

Mr. Morel's

Oration.

AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED AT LENOX

JULY 4th, 1808.

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE ANNIVERSARY

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY GEORGE MOREL. A. B.



PRINTED AT LENOX,

July, 1808.

To Mr. MOREL

SIR

THE Committee of Arrangements are requested, by the Citizens of *Lenox*, to express to you their approbation of your **ORATION**, this day delivered, to thank you for your exertions in the Republican cause, and to apply to you for a copy for the Press.

We assure you that the Committee cheerfully comply with this request.

By order of the Committee of Arrangements,

ELIJAH NORTHRUP.

Lenox, July 4th, 1808

To Col. E. NORTHRUP.

**CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OF
ARRANGEMENTS.**

SIR

NOTHING but the earnest solicitations of my friends, and the great desire I have ever to oblige them, could have induced me to comply with your request.

After having made a few verbal alterations, which, from the shortness of notice, and the haste with which it was composed, I had not time previously to do; I humbly submit it to your candour, and to the candour of an enlightened public.

I am, Sir, with great
respect, your most
humble Servant,

GEORGE MOREL.

Lenox, July 4th, 1808.



An Oration.



FELLOW CITIZENS.

AT a time, when Liberty is swept from the face of the European world; and her name almost extinguished in the conflict of nations, and in the horrors and devastations of war; how ought we to rejoice on this anniversary of our national Independence, and adore the goodness of that divine Providence, who has hitherto preserved us from such afflicting calamities!

On the return of this pleasing anniversary the voice of Liberty once more resounds in our ears, proclaiming to us and to the world, our blessings and our happiness.

This harmonious sound returns not to the sable African, groaning under the lash of an imperious Master;—it returns not to the dark and benighted savage;—it returns not to the unfortunate and distressed European prostrated under the iron hand of despotism!—But it returns to us, my Countrymen, to cheer and comfort us in this “hour of perilous magnanimity.”

Liberty after visiting many nations of the Globe, seeking, in vain, for an asylum, at length set her foot on this happy clime, and emancipated “millions of souls” from thralldom and bondage! Here she has erected her standard—here she dispenses her blessings,—she has blessed us with a government, which sheds its benign influence throughout the whole community; which is framed, not for the aggrandizement of a few individuals, but for the general welfare, and protection of the whole body of the people. Here no tyrannical laws check the researches of the Philosopher—no religious test forbids the free enquirer investigating the mysteries of natural and revealed religion, but both are at liberty to open the recesses of nature, and explain the works of nature’s GOD!

The causes of the revolution, which raised the indignant spirit of freemen, and gave birth to the day we now celebrate, are so faithfully recorded in the annals of history, and so firmly impressed on the breast of every true American, that their events need not be particularly detailed. Suffice it to say, that the tyrannical acts of the British Parliament, had reduced us to a state too humiliating for men to bear, who felt the sacred fire of liberty and true patriotism burning in their breasts! But indignantly spurning from them the proffered yoke, fought for liberty and independence. After a long and obstinate struggle, in which, raw and inexperienced militia, destitute of arms, provisions and cloathes, were opposed to disciplined and well organized troops;—want and poverty to wealth and plenty. They finally erected the altar of liberty on the

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ruins of tyranny and oppression ! They possessed the hearts of freemen whom “ no danger can appal, no force resist.” It is with the sincerest pleasure and the greatest heartfelt satisfaction, that I see before me many of those venerable patriots and heroes, whose days have not yet been shortened by the hand of time, who were actors in that grand drama ; and to whom, any description I could give, would be but a feeble representation of the trials, and deprivations of that day.

At the accomplishment of the revolution, those patriots and statesmen who had conducted our Nation with such ability, through a long and arduous war, framed a government which claims the admiration of the world. Which, by the nice construction of its parts, and the exact balance of powers, secures to us national independence and individual liberty. This is truly a government founded on the “ social compact ” which all good men and lovers of freedom had anxiously looked for ; but which was believed to exist, only in the fanciful speculations of the theorist. The honor, the praise was reserved to us, for shewing the practicability of it, and of demonstrating to the world that the people are capable of governing themselves. In no manner can the advantages of our government, be so fully displayed, as by contrasting it with other governments.

Look to the governments of Europe, and where shall we find one that possesses such superior advantages as ours.

In the government of Poland we behold a

remnant of the feudal system, united with a kind of Democracy. In this heterogeneous mass, which consisted of three departments, there was not that balance of power, which is requisite for the preservation of every free constitution. The King did not possess sufficient power to quell the haughty and turbulent spirit of the Nobles, who decided all their disputes by arms, in defiance of their laws and constitution. But the privilege, which any member of the representative department possessed, of putting his "liberum veto" upon all state proceedings, effectually destroyed their liberties and gave a death blow to their constitution. This privilege the brave but unfortunate Poles considered as the palladium of their liberties. Strange infatuated nation! Little did they think that by the exercise of this very privilege, they were heaping miseries upon themselves, which oceans of blood could not wash away!

Three neighbouring states, taking advantage of the scisms and divisions of the unfortunate Poles, planned, and executed that nefarious project, the partition of their Kingdom! The accomplishment of that diabolical scheme, which, at the time, was viewed with so much apathy by the European Nations, may be considered one of the first causes which led to the destruction of that balance of power which had been preserved with so much jealousy in Europe. But those Nations have since paid, severely paid for their injustice, their robbery, and their plunder, by drinking deep of the cup of humiliation and degradation.

That Nation, which now rules continental Europe with imperial sway, has witnessed various vicissitudes of fortune. Actuated by too ardent a zeal, and a mistaken notion of true and genuine freedom, we behold them with all the ardour of enthusiasts, dethrone their King, subvert all rank, both civil, and ecclesiastical and endeavour to establish their own freedom on the broad basis of Liberty and Equality. But the people possessed neither sufficient virtue nor patriotism to continue long in this situation. They wanted that knowledge, that information which is essentially requisite for every free people. From this state of anarchy and confusion originated several governments which were soon abrogated, and which has finally ended in a complete despotism !

At the commencement of this revolution almost every American wished them success. They ardently longed, to see the Sun of Liberty, which had dawned with such heavenly brilliancy upon this country, diffusing "its prolific radiance" over the face of the globe, emancipating nations, and establishing the rights of man ! But since the order of things have been changed, we cannot view with the same feelings, that government, the principles of which are so diametrically opposed to our own.

Let us take a short review, of that choice collection of European wisdom. "that stupendous fabrick of human invention" the British government ; and see whether it secures to the governed equal advantages with our own government. Although its citizens possess pri-

vileges, far superior to any other European government, yet they fall much short of those which we enjoy. There is something in monarchical governments, which is incompatible with true and genuine liberty. Where the sovereignty of a Nation resides in one man the people cannot be absolutely free. Notwithstanding the nominal power of the Kings of England is at present considerably limited and restrained, yet their real power falls little short of what it was under their most absolute sovereigns. For what they have lost in prerogative is amply supplied by influence. This influence pervades the whole system of the body politic. It spreads and infuses itself into almost every branch of the government, carrying with it the seeds of monarchy and oppression. Look at what is called their "freedom of election." and the truth of this assertion will be amply verified. Here we behold representatives elected not by the free and unbiassed choice of the people, but by the influence and intrigue of Court parasites and perjured Borough-mongers. Bribery and corruption, with every class of venality, are practised with the most shameless effrontery. Vice and immorality are publicly sanctioned, and a vital stab given to the liberties of the people.

Let us, my countrymen, contemplate for a few moments, the unhappy situation of Ireland. Once, a free and independent nation; happy under the enjoyment of its own laws, participating the blessings of liberty under all the benignity of primeval simplicity.

Now under the cloak of union and a partici.

pation of the privileges of the British constitution, they are reduced to the lowest state of degradation. Their country ravaged, their habitations wrapt in flames, and the peaceable and unsuspecting inhabitant "escaping from the conflagration of his own dwelling" only to receive a more cruel death, from a merciless and unrelenting soldiery! Upwards of four millions of Catholic subjects, to whom, either through bigotry or superstition, a participation of the few privileges which their brethren enjoy, have not yet been extended, and to whom the laws scarcely afford any protection, are now reduced almost to a state of vassalage. Without any spring of action; without any motive for enterprise; and without any inducement to industry, they live in the most abject poverty, gaining a miserable subsistence, either from the scanty productions of their untilled soil, or by robbery and plunder! Neither hath the sacred temple of justice been exempted, from its victims. Its altars have been stained with the blood of Patriots, who suffered in endeavouring to emancipate their country from the chains of British slavery

With what feelings of complacency do we not turn our eyes from these scenes of horror, to behold our own happy situation. Do not our hearts rise in grateful acknowledgements, to that Deity whose goodness and benevolence has placed us in a land of Liberty? who showers down his blessings upon us in the rich profusion of heavenly munificence! under whose fostering care our land has flowed with "milk and honey" which made glad the hearts of its citizens.

AMERICANS.

You possess a country vast in extent, fertile in soil ; and fruitful in resources. Embracing all the happy variety of clime, without any of its excesses. The more northern and middle States, in the temperature of the climate, in the salubrity of the air, and in the face of the Country far surpass the northern countries of Europe. While the more southern and western States, in the almost spontaneous productions of its earth, and in the luxuriance of its soil yield not to the fertile plains of Languedoc, or happy soil of Italy.

Embracing an extensive range of sea-coast ; indented with numerous bays and harbours ; intersected with many navigable streams, whose waves are whitened with the sails of Commerce wafting the produce of the Husbandman to a ready market.

Through the enterprising spirit of the Americans, the wilderness, once the receptacle of beasts, and the haunts of Savages, has been converted into fruitful fields, and splendid villas. Enjoying all these advantages, and possessing such ample resources, our Country has risen in wealth and power with a rapidity, hitherto unexampled in the annals of the world. Scarcely thirty years have elapsed since we became an independent Nation, and we behold the arts and sciences, agriculture and manufactures flourishing ; and our commerce nearly equal that of the first commercial nation on the Globe.

But how far it is our interest to pursue commerce in preference to agriculture, has been

made a question of policy. Commerce as far as it is subservient to agriculture is certainly advantageous ; but when carried beyond this, under a Government, and in a Country like ours, its policy may be truly questioned.

In republican Governments, which are founded on virtue, those avocations ought principally to be pursued, which tend to increase this fundamental principle. Perhaps there is no occupation which tends to encourage morality and virtue so much as the agricultural. The cultivators of the soil, being in general scattered over a large extent of country, surrounded by their families, cultivate those social and domestic virtues which endear man to man, and make life a blessing.

But in all commercial nations and places, the people, by being collected together in large bodies, become vicious and immoral : luxury and effeminacy with all their concomitant evils are introduced : The people become enervated, and lose that zeal, that patriotism, that love of their country, which is necessary for every free government. Artful and designing men taking advantage of this will lull them into a fatal security, and establish their own power on the destruction of the people's.

It likewise becomes us, as an independent nation, to pay particular attention to our manufactures. Possessing all the materials in great abundance, we only want the inclination to carry them to the greatest perfection. And is it not degrading ? Is it not beneath our dignity, as an independent nation, to transport our raw

materials to foreign climes, to be there manufactured and then re-exported to us at a great disadvantage? Are we, who boast of our liberty and independence, thus to be dependant upon foreign nations for the most common and necessary articles of life; even those which with very little exertion we might manufacture ourselves? Our citizens appear to be fully sensible of the impolicy of this, as is fully evinced, by the flourishing state of many of our infant manufactures.

Many individuals and societies have embarked their fortunes in this laudable undertaking, and have engaged in it with a zeal and patriotism which deserves the thanks of their country.

Permit me earnestly to recommend to you, a proper attention to the education of youth. A right attention to this has ever been esteemed, by the greatest statesmen and wisest Philosophers, as the fundamental principle of republics. In our common schools our youth are taught the first rudiments of knowledge, a proper decorum of behaviour, with a due respect to their superiors, which fits them for exercising with ability the important rights of citizens and freemen. Here are sown the first seeds of liberty, virtue and morality, which germinate and perfume our land with their fragrance.

Here they acquire "that learning which is necessary to a knowledge of our Constitution." In this respect, Fellow Citizens, we stand unrivalled. There is no nation on the face of the Globe where the youth are more generally educated, or where the mass of the people

better informed. And on the virtue, the morality, and the knowledge of the people are we to depend, for the stability and duration of our government. While these remain pure and unfulled, we may bid defiance to the thunders and denunciations of the tyrant, or to the arts and intrigues of the Demagogue.

FELLOW CITIZENS.

Soon after the adoption of our admirable constitution, some of our best men and wisest statesmen differed as to the manner of administering it. These separated into parties, who have carried their divisions so far as to endanger our happiness. Although party spirit is, in some degree, favourable to free governments; yet, when conducted with that heat and animosity, which is witnessed at the present day, it seems to forbode a dissolution of our government. This is observable in the state, as well as in the general government.

In this state, we witnessed for many years the ascendancy of that party whose principles, we conceive, militate with the constitution. Permit me to congratulate you on the return of sound principles, and the triumph of our political sentiments over those of the opposition. Although the bodies which surround our Chief Magistrate are, at present, polluted with the waters of Federalism, yet I trust the return of the annual election will wash these stains from the face of your political horizon.

The events of the last election may teach Republicans an useful lesson. It may teach them that art and intrigue may do, when or-

posed to honesty and sincerity. It may teach them in time of trial, to be ever on the alert, to rally round their political standard, and exercise the independent rights of Freemen. For no trust, no dependence, is to be placed upon the actions of Men, who have grown desperate through disappointment.

Let us take a comparative view of the merits of the two parties in our general government, as exemplified in the former, and present administrations. The former administration, in the plenitude of their power, advanced principles and enacted laws, which were odious to the people, and ruinous to the country. An useless provisional army was raised, when the exigencies of the nation did not require it: The national debt was unnecessarily augmented: Our lands and habitations were taxed: Excise and sedition laws were passed, than which, among a free people, nothing can be more odious.

But since the present Administration have come into office, we have seen almost a total renovation of our political system. All those oppressive and injurious measures of the former administration have been abolished, large appropriations have been made to the extinguishment of the national debt, which, if the present system is continued, will be accomplished in the course of a few years. A system of œconomy was adopted, by which our treasury has been filled, and many useless and superfluous officers cut short of their sinecures “in the full tide of” anxious expectation.

Under the skilful guidance and direction of our present Chief Magistrate, the wheels of government have moved with celerity ; our commerce has rapidly increased ; manufactures have flourished ; and the labours of the Husbandman been abundantly crowned with success. The voice of liberty has resounded in our land, and we have reciprocated its blessings.

Ye Patriots and Heroes of the revolution, when you contemplate the happy situation of your Country, do not your hearts exult at the idea, and grateful responses say to you, these are the rewards of our toils,—the rewards of our labours,—and the rewards of our sufferings !

But alas ! These beautiful prospects, these scenes of happiness are now overshadowed by a cloud, which threatens to overwhelm our Country in its inundation. Within the compass of little more than a year, events have occurred, which seem to portend a downfall to liberty, and destruction to the rights of Man. At no period since the revolution, have we been placed in a situation, which called for the abilities and patriotism of the Americans like the present.

From within, we have beheld the development of a conspiracy, which in its extent and progress threatened the dismemberment of our government. Headed by a Man of the most unbounded ambition, in talents inferior to none, enterprising, active, and indefatigable, success was deemed practicable and victory complete. But when he had brought his plans to full maturity, and is about to apply the last torch to the

building, he is arrested, in the fanciful career of his glory, by the potent arm of our government, and brought before the tribunal of his Country. All his visionary schemes of power and greatness vanish in the air, and he suffers all the cruel mortifications of disappointed ambition. Although that nefarious conspiracy is quelled for the present, yet it is to be feared its seeds are rooted deep in the hearts of many of our citizens. It requires us to be ever on the watch lest at some future period they should “start up like Hydras in every corner” and rob our country of its well earned labours.

From without, notwithstanding our government has conducted with the utmost justice and impartiality to foreign nations; yet, on the one hand, we have seen, in defiance of our amicable relations, and of the negotiation that was the pending, one of our national ships, bearing the ensign of sovereignty, attacked and insulted in the most cruel and barbarous manner—Our fellow citizens slaughtered—and our brethren dragged from their native soil to support British tyranny and usurpation! The blood of our murdered countrymen cried to us for vengeance. Our government demanded reparation! But how is it requited? Instead of making that honorable and just reparation, which our country demanded, and which good faith among nations required: they endeavour to deceive us, by false pretences, and by playing off upon us, the chicane and intrigue of a corrupted Court! On the other hand, we behold the dictator of continental Europe, in direct violation of subsisting treaties, sequestering our property and con-

demning our ships. These nations, the one, the tyrant of the ocean, the other, the despot of the continent, have set aside the long accustomed usages of nations, and adopted new customs founded upon no other principle than that of power ! Principles subversive of all amity, of all faith ; and which deprive the neutral of his just and acknowledged rights. The decrees of the one, and the orders of the other, although apparently aimed at each other, militate directly against us as the only neutral nation on the face of the civilized globe.

In this perilous extremity what course were we to pursue ? War, submission, or neutrality lay before us.

It is acknowledged by all that we have just cause of war against both nations. But would it be good policy, would it not even be the height of folly in the present condition of the world, to engage both or either of those nations in war, unless it was absolutely necessary, for the support of our injured rights and wounded honour ? And should we submit ? Submission ! A term not known to the feelings of an American ! Where is there an American who would submit to any Power on earth, while there ran one drop of blood in his veins, with which he might defend his country. Neutrality then was the only course left for our government to pursue. But how were we to remain neutral, as long as our commerce continued on the ocean ? While the the French decrees and the English orders of council remained in force, our commeree could not be continued without involving us in immedi-

ate war. The wisdom of our Rulers foresaw this, which led them to adopt the embargo as the only resort, by which we might support our neutrality.

This measure materially affects both France and England, and needs only the patriotism of the people to make it effectual. Look at the distressed state of their West-India colonies, almost reduced to a state of famine. In England petitions long and loud, from merchants and manufacturers, are daily presented to the throne, praying relief from their distressed situation. France also and her dependencies severely feel the effects of it. But the people are held in such absolute fear that they dare not complain.

We likewise feel some of the effects of this measure. But we have the consolation, that we suffer in the cause of liberty, in the cause of our country! And are we so degenerate that we cannot suffer in our country's cause? Have we so soon proved ourselves unworthy of our liberties? Has the blood which flowed in the veins of our fathers, and which impelled them to action, so soon become contaminated? Forbid it YE SAINTS! Forbid it HEAVEN! No, rather than see our country wronged, and insulted, we are willing to endure any privations. We are willing to oppose our breasts to the "shafts of battle," and either conquer or die in the defence of our freedom. Yes! YE SAINTED PATRIOTS and HEROES, who dwell in regions of bliss, we swear to you, ever faithfully to protect and defend those Liberties and Blessings "for which you fought, for which you bled, and for which you died!"