

AN
ORATION

DELIVERED ON THE FOURTH OF JULY,

1805,

AT THE NORTH MEETING HOUSE,

IN

SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS.

BY ICHABOD NICHOLS, TERC.



S A L E M :

PRINTED BY JOSHUA CUSHING.

1805.

AT a large meeting of the FEDERAL REPUBLICANS of Salem, held at Concert-Hall on the 4th of July, 1805, it was UNANIMOUSLY voted, That the thanks of the meeting be presented to MR. ICHABOD NICHOLS, tertius, for the excellent oration which he has this day delivered, at the solicitation of their Committee of Arrangements, in commemoration of the Independence of the United States of America; and that he be requested to furnish a copy for the press.

VOTED, That the Committee of Arrangements be requested to wait on Mr. NICHOLS for the purpose of carrying the above vote into effect.

*B. GOODHUE,
President of the Meeting.*

Salem, July 5, 1805.

SIR,

I am deeply sensible of the honor, that has been done me by my respectable fellow citizens in their vote of thanks for my oration, and request of a copy for the press—which you have so politely communicated to me. Whatever may be my own wishes, in compliance with theirs, I submit the performance to publication; not doubting that any apology, that can be made, will be candidly considered.

I have the honor to be,

very respectfully,

Your humble servant,

ICHABOD NICHOLS, 3d.

*The Hon. WILLIAM PRESCOTT,
Chairman of the Federal Committee of
Arrangements, &c. }*

AN
O R A T I O N.

THIS is the anniversary of our political nativity. The day, on which we rose to sovereignty, and took rank among the nations. Let no tongue, no bell, no cannon withhold its joy. Decency, patriotism, policy demand it.

BUT, my fellow citizens, however glorious in itself the event, we celebrate, it is impossible altogether to abstract it from the unpleasant circumstances, under which we are convened. Upon this occasion, all should have felt their brotherhood, and been assembled to have rejoiced together over those exalted privileges, those noble treasures, which their ancestors have bequeathed them ; to have congratulated each other, that they remained inviolate ; that no daring hand had rifled, no insidious canker was corroding

roding them ; with honest pride to have exulted, that they were theirs, and should be their children's. A day, upon which all should have conso- ciated to have quenched the burnings of every inflamed passion, and removed the gnawings of every macerating enmity, over the festive board. An anniversary, that was designed to answer the same amicable purposes with the celebrated Olympic festival of ancient Greece : on which all, of every name, of every political feature, and of every garb of sentiment, should have collected to have recognized their individuality ; to have felt, that they were Americans ; and, while warmed by the contemplation of common interests, common blessings, common glories, while glowing with the pride of national character, to have melted into union. How mortifying therefore the thought, that upon a day, when all, for the moment at least, should have been incorporated into one body, and been animated with one soul, such divisions, such animosities should exist, as to render a concurrence of parties not only impracticable, but, perhaps, impolitic ! How mortifying the consideration, that the nearer their approach, the stronger would probably be their repulsion !

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How much soever, my respected fellow citizens, a discussion of Federal and Antifederal measures and principles might be to your vindication and to your honor ; yet, as it would inevitably lead us into comparisons, not the less invidious, because they might be fair ; and to reflections, not the less irritating, because they might be just ; we feel constrained to decline it. At a moment, when all enmities and distinctions should be forgotten, and when you and all real patriots are lamenting, that they are not ; it must be as uncongenial to your feelings, as unsuitable to the occasion, to declaim upon inflammatory points. For declamation is the only alternative, after the judicious illustration of those subjects, which you have received from my predecessor. Leaving these important topics to those, whose course of study and extensive acquaintance with the political world have given greater authority to their opinions ; we solicit your attention, for the few minutes, we propose to engage it, to an examination of some of the principal causes of those unhappy differences, which, at this moment in particular, it is impossible, not peculiarly to deprecate : and if, in prosecution of the subject, we shall be so fortunate, as to suggest
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any considerations, calculated to promote the cause of harmony, religion, and Federalism, we shall feel, that we have some claim upon your approbation.

AND, first, it can excite no surprize, that in a nation of republicans, where the mind, as if affecting the independence of the body, seems disposed to deviate for deviation's sake, the greatest contrariety of opinion, even upon the most obvious subjects, should exist. When left at liberty, the human intellect seems to delight to shoot out into wild and fantastic notions. But, waving this sentiment, so different are the understandings of different people ; so various are the mediums, through which every thing may be viewed ; and so greatly are the appearances of objects altered, according to the distances, at which they are contemplated ; that differences of opinion with respect to them must necessarily arise ; so that, scarcely any thing can be adduced, concerning which mankind universally agree. A constitution of things, which, in a political view, seems to have been designed by Providence for a check upon the intrigues of the ambitious ; upon that disposition to tyranny, so natural

to men in power. Did every subject appear in the same point of view to every one, it would not be difficult for an artful ruler to mask his designs by conforming his measures to the prejudices of the people, to the prevalent mode of thinking. But, now, however concealed his design, however plausible his measures, it is impossible, that amid the infinite variety of lights, in which they will instantly be apprehended, the treachery should escape unnoticed. Thus liberty is guarded with a kind of Argian jealousy. What one eye overlooks, another detects. Though all these hundred eyes have been lulled to sleep by the firen song of "liberty, equality and the rights of man," it is not a supposable case.

If the foregoing reflections be just, if erroneous-ness of opinion be so compatible with right-ness of intention, is it not unfair, is it not injudicious, to throw out those unqualified re-primations, which, however applicable to those, for whom they were intended, cannot be to many, who, nevertheless, will assuredly feel themselves implicated? However reasonable it may be to impute to all the general principles of the party, to which they belong; and to charge

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them with the tendency of those principles, with supporting men and measures, that look to the ruin of their country ; when the charge contains reflections upon the motives, the understanding, or the character, it cannot be applied with too much caution and discrimination. Those, who may feel unconscious of dishonesty or bad intention, will be wounded, will be irritated, by any epithet, that implies them ; and, believing others to be as innocent, as themselves, will be the more attached to their party. Democrat, Jacobin, fool, knave, are terms of very different import ; however they may be confounded by the superficial, the hasty, or the loquacious. Nothing is more injurious, either in religion or politics, than to over-rate. You may press a man with his errors, with his crimes, till he feels convicted and ashamed ; but the moment you exaggerate in a single point—the instant you extend your line too far, he is through—he is perfectly innocent. Forgetful of the charges, that may be true, he dwells only upon the false. So near are the extremes of guilt and innocence. To apply it to our subject ; nothing can be more impolitic, than to style him a Jacobin, who is
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only a Democrat ; and to call him a knave, who is only a fool.

By these and similar means has not much injury to the Federal cause and much irritation been produced, that might have been avoided ? Are there not, my respected fellow citizens, many valuable young men rising into life, who though attached, as they ought to be, to the creed of their parents, are far from having established their political opinions ; not to mention a thousand others, who, though, from some unfortunate circumstances, they may be nominally your opponents, are still open to truth and conviction ? I say, have not the rash and enthusiastic conducted indiscreetly in stigmatizing these with epithets, which they may not deserve, and thus fixing them in a party, which they might otherwise have deserted ? It is a common adage, that nothing more directly tends to make one bad, than the reputation of being so. For this obvious reason ; it removes that restraint upon vice, that consists in the dread of being exposed for it. May we not ask too, and we would do it with becoming deference, whether, when some have had the ingenuousness and independence

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to confess their errors and come over to your side, it has not been injurious to the cause of Federalism to triumph upon the occasion, and to hold them up to public view; whether it has not probably deterred many, very many, from expressing their real thoughts, and, if not wholly throwing up their erroneous politics, from discarding the most obnoxious points. No one is willing to acknowledge error; much less, to have his acknowledgment made public. No one is willing to be seen coming from a house of ill fame at midday.

To these, and the like indiscretions and mismanagements it has been owing, that such an impassable line has been drawn between the parties: a thing which we the more lament, fellow citizens, as we conceive, that it operates to your particular disadvantage; because, like the "great gulph, that is fixed," we all know where, while its obstruction is not needed to prevent the passing from us to them, it so deplorably hinders the coming from them to us. Let it be for those, whose interest it is, to keep up every invidious distinction, to excite prejudices, to inflame the passions, by the most audacious outrages upon
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private character to provoke us to retaliate, in fine, to keep the question from turning upon any thing but the truth; but let those, whose cause rests upon being calmly heard and fairly understood, persist in every thing mild and dispassionate. Who knows how much depends upon such conduct? and who knows that if the honest could by any means be gained, if the *fifty*, or the *twenty*, or the *ten* could be induced to quit the *city*, deserved destruction would not soon fall upon the remainder? And that, without any supernatural interposition. These men give to their party its respectability and main support. To these you are eternally referred, when you press your opponents with deficiency of moral character. It is by recurring to these, that many, when facts stare them in the face, contrive to hush their doubts and ease their consciences. It is by noticing these, that not a few, especially of those, who have attended but little to the subject, are led to the crude opinion, that, in politics, as in religion, there are as many great and good men upon the one side, as upon the other; and that the dispute turns upon points, with which common people have no concern. If now, by any private applications, by any insinuating address,

addresses, and few can resist these things, when backed by truth, by any means whatsoever, consistent with dignity, these honest men could be so far undeceived, as only to withdraw their support, and leave the characters, and principles, and conduct of their party to stand upon their own merits, what could you desire more ?

DEMOCRAT, Republican, the name is nothing—you, that love your country, who prize religion and morality above every thing, convinced that every thing depends upon them, who know, that no man can have the least pretension to patriotism or any thing good, who is destitute of them, why, why will you not look around you ? Look throughout your country, and ask how is it, that so many hungry adventurers, so many immoral, irreligious, profligate men are upon my side ? How is it, that such a cloud of vultures, ravens, and birds of that black feather, are hovering around me ? There must be carrion somewhere. There must be something wrong, some pernicious tendencies in my principles, whether I see them, or not, to induce all such men to advocate them ; and that too with so much zeal. In religion and other things, where

where the best men are engaged in the best causes, I see none of this impassioned earnestness ; but rather languor, and indifference, and negligence. Can it be, that, that sot cares for any thing but his bottle ; that, that turbulent man is overturning every thing to establish good order ; that, that knave is raging for justice and the rope ! I beseech you, my respected fellow countrymen, by every thing tender, by every thing sacred, be not deceived. Your political principles, as they stand modified in your minds, may be perfectly compatible with honesty. But it is not so much from what, you may think, nor from what others may profess, were there nothing licentious in their professions, that the principal danger is to be apprehended ; but from their proceedings, when they have gained that consequence, and attained that power, at which they are aiming. Can you believe, that men, who are regardless of the duties of private life, who cannot be held by the dearest ties, the strongest obligations, will be restrained by the weakest ; that they will be governed by abstract notions or by any considerations of duty or fitness ; that they will not do with your liberties, as they would with
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your purses ? Even the best disposed men find it not a little difficult to subject their passions to their principles ; and can you expect it of the worst ? No, it is not in human nature ; and the events of the French revolution are an eternal demonstration, that it is not. The leaders of that revolution began with the sublimest professions of regard for liberty, for their country, and for mankind. All was disinterestedness ; all was patriotism and philanthropy. These rare virtues were then so common, that all your base, petty moralities, as justice, honesty, humanity, and the like trash, were despised and trampled under foot. But how did these mighty men of perfection conduct ? Did they sacrifice every thing to the public welfare—or to their own aggrandizement ? Did they emancipate their country, and make it the freest, the wealthiest, the happiest nation upon earth—without spilling a drop of blood ? Ask a Parisian. Ask a Frenchman.

It is indeed amusing to consider how these philosophers have managed the question. When they came forward with their positions, all old received principles, all old authorities, all political dogmas were to be laid aside. Every thing was to be tak-

en up anew. Every point was to be inquired into, and argued. Pure, unshackled reason was to be the sole guide. But, as upon the first broaching of any novel system, there will always be a host of prejudiced men, starting up with their objections about innovation, experience, and the like nonsense, it was found necessary to answer these in the *opening*. And how did they contrive to confute these narrow-minded bigots? Why, by an argument, on which the French have since placed their chief dependence in every political controversy—the most acute, the most penetrating in the world—the point of the bayonet. Let their opponent be ever so stupid, let the blockhead's skull be ever so thick, there was always one thing, that would find his brains, if he had any—a cannon ball. Did any one hesitate, did any one decline to come out openly upon their side, he was instantly clapt into a dungeon, there to contemplate the subject a little, upon an empty stomach. Did not this bring him to reason, they had always one piece of logick in reserve for him, that never failed, which, in consequence of its being so *mechanical* an affair, and the *middle term* being the most important part of it, might be called a guillotine, or a syllogism of the *disjunctive* class.

When by these and similar modes of ratiocination, they had argued down all their disputants, they seemed, as is not unfrequently the case, in the course of a warm debate, to have lost sight of the premises ; and to be intent upon nothing, but carrying their own point. Every thing now became involved and confused ; and no one can conjecture, when or what would have been the *issue*, if an ingenious little Corsican had not happily stepped up with the *conclusion*. However unphilosophically this argument has terminated, it has at least afforded a demonstration to the world, that with whatever professions or principles they may begin, bad men are not to be trusted for the *consequences*. These champions of reason can make any thing of any thing. Liberty, “ Equality and the Rights of Man ” may *head* the book ; but Slavery and Despotism always come in at the *finis*.

Do we intend to insinuate, that the same abandoned men have obtained rule, and that the same irreligion and licentiousness prevail in this country, as did in France? God forbid! We trust, that the habits and principles of the American people will long preserve them from such an infamous state of things. But human
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nature is the same in every age, in every place; and men are as capable of the most atrocious villainies in this country, as in any other. Angels could raise rebellion even in heaven. Be assured, that whenever that period shall arrive, which Heaven avert, when the highest officers in our government shall outrage religion and insult its teachers with impunity; when the chief magistrate of the union shall in essential points be destitute of the virtue, of which he should be the illustrious pattern; then our worthiest citizens will be ejected from office, our constitution torn in pieces, and, unless the people shall rise indignant at such proceedings, at such enormities, anarchy and despotism will soon close the shameful scene. If, amid the turbulence of party, the ignorant and irreligious be gaining consequence; if, amid the commotion of the waters, the mud be fast rising from the bottom to the top; if our liberties, our every thing be threatened; let every patriot, every good man be at his post. And, especially, let the ministers of the gospel take a firm stand. They however, it is said, have no concern with politics. To attend to the spiritual, and not to the temporal interests of men, is their proper employment. Whatever events

events may take place ; whatever political divisions may exist, they are always to be on the Lord's *side*, and on his *side* only. This is exactly our position. They are never, for the sake of supporting any favorite political system, of upholding or of overthrowing any administration, to give encouragement to any party, nor in any way contribute to the influence and elevation of men whose measures, principles, or example will probably operate in the smallest degree, to the prejudice of religion or morality. "He that loveth father or mother more than me ;" he that loveth any cause more than mine, "is not worthy of me." They particularly should remember that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but that sin is a reproach to any people ;" that public virtue is the sole basis of public welfare ; and upon all occasions, in the face of all opposition, should openly countenance and support those men, those candidates for office, who, in their consciences, they believe, have the deepest regard for God and sacred things ; and whose authority and personal influence are most likely to be exerted in the promotion of piety and virtue. When the great body of this holy order ; when those, who have the strongest motives to integrity

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ty and the best means of information, who from long reflection, attentive observation, and intimate acquaintance with ecclesiastical history are the best qualified to judge of the tendencies of things in respect to religion or morality ; when such a class of men, and in New-England it is a large class, rise almost to a man in opposition to any principles, or to any administration, who may not be startled ; who may not be alarmed ?

BUT not to refer to an order of men, against whom so much has been insinuated, we call upon our brethren in this assembly, our fellows in youth or inexperience, to listen to the uncontested truth, that a large majority of the wisest and worthiest in this country are upon the side of Federalism. We entreat you, God knows for the sake of no invidious comparisons, to look around you, and behold how many of those, whom we have been taught to respect, to love, to venerate, are here collected and constellated. Do I insinuate, that you should resign yourselves implicitly to their authority, and degrade your own dignity from respect for them ? By no means. Little would such a sentiment comport with the manly feelings, that this occasion should excite.

excite. But, my friends, let us not affect an independence that does not pertain to us. Is it not an undeniable fact, that we are indebted to our parents, our relations, our acquaintance, and to public prints, if not for our opinions, for all those views, and statements, and reflections, upon which we form our opinions? Indeed it cannot be otherwise. Situated, as we usually are, either too much secluded, or too much involved in business, not to mention a thousand other circumstances, it is impossible for us to ascertain every truth and fix every point for ourselves. We are called to take an active part in the political world, long before we have thoroughly investigated, long before we can demonstrate. Since then we are, and necessarily are, dependent upon others; whom shall we choose for our authorities? Whom, but the majority of the wise and good? Whom, but those of whose integrity we have the fullest assurance, and on whose talents and information we can confidently rely? Survey the assemblage before you. Mark the individuals, that compose it—but I forget myself. Why do I refer you to aristocrats, to monarchists, to speculators of the public money, to traitors, to —— But I will not shock decency

cency by an enumeration of the epithets, that
 have been given them. Oh, why have we lived
 to behold this shameful day? Why have we
 tasted the sweets of freedom, so soon to be shack-
 led by the hands of our unnatural parents? Why,
 ye hoary-headed men, why this baseness, this
 astonishing degeneracy? Why will ye now tear
 the wreath from your brows by this madness—
 this worse than superannuated folly? Why, so
 soon to drop into the grave, will ye not leave us
 the riches, ye have earned? Why, oh why, will
 ye not close your eyes upon the welfare of your
 children; and make the happiness of your pos-
 terity the monument of your fame? I see the
 reddening innocence. 'Tis false—'tis damnable.
 They are not hypocrites. They are not execra-
 ble wretches. They have not been wasting their
 lives and their fortunes in establishing the liber-
 ties of their country to overturn them at the last.
 No, they fondly hoped to have been repaid for
 all their toil and all their sacrifices in contempla-
 ting the glorious fruits of them, in the ease and
 honors of their latter days. How cruelly have
 they been disappointed! How have they been
 branded as traitors, and loaded with infamy!
 Washington himself—We did entertain the
 flattering

flattering de'usion, that death had removed him from the ingratitude of his countrymen. But scarcely had the worms seized upon his body, when his insidious enemies began upon his reputation. How have they attempted to poison his fame! How have hired assassins been stabbing at his character! But let them persist. He is as far above their malice, as their level. His character needs no defence. It will defend itself. Let the blackest clouds collect and burst upon him: that same integrity, that same elevation, that attracts the fery vengeance, shall conduct it off, in safety. Yes, let them attack with open violence. Let the "*tumultuous sea*" raise all its angry waves. Let them heave their mantling spray upon the rock, and—subside at its base. Let them toss their foaming heads on high——while the sun smiles down in contempt upon their rage. Never shall they overwhelm his glory: never shall they extinguish its splendor.

