to express, relative to the performance of yesterday. As I had returned from a journey but a few days previous to the recently celebrated period, and frequent interruptions in that short space, *some* difference *may* appear in it, from the press. In submitting it, however, to publication there may be a failure of even proper solicitude for personal reputation, and what is more, for the satisfaction of those who may attempt its perusal.

I have the pleasure to be,

Gentlemen, with high respect,

Your cordial friend and very humble servant.

EDMUND MILLS.

General CALEB BURBANK,
Doctor AMASA BRAMAN,
Lieut. DANIEL TENNEY, JUN.



A N
O R A T I O N.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,

YOU will give me leave to congratulate you, on this anniversary period of our National Independence ; and especially, that the information received from your respectable committee, relative to its celebration, is so perfectly at agreement with the social feelings of man. By them it is understood, that all discordant passions, and interruptive remarks, are to be excluded from the justifiable festivity of the present occasion. In testimony of this, will stand forever your honorable proposal, relative to a coalescence in the solemnization of the event before us. If therefore, the fire of party spirit be requisite to constitute our happiness this day, we shall have but a miserable time of it. If, pouring censure and contempt upon fellow-citizens be requisite, to give vivacity and hilarity to the social scene, we shall have neither life nor spirit. If, criminating or applauding men or measures, so congenial to the spirit and mode of these times, be requisite, to give us a dignified stand, then we shall do well to

be content with one that is low. And, indeed, if making any observations, or exhibiting any conduct wearing an unsocial unfriendly aspect, belong to a grateful recognition of the event, by which we are convened, then be satisfied, that it pass without further notice. We hesitate not to say, these things are all prohibited any part or lot, in the arrangements, or transactions of the day. They are not only secluded from the province we occupy, but are doomed to have the curtain of oblivion drawn over them.

PERCEIVING then, Fellow-Citizens, that you are not convened for the purpose of calling to remembrance, the sins and follies of our country, nor for reviewing the dreary parts of the way, through which we have passed, it is with pleasure the present stand is now taken. The object therefore, shall be to pronounce sentiments worthy of this audience, and which shall be opportunely chosen, interesting and important, in the view of this numerous, and respectable assembly. In the mean time, should there be a failure of discerning either time or judgment, as to any thing that may be said, you will have the goodness to ascribe it to the want of skill, not of desire.

WITH these impressions we proceed serenely, and with hope of success to enquire, IN WHAT MAN-

HOW CAN THE STATE OF SOCIETY BE MELIORATED,
AND ITS HAPPINESS OF CONSEQUENCE INCREASED ?

THIS inquiry, amidst the existing painful derangements of social order, seemeth to alleviate the ingenuous feeling mind, and irresistibly to occupy its attention ; and should it receive a just, proper, and distinct answer, in the course of the following remarks, the object in view would be gained, and delusive calculations would be prostrated. Here it may be observed, that in respect to the periods of the world, and of nations, in which to make the present inquiry, relative to social felicity, there is doubtless considerable of a choice.

THE same holds true, in respect to any point, within the limits of human investigation. An inquiry, totally pertinent at one period, might lose all its pertinency at another, and the same inquiry, urged by things existing in one place, might be rejected, by things existing in another. The state of society, if properly heeded, will generally suggest the most interesting, and the most seasonable observations. Were an inquiry to be brought forward at present, in regard to astronomy, mathematics, or chymistry, it would be thought very untimely introduced. There is a time, however, or season, suitable for every thing, in its place, and to ascertain this, and be at agree-

ment with it, is the principal thing to be heeded, in every public address. Fortunately introduced, therefore, is that inquiry, for which, the human mind is previously prepared, and for the illustration, understanding, and reception of which, surrounding events and circumstances, all give their united aid. The present inquiry, is conceived to be thus favored. If so, the very proposal of it may seem to be, about the whole that is requisite—the mind thus aided, will need but very little assistance from any other resource. Every man is taught by his own experience, that the state of society needs meliorating, and by his own observation, that events, unusual in their rapidity, and alarming in their aspect, are passing over the world. The present period then, may be noticeable, for instructive lessons. It may exceed any previous one, in respect to the acquirement of intelligence, and the urgency of making a proper use of it. It may indeed be, the most opportune season, for ascertaining the manner, without the least delusive reliance, by which the state of society can be amended, and its happiness of consequence increased. And especially correct is this sentiment thought to be in regard to this country: If it be admitted that society may have assigned to it three general states, namely, that of rudeness, that of refinement, and that of decay, it may

serve to justify in part, the opinion which is now advanced. In the rude state of society, men appear to be feebly united, to adopt some species of government, to begin the exercise of the powers of reason, to display faintly the social virtues, and to act under the obscure light of morality. In the refined state, human abilities arrive to their greatest glory, the arts and sciences are cultivated, industry and affluence join hand in hand, pleasing prospects are indulged, and social affections have the strongest influence upon the sentiments and conduct of men. In the third state of society, are the painful marks of declension and decay, perfectly congenial to the fate of all things temporal. To continue long in the same state, is not in the nature of human affairs. The circumstances of mankind are usually changing for the better, or for the worse. Their manners are in the same fluctuating condition; and they scarce arrive to the standard of refinement, to the golden age of society, but they begin imperceptibly to decline. When opulence is acquired, its natural attendants, luxury and effeminacy step forward, enervate the sinews of society, and its glory depreciates and hastens to extinction. These are the impressions that will naturally be made upon the human mind, in consequence of a general view of the progress and decline of society.

Hence, it is a clear point, that in its declining state, an inquiry relative to its happiness, would meet but a miserable attention, and therefore, would not certainly be chosen. Equally clear is it, that a similar inquiry would meet a similar fate, in the rude state, and for the same reason. What then, is to be the fate of this inquiry at present? To doom it to a miserable attention, on the ground of being, by the designating scale of society, either in that of rudeness, or declension, we shall surely have no heart; and were we even thus disposed, we could not do it, because, we evidently are, in the intermediate province. To give it a treatment, therefore, becoming those in the province where the energies of the mind are awake and efficient, will be indispensable. Whether we be far advanced in this state, or have many grades to ascend to reach the height of it, still, we may have arrived to that stand in society, which is peculiarly favourable, to the contemplation of measures for its peace, and prosperity. It may, indeed, greatly alleviate even the public mind at this period, worn out of patience with the follies of the day, to advert to an inquiry of the nature of that before us. And surely, there is no point within the province of civil concernments, to which attention can be turned to greater advantage. Especially, con-

sidering that the stage of society, at which we now are, presents more useful and solid instruction, whereby to form just conceptions of things, requisite to its melioration, than have ever fallen, within the reach of any people. Is it not conceded and without exception, that this country has been peculiarly privileged;—"that with respect to their government and its administration, they have possessed their whole hearts desire." Is it not granted, that an experiment has been made in these United States, for peace and prosperity, on the highest calculating scale, that was ever formed in the political world—that no people, ever set forward with more pleasing, and promising aspects, and that, the pleasures of social intercourse were anticipated, in their most attractive charms? And what has been the amount? *Have* the prospects been maintained, and the calculations carried forward upon as high a key, as constructed? Experience indeed, has taught us that the happiness and glory, so much talked of, at home, and abroad, have not in truth, been realised. Are we not therefore, at that stage in society, which presents opportunity for contemplations in respect to its melioration, and consequent peace, less entangled with delusive ideas, than at any former period? On this ground there are a few things, which deserve a distinct, and momentary

consideration. Let it therefore, be considered, whether, at this period of the world, sound expectations can be entertained, that the state of society will be much softened, its roughness hewn off, and its happiness materially increased, by any manner, or form of civil government, which can be adopted? We readily grant, that high calculations have often been made from this source, as to social peace and prosperity. We also grant it probable, that some forms of civil government admit, of better prospects than others, nevertheless, it will *now* be a given point, the state of society, may be miserable, under any form, of whatever nature or description. What civil constitution is the best, or what mode of government, is most adapted to promote the peace and happiness of mankind, remains in a state of indecision, that is, a universal agreement on this head, has not as yet, been formed. There is doubtless, however, some one form of civil government, which deservedly has the preference of all others. And be it so, indeed, that we in this country, are distinguishedly favoured in this regard—admit “that a comparison of our condition with that of any other people, must be sufficient to convince every one, of the enviable situation in which we are placed, and of the superior means afforded us, of enjoying all the blessings, of which social life is

capable," nevertheless, *have these blessings in fact been enjoyed?* Has there not been, an alarming suspension of them? Has it not so happened, that with the very best of civil constitutions in our hands, the pleasures of social intercourse, and all the endearing charities of life, have been very much, and very painfully interrupted? Indeed, has it not been justly remarked, "that unless we can prevail on ourselves, to soften our asperities, to yield a portion of our prejudices, to the common good, we put in imminent hazard, the morals and prosperity of the citizens, and even the safety, and freedom of the commonwealth." If so, there results but slender hope, as to the happiness of society, from the best system of civil government, ever formed, or adopted.

AND further, let it be considered, whether much expectation can be justifiably entertained, relative to the melioration, peace and happiness of society, by the diffusion of knowledge, ever so extensively made? Very confident have been the hopes of many, that if correct information could be disseminated, it would cure men, of every thing amiss, both in speculation and practice. That if just views were received, of their civil constitutions, of the leading points of government, of men and measures, together with the seeds of general knowledge, society would feel, directly, and permanently, their happy effects. It is at

once granted, that the diffusion of knowledge is an important object, and that it merits universal attention. To this truth, the exertions of the Commonwealth, and of the Country in general, bear indeed very honorable testimony. If intelligence then, be highly interesting, as it respects mankind at large, particularly, is it so in regard to a people “in whom by the constitution, all power resides, and who, for their prosperity, safety, and happiness, have instituted civil government.” And yet, as in the religious province, so in the civil. In the religious province, a man, though he have all knowledge, and understanding all mysteries, and remove mountains, may notwithstanding, be a miserable member of religious society. So in the civil province, though a man, know every thing that ought to be done, and the best time of doing it, though he penetrate the whole circle of jurisprudence, and thus seem ready to every good word and work, he may notwithstanding, be a miserable member of civil society. There is alas, too much of truth in the observation sometimes made, that the most intelligent, are often the most mischievous, and destructive members of society. We do not mean, however, to say any thing with a view, to enervate exertions for the acquirement of knowledge. We do not mean to depreciate in the minds of any, so important an object—nevertheless, we do

mean to say, that calculating upon a better, improved state of society, so as to increase its felicity from the diffusion of knowledge simply, is proceeding in near relation to the forlorn hope.

AND this is not all, we ought for a moment further to inquire, whether unshaken reliance can be indulged, that society will proceed regularly, and its happiness be increased, from the consideration of the very best *rulers*? Here, we wish to speak with the utmost caution, and to acknowledge, the incalculable blessing, conferred on any people, who have their public concerns, lodged in the hands, of upright and skilful men. That things were usually, in a desirable train with the people of Israel, when favoured with good rulers, cannot be denied. Equally applicable, to any other people, may have been the same truth, when indulged with the same blessing, still there have been noticeable exceptions. Painful instances of this kind, presenting interesting instruction, may be found in the history of Nations. Facts, however, of this description, which have taken place in our own country, and which all of us may recognize, will be the most convincing. Under the presidency then, of even WASHINGTON himself, it is well known, the seeds of incalculable mischief, and abuse were sown. Not only so, but open infractions of laws, by citizens, under the best government, and administration were com-

mitted, and a painful necessity introduced, for a
 summon to arms. Striking evidence this, indeed,
 that no infallible connexion subsists, between the
 regular, meliorated, happy state of society, and
 the very best rulers, and therefore reliance ought
 not to be placed upon it, from this consideration.
 The inquiry then returns, in what manner can
 the object in view be effected, or must we leave it
 in a state of desparation? Are we cut off, from the
 pleasing hope of those blessings, of which social
 life is capable? Can any way be pointed out, for
 the melioration and consequent happiness of man-
 kind, upon which reliance may indeed be placed?
 Verily, there is no need for the least despondency,
 in regard to this point, for, *by the reception only,
 of patriotic sentiments, and the exhibition of patriotic
 conduct, society rises, to its most eligible state.* This
 it is conceived, is a just, proper, and distinct an-
 swer, to the inquiry before us, and it is believed
 the only sure one, that can be given. By the re-
 ception of patriotic sentiments, and the exhibition
 of patriotic conduct, every thing pertaining to the
 peace, prosperity, and happiness of society, is
 pleasingly introduced, and safely protected. This
manner, therefore, of thinking and living, would
 powerfully operate to cure men, of whatever may
 be amiss in their political creed, or practice.—It
 is the very thing needed in this country. It is
 the very thing requisite, to complete the glory, of

the civil stand we have taken. Let the prescription, therefore, now proposed be followed, and the object in view is totally gained. The language and conduct of fools, would subside, for there would be none of this description. On the other hand, disregard patriotic sentiments, and patriotic conduct, and be the government, of whatever nature, or kind it may, be the diffusion of knowledge ever so extensive, be the rulers the very best men, still the misery of man, will be great upon him, and social order will be prostrated.

Do we wish then, to see the state of society softened, and improved, its peace and happiness increased, the way is obvious, perfectly open to, and within the limits of every man. Every one has it in his power to regard his country more, than his own will, or his own will, more than his country, and when the latter becomes true of a man, he becomes, unfit to be a member of a free state. No good reason can be given, why any man, be his profession, occupation, or condition what it may, should fall behind the ancient Spartans and Romans, as to patriotic principles, or conduct. *Their* patriotism, is well known, and has been justly admired; and surely, it ought not to shine with less brilliancy in modern times. To cherish in our bosoms, this noble passion, and to give it a proper display, it is requisite, "to pursue our private interests, as

subordination, to the good of our country, to be examples in it, of virtue and morality, to choose for rulers, the best friends of its constitution and its liberties, to embrace every opportunity for advancing its prosperity, to contribute for the defence and support of our country, and if need be, to die for it." These are among the duties of patriotism, and which every man who has the happiness, to be a citizen of the United States, owes to his country.

With sentiments of this description, supported by correspondent conduct, we may look forward, and give indulgence, to the most pleasing prospects. We may expect, speedily, the funeral of party spirit, and without any attendants. We may with reason anticipate the very height of national glory and felicity. Present appearances in the United States, after a long and tedious eclipse, are indeed auspicious. Already have they been welcomed with that warmth of attachment, which rational liberty inspires. Duly to estimate its just rights, the public mind, is never better prepared, than when emerging from a state of depression. Be it then our care, by patriotism in heart, and in deportment, to foster our rights, and hand them down unimpaired even to the latest posterity.