

AN

ORATION

BY

COMMEMORATION

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

PRONOUNCED AT WINDSOR, Vt.

JULY 4, 1816.

BY SELLECK OSBORN.

WINDSOR:

PRINTED BY JESSE COCHRAN.

Windsor, July 7th, 1816.

SIR,

At the request of the republican citizens present at the celebration of the 4th inst. the Committee of Arrangements return you the thanks of the meeting for your elegant and patriotic Oration, delivered on that occasion, and request the favor of a copy for the press.

The Committee are happy, Sir, in having this opportunity of conveying to you their high sense of the merits of that performance, and of renewing to you the assurance of their esteem.

Respectfully, Sir, your obedient servants,

ASA AIKENS,
SAM'L PATRICK, Jr. } *Committee.*
THO. BOYNTON, }

CAPT. SELLECK OSBORN.

Windsor, July 10, 1816.

GENTLEMEN,

I am grateful for the good opinion which you and others of my fellow-citizens have been pleased to entertain of this production. I yield it to your disposal; though I fear it will gain nothing in your esteem by a closer inspection.

I am, gentlemen, with sincere respect, your humble servant,

SELLECK OSBORN.

Messrs. ASA AIKENS,
SAM'L PATRICK, Jr. } *Committee.*
THOS. BOYNTON, }

AN

ORATION.

AMERICANS!

IF a recurrence to past hardships and dangers, and the means by which they were borne and surmounted, fortifies the mind against despair, and refreshes it with rational hope—If a grateful remembrance of Divine protection lifts us from a servile human dependence to a noble and exalted dependence upon Him, whose bonds are freedom, and whose yoke is liberty indeed—If the consciousness of well doing, and of manly perseverance in the perilous trials of patriotism, tends to enlarge the heart and inspire it with magnanimous confidence—then, sacred is the motive of this assemblage, and most salutary may be its operation upon our hearts.

Our *reading*, and our *observation*, make us acquainted with the feasts of *Bacchanalians*, the gross indulgences of animal appetite, unconnected with moral or sentimental enjoyment. Our *hopes* and our *faith* teach us to aspire to *nobler* pleasures, to the festivity of *mind*, to “the feast of *Reason*, and the flow of *Soul*.” As we are not *savages*, we spurn the mere grossness of the former—as we are not *angels*, we can hope for but a portion of the latter. Our characters and our passions are mixed; and our festivals, to be enjoyed, must be adapted to the blended appetites of the moral and the natural man.

To me, and my coadjutors in this house, falls the duty of administering to the nobler propensities of our nature. Would to heaven my means were proportionate to my will; you who come to be amused,

should go away instructed ; you who come in opposition, should depart united ; you who come from curiosity, should go away in reflection ; and you who come to *spend* the time, should leave me with a determination to *improve* it.

You have just heard pronounced from this desk, the solemn *declaration*, by which the illustrious Congress of '76 passed the rubicon—not like Cæsar, to *enslave*, but, like intrepid patriots, to *emancipate*, their country. I sincerely hope it has not fallen upon your ears like seed upon barren ground, but that it has led your minds to a profitable reflection upon the causes which led to, the spirit which dictated, and the circumstances which accompanied that important measure.

Forty years ago this day, when this effusion of republican energy was announced to a struggling and almost despairing people, how few could entertain a confident hope, for themselves or their children, of realizing the happiness and glory which, as a nation, we now enjoy ! How obscure and perplexed was the patriot's path—how palpable and appalling the impediments that obstructed it ! Menaced by the numerous and *then* invincible navy, defeated and harassed by the veteran armies, and obnoxious to the high-wrought anger, of a most formidable nation—with nothing but a nominal government, an irregular and fluctuating military force, meagre and dubious funds, and the untried firmness and fidelity of a scattered people, to meet the approaching shock—How transcendent must have been the courage of those heroic spirits, who dared to hurl the gauntlet against such antagonists, and stake their lives upon a chance, apparently so desperate !

Prominent as this declaration is in intrinsic merit ; bold and commanding as it sounds at this hour of national security, in this peaceful country, under this consecrated roof, after this lapse of years, and amongst the friends of its principles ; what must have been the admiration it excited, when intrepidly pronounced before the cannon's mouth, in the hour of nation-

al calamity, in the face of a powerful and vindictive enemy ! How noble and dignified appears that unchartered congress, on the page of history ! Undaunted, incorruptible and disinterested, penurious in words, but liberal and rich in deeds, it was indeed, as such a body should ever be, the faithful organ of the people whom it represented. Its members deliberated with halts about their necks, and legislated under the gallows ; yet they stood erect in the proud consciousness of duty, though surrounded with difficulties most perplexing, and perils most imminent. *They* were not moved by the very body and reality of *power* ; much less, like some of their degraded successors, by its mere shadow and counterfeit, by the empty menaces and idle brawling of faction.

In that day of gloom and uncertainty, when the aged parent looked upon his children with anxious doubt whether he was rearing a race of freemen or of slaves—could one glimpse of brilliant futurity have crossed his sight, what serenity would it have given to the evening of life—what cheering rays shed on his lonely path to the grave ! Could the wounded and dying patriot, while the last throbs of life beat for his country, and his last faltering accents enjoined his sons to live or die like freemen, have had a prophetic view, like Moses from Pisgah, of the blessings, denied to himself, but secured to his children—Could he, with the eye of faith, have viewed, as I do in this house, *age*, cheerfully conscious of past usefulness, contented with the present, and elated with hopes of the future—*manhood*, ripe and mature, exulting in the fullness of faculty and enjoyment, the pillar of the state, the example and the shield of the rising generation—*youth*, ardently emulous of the virtue, the patriotism and the fame attained by others—and *beauty*, virtuous and accomplished, the most powerful incentive to manly ambition—all, free, happy and grateful, assembled here to commemorate the heroism of our fathers, and the goodness of heaven—would not such a scene in

his imagination have blunted the keenest arrow and sweetened the bitterest cup of death? Would not all the sufferings of himself and his fellow patriots have seemed light and trivial, when compared with the inestimable blessings of which they were the price?

What could not have been revealed to the revolutionary sufferer without a miraculous exhibition, may always, in times of national calamity, be made visible to us by the light of experience. When our liberties may be assailed, however formidable the aggressor, and however inauspicious, upon human calculation, may be our prospect of resistance; we have only to recur to the gloomy period of '76, and the difficulties which then surrounded our cause; to imitate the intrepid patriotism which surmounted them—and the aid of prophetic vision will not be necessary to shew the result.

Forty years ago, this day, my friends, some of you who have just moved to the sound of the *festive* drum, heard that instrument beat the midnight alarm, that called you from your repose to the renewal of oft repeated dangers. You, who *now* hear the harmless cannon only as the signal of rejoicing, *then* saw it charged with death, levelled at your breasts, and fired by the hand of remorseless tyranny. You, who *now* proudly exult in the character of free citizens of a nation, whose deeds have astonished the world, were *then* denounced as *rebels*, stigmatized as *cowards*, and hunted as *outlaws*. That forbearance which endeared you to the friends of liberty, exposed you to the derision of tyrants, who had no idea that you would dare to raise a finger against the “world’s last hope”—and who, no doubt, believed that you “could not be kicked into a war!”—The event proved that they knew you not. When attacked, you resisted. You declared yourselves independent, and solemnly pledged your lives and fortunes to support the declaration. *Then* it was that you were first accused of waging “a wicked, unjust, unnecessary and unnatural war!” There was supposed to be something next to sacrilege in resisting “the

bulwark of our religion," in alienating yourselves from "the fast anchored isle" of Britain. Your immortal leader was proscribed as an "arch rebel;" and he was loaded with every appellation of reproach, excepting that of "*Virginian*"—which improvement in opprobrious language was reserved for the more copious vocabulary of *modern* faction.

But for a rare combination of causes, such as occurs but once in a course of ages, you had still been slaves, with the additional stigma of *rebellion*—your illustrious leader would have perished ignominiously, without even the reputation of a martyr; and mankind, without the guidance of your example, and the encouragement of your success, might have grovelled on for ages to come, acquiescing in the "divine right of kings," ignorant of the power as well as the rights of a brave and virtuous people. As it has resulted, however, the tyrants of the earth, though they may occasionally shut their eyes against experience, cannot be wholly blind to the lesson you have exhibited for their warning: and their subjects, though incapable of appreciating at once your example, cannot fail gradually to imbibe the principles which actuated, and the wisdom which guided your efforts.

In this extensive view of the subject, have we not as a nation, a claim to other merit than merely that of asserting the rights of our own country? May not the *Congress* who promulgated the declaration of Independence, and the *people* whose *voluntary* subordination supported the measure, be considered as the benefactors of mankind, as the champions of human rights, as the apostles of that liberty which must ultimately pervade all nations? For my part, I cannot but consider the *spirit* of that declaration as the germ of future revolutions, which shall dispense happiness even to remote nations, long after we and our children are consigned to our native dust; and, *perhaps*, long after this great republic shall lose its identity in a constellation of free and powerful governments!

This *spirit* is the essence of all that gives strength and happiness to a nation. It is derived from an enlightened view of the rights of mankind—an ardent attachment to the cause of liberty; and a thorough and general conviction of the justice of that cause—that confidence in each other, general among the people, and mutual between them and the government of their choice, which arises from such conviction—that unity of sentiment and effort which usually binds men actuated by the same principle—and that firm reliance on divine protection, which arrays moral against physical strength, and arms perseverance against despair.

To cherish this spirit, fellow citizens—to inculcate the principles which impelled to the achievement of Freedom, and which alone can contribute to its preservation, should be the leading object of this celebration. Our exultation in the glory of our revolutionary exploits should not be out of vain boasting, but to excite emulation. Our triumph in the defeat of our enemies should not be to perpetuate animosity, but to inspire courage and confidence within ourselves. The overbearing spirit of our former tyrants, and late enemies, should not be held up as a stimulus to revenge, but as a beacon to warn us of danger.

To remind each other of the perils we have escaped, and how they were averted—to enjoy together the advantages we have obtained, and assist each other gratefully to remember whence they were derived—to enhance our blessings by participation—to promote congeniality of sentiment by temperate convivial intercourse; are objects worthy of this hallowed festival. To exceed these would but tend to the corruption, to come short would but evince the degeneracy of our manners.

It is not necessary for me to recapitulate the events of that arduous conflict, which resulted in the establishment of our independence, in the consummation of that important measure which we are assembled to commemorate. Some of you have personally

shared in its hopes and fears, and partaken of its hardships and dangers. All of us have dwelt with sympathetic interest on the historic page which has recorded your deeds under the seal of immortality.— Never, whilst one spark of patriotism lights the altar of freedom, while one verdant leaf remains on the tree of liberty, shall we cease to remember the toils and perils you encountered in our behalf; the firmness with which you met the hostile bayonet; the integrity with which you spurned the allurements of pardon, protection and reward, that tempted you to abandon our cause, even when its unpromising aspect would almost have excused your defection.— Beloved and venerated fathers of your country! Long may your descendants set apart this day, for an annual tribute to your sublime virtues! Though patriotism should expire, and liberty wither—though anarchy and despotism should overwhelm this land of freedom; your laurels would survive the desolation, and serve to mark the spot where virtue *once* triumphed, and where *once* flourished all that was dignified in the human character! Though degeneracy should waste our nation, tyranny prowl amidst the political desert, and the reptiles of corruption hiss among the fragments of moral ruin—your names would stand, like lonely columns, to shew where men, “high-minded men”, *once* stood erect, in all the majesty of their species!

The pressure of physical danger, in the revolutionary struggle, though great, was the least of your calamities; and your successful resistance against it, though glorious, the least of your merits. You had more formidable enemies than grenadiers, and more deadly weapons than bayonets, to encounter. Your personal attachments; your prejudices, your exalted estimation of the English character, all operated in favor of the mother country, and put the firmness and constancy of principle to the severest trial. But as *evil*, when successfully resisted, is often converted to good; so, the reluctance, arising from these prejudices, delayed your resistance till the question

was ripe for decision. The moral danger that beset you was, that you would *yield* the point, or *precipitately* adopt the last resort. Your reluctance to shed the blood of your fellow subjects, led you to that vigorous *intellectual* contest, those able and cogent reasonings, which render your memorials of that time so conspicuous in political history.—You had demonstrated to the world the justice of your cause; when your enemies themselves brought the question to the arbitration of the sword, and attacked you; just as you had entrenched yourselves in that strongest of all positions, your own conscioufness, and the world's conviction, of the righteousness of your views.

The propensity to luxurious indulgences, (though of this sin you had but little to account for) was another moral danger that threatened you, and this was nobly met. Your rigid self-denial, in abstaining from the use of British manufactures, and the productions of British commerce, was not merely beneficial on account of its direct operation on the British interest; but it afforded an earnest of your devotion to principle, and capacity of endurance, that promised every thing propitious, and cemented your attachment to each other.—Men who associate to share in acquisitions, often quarrel about the distribution; but men who assemble to emulate each other in sacrifices and privations, have the strongest security for union. Each admires that heroic self-denial of the other, which is the severest test of sincerity and firmness; and from this arises a mutual confidence which no external pressure can shake, but every trial tends to confirm.

It is to be regretted that we cannot congratulate ourselves on the strictest imitation of those Spartan virtues—that a headstrong propensity to selfish indulgence has too recently clashed with the wisest measures of our government, and left us vulnerable to foreign aggression.

Great as was your perseverance in that long and arduous conflict, it was not unshaken by an alarming

evil, which is too prevalent in the human temper: I mean that impatience and restlessness under adversity, which leads men to the most erroneous conclusions, suggests to them the most preposterous remedies, and attributes disaster to every cause but the true one.—In some gloomy moments of your revolution, when your illustrious leader was almost the only man who cherished a hope of success, his military policy was considered as weak and indecisive; and you were within a single point of investing the brave but impetuous LEE with that important command, which was in the end so gloriously fulfilled by a WASHINGTON! Preposterous as that design was proved to be by succeeding events, and signal as was our escape from its completion, we have, some of us, profited but very little from the lesson. In a second struggle for independence, we have, some of us, been prone to lay our misfortunes at the door of our best and ablest friends.—The same spirit that would have consigned a Washington to oblivion and disgrace, and raised an ambitious adventurer in his room, would have deposed and sent a Madison to Elba, and placed in his station, it is difficult to say whom; but certainly not a better man. Much good fortune, and, I am willing to think, more good principle, saved us in both cases. These, and other instances which I shall have occasion to mention, are blemishes in our national character; but they have not obscured our glory. The sun itself is not without spots.

I speak not of these blemishes as an enemy, to irritate; but as a friend, to instruct. A few instances of factious error could not tarnish the lustre of the many virtues which sustained you through such severe and protracted trials.

It would be idle vanity for us to meet for no other purpose but to inflate each other with self sufficiency. If self *knowledge* is useful, we should not shun disagreeable truths.

“Our virtues would grow proud, if our faults
 “whipp’d them not; and our vices would despair,
 “if not cherish’d by our virtues.”

I have spoken to you of the external and internal dangers which assailed you, while pressed by a foreign enemy. I have left details to the proper province of history. If I dwell more upon the point I am now about to touch, it will be because I have always considered it as one of the most critical in our revolutionary history; one reflecting individual turpitude most strongly, and popular virtue most brilliantly. It would seem almost incredible, were there any room for doubt, that after the extraordinary proofs you had given, during many years trial, of your moderation, firmness and constancy, there should be one mind so perverted as to imagine you capable of blotting, in one moment, the fair page of your glory; of demolishing, by one sudden act of madness, the blood-cemented fabric, raised with years of toil! But, supposing you to partake of the infatuation of the unprincipled mobs that led a Socrates to execution, and banished an Aristides by ostracism, some evil genius, for a purpose equally evil, attempted to practice upon your minds, weakened as they were supposed to be by suffering and privation, and instigated you to withdraw your confidence from that congress which had been so faithful to your interest; deny their authority, and retain your arms to overawe them! And on what provocation? Because they had not wrought miracles; because they had an empty treasury, exhausted for your benefit; because they had no philosopher's stone, to make gold for the payment of their troops! You spurned the base proposal. You rallied round your Washington; you listened to his affecting admonitions; and, with eyes streaming with sensibility, and brightening with patriotic virtue, swore not to terminate a long career of glory with an act of shame! The *battle* had proved you *brave*. The long march, in destitute circumstances, had proved you patient. Frequent adversity had proved you persevering. It remained for this act to finish your character. It remained for you, when your sufferings were such as to make ordinary men ripe for acts of desperation,

and when addressed by as fascinating a pen as ever appealed to the human passions; to complete the character of *American citizens*, determined and worthy to be free!—to crown your conquests by an act superlatively glorious—by a *victory over YOURSELVES!*

Whether it was the same spirit of mischief, animating other bodies, that appealed to the sordid passions of the people on *later* occasions, I will not take it upon me absolutely to say. I will not positively assert, that it was in this spirit we were exhorted, during our commercial restrictions, to set aside obnoxious laws, as unconstitutional; to disregard the national authorities, and prepare to resist them by “silver-grey” armaments. I will not swear that it was this identical spirit, that exhorted the militia not to take up arms during the last war, or to take them up for any purpose but to repel the enemy—that instigated the establishment of ten thousand *state* regulars in Massachusetts—that urged the New England people to secede from the union, and form a separate peace with its enemies, and become neutral in the cause of their country! I will not insist upon all this; but content myself with observing, that the *tendency* in both cases was similar; and that the result in both cases was as highly honourable to the American *people*, as it was disgraceful and mortifying to the instigators. I congratulate you, republicans, that you had the moderation, in the latter case, not to give provocation or pretext for violence. And I congratulate you, my federal friends, that *few* of you had the folly to approve, and *none* of you the temerity to execute, the threatened deeds of treason and civil war.

The war ended, and hostile alarms heard no more, you rested in the shade of your laurels, and felt as if every thing was finished. But you was soon reminded that there could be no gain without labor, and no enjoyment without activity. You even then realized what has since been well expressed by an eminent orator,* that “the condition on which heaven gives

* Curran, the Irish advocate.

liberty to man, is that of *eternal vigilance.*" The task of forming a new constitution, which might affect the happiness of many ages, was a business as critical and delicate as it was important; and naturally exercised all the ingenuity of the statesman, and all the jealousy of the people. After much diversity, and, ultimately, great mutual concessions, of opinion, was established that great national compact, the CONSTITUTION—a word destined to be the drudge of talkers and writers for many succeeding ages—to be often used without meaning—to be alternately pressed into the service of power to justify oppression, and of faction to countenance licentiousness.

It was fortunate that the popularity of a Washington gave vigor to the first exercises of the infant government, and repressed the spirit of party.

A government formed thus, under the most favorable auspices, and administered by men deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, seemed to be in fair progress to all the perfection that can be expected from human institutions. But it was destined to undergo the severest trials from an event which has involved the whole civilized world in its tremendous consequences. The French revolution, in its first and comparatively innocent stage, was joyfully hailed by Americans. The enthusiastic interest in favor of the French people, which was manifested in this country, without distinction of party, was almost boundless. Even so late as the year 1794, *after the reign of Robespierre*, the great Washington himself could not refrain from expressions of enthusiasm—calling the French "a wonderful people," and expressing the warmest wishes for the success of their cause.—Even in Boston, cannon were fired, bells rung, and oxen roasted, in honor of French victories, by those who have since been most strongly attached to the British interest. If ever "*French Influence*" actually existed in this country, it was at that time. *Arnold*, indeed, immediately after his defection, in an address to the American people, was the *first* who accused the Americans of being under French influence;

and it has been repeated since, with about as much truth, and from sources equally pure !

If this zealous attachment to the French, during the administration of Washington, was a weakness, it was an amiable one ; the effusion of gratitude, and of sympathy for the oppressed. It subsided, as all such excessive national attachments should do ; but unfortunately it vibrated to another extreme, less excusable in its motives, and more pernicious in its consequences. The dream of sympathy for republican France was dissipated by the loud voice of interest. The charms of a lucrative freight to England, and a seducing return cargo of dry goods, were rivals too powerful not to prevail. The ridiculous caresses which had been lavished by Bostonians on *petit maitre* officers of the French navy, were judiciously transferred to British factors, agents, and supercargoes. Here, in a great measure, originated that "return to the wallowing in the mire," the renewal of that British partiality, which had been interrupted by the *first* war of Independence.

If the Israelites were censured for wishing to return to the bondage of Egypt, for the sake of the "flesh pots," in the moment of famine and in the midst of the wilderness ; how would they have been reprobated if they had evinced the same degenerate desire after tasting the "milk and honey" of Canaan ! In the darker moments of our revolution, with the hardships and dangers of the patriot's life to repel, and the comparative ease and safety of British protection to attract, there was some excuse for returning to the "flesh pots." But, after enjoying the sweets of Independence and free government, it was grievously surprizing to see men so greedy for the "leeks and onions," as to be bound to British interests and British principles by the paltry ties of tape and ribbon !

This change of national attachment led even to a declaration of war against France, which might have ended in an alliance, offensive and defensive, with England, had not a *real* federalist, the venerable Adams, frustrated the mad ambition of his counsellors.

It is not necessary, in this place, to rake up the conduct of the ruling party in 1799—It is sufficient that the majority of the people, the grand constitutional inquest, returned a verdict against them, and placed the government in other hands. Most of us remember the ludicrous aspect of political warfare after that period. The government was opposed because Mr. Jefferson wore red breeches, tied his own horse to a peg, and had formerly fled from an enemy whom he had no means to resist, as Washington had repeatedly done under the same circumstances!

In the mean time, there was so much fawning around the lion of England, that the proud animal began to doubt whether we were of the same sturdy race which had once kept him at bay; and very naturally made some rude experiments, to ascertain how much spaniel blood had crossed our breed! He was amused to find how hard he might gripe us with one paw, while he reached us a Manchester or Birmingham bone with the other! In short, my friends, to speak without figure, I am bound to tell you the unpleasant truth, that England found, or thought she had found, our avarice to be our ruling passion—that she might impress, flog and shoot our citizens with impunity, while her lucrative intercourse soothed and conciliated us! she thought she had discovered that we would sell our very children, like the unnatural savages of Africa, for gaudy tinsel and paltry gew gaws. How much reason she had for this degrading opinion, you can judge as well as I. At length she ventured to touch the master nerve. In ransacking our *pockets*, she grasped a heart-string, where, as much as she had calculated upon our avarice, she hardly expected it. Her spoiliations upon our property awakened the sensibility which all the groans of our enslaved seamen could not move. She was startled for a moment at our sudden resentment; but the sweet taste of plunder but increased her appetite, and she determined to press Jonathan to the very verge of his patience. In which she was encouraged by some of our own *very honest* politicians, who declared that all this was “no essential injury!”

The merchants, *six years* before the late war, called upon our government to resist these aggressions, and pledged themselves to support it in *any measure* it might think "expedient." How that pledge was redeemed, was seen when the government thought it 'expedients to adopt commercial restrictions, preparatory to war. It was on this occasion that reflecting politicians, who had long been but two well convinced of the increasing mercenary disposition of our countrymen, first saw it in its fullest and most alarming extent. It was then that they beheld this moral gangrene, having deadened almost every fibre of the commercial limb, menacing the very vitals of the nation. Even you, Republicans, must not apply all this censure to your neighbors in opposition—Even you, who, not without reason, considered yourselves as some of the capital organs of the body politic, were at least remotely affected by this malady. Yes, *you*, republicans, who scarcely looked for danger except from England—as well as you, federalists, who knew no evil but Bonaparte, as sick men in delirium fancy all their pains to be inflicted by their enemies—you were very little or not at all sensible that a greater evil than either was corrupting your own system. All the powers of Europe combined in hostility could not be so dangerous as the encroachments of this moral poison upon declining patriotism.

Few have forgotten the unequivocal symptoms of this disease, as exhibited during and ensuing the commercial restrictions. Then was the golden harvest of political quackery. Your *real* danger was concealed; your *imaginary* perils aggravated. You were pleased with the palliatives of empyrics, but dreaded the cautery and the knife, which alone could operate a radical cure. You dreaded war—but war saved you.

Bold as the doctrine may appear—and startled as you may be at the sound; I declare it as my solemn belief, founded on strict observation and careful deduction, that nothing but a war could have revived the dying principle of patriotism in our country;—~~and that ten years more of peace and speculation~~

would have ruined the nation past redemption.— Witness our drowsy movements during the first year of the war. If less than thirty years of peace had so befuddled us, that we could scarcely be roused to action with war at our doors and the bayonet at our breasts ; what must have been the accumulated stupor of ten years more of indulgence. War is dreadful ; and so is a fever ; but the one is as natural an effort of the political, as the other is of the natural body, to throw off causes hostile to its existence: A comparative view of the approach and commencement of the wars of 1776 and 1812, here forces itself upon me. In the former case, you bore taxation for many years ; but flew to arms at the first deliberate act of bloodshed ; in the latter, you bore impressment, floggings, and repeated murders ; but first began to think seriously of war only when your *pockets* were plundered by rule. In the former case, England claimed your allegiance—she professed to act upon principle—and yet you met the first act of war as one man, with union and vigor. In the latter case, she exceeded her former provocations, without even the pretext of principle, avowedly upon the ground of “expediency ;” and yet your first acts of war were languid and disastrous. Do not these circumstances confirm what I have said of the apathy you had contracted towards every thing but the sordid pursuit of gain ; and it is further established by the fact, that in proportion as you were weaned from this pursuit, your native spirit revived ; every campaign increased the terror of your arms.

It is not in the snarling spirit of a cynic that I indulge myself in this language of reproof. If it is enquired why I dwell upon these faults, the answer is, to hold up the lesson of experience—that you may remember, that unless you watch and trim the vestal lamp of patriotism—unless you cultivate public spirit, and in time of peace qualify yourselves for war—unless you keep yourselves awake to the interests of your country—Providence, more careful than yourselves of your rights, will not suffer you to doze in a precipice ; but will wake you with *agony* !

One of our national war attitudes, if personified and painted, would exhibit a strange mixture of the horrible and the ludicrous. It would represent America, presenting a pistol to an enemy with her right hand, and feeding her with her left ! An army of soldiers fighting him in one district ; and a band of smugglers driving cattle to his lines in another ! ! This was some of the precious fruit of that avarice and speculation so profitably cultivated during 30 years of peace !

But, my country, if I have probed your wounds, I have done it but to heal. Far be it from me to insinuate that my countrymen are worse than other nations. But they ought to be *better*. They have more responsibility. Liberal men in every country expect much from a nation which alone sustains the credit of freedom. Neither do they expect it wholly in vain. If we have erred greatly, we have had great temptations. We were spoiled by unexampled prosperity. While we were the carriers for all nations, before the famous retaliating acts of England and France, the world was in a manner tributary to us. It is not in human nature to descend contentedly from plenty to privation. Neither does the rich nabob draw the sword with the alacrity of the poor Arab.

I turn with pleasure from the dark to the bright side of your character. I contemplate with proud satisfaction the humbled arrogance of the restless disturber of the world. I am gratified that the phantom of British naval invincibility is forever laid by your hand, and no longer adds moral to her physical power. I delight to recollect that novel and astonishing exhibition on the theatre of the ocean and the lakes, on which the self-styled sovereign of the sea so often struck his "meteor flag," and clubbed his sceptre. Severe has been the retribution made by England for her aggressions, on the very element where they were perpetrated. She has suffered by a flame of her own kindling. "Sailor's rights," which she had outraged, were the words of the battle which wasted her. — On the land, the war which

~~opened with defeat and disgrace has closed with vic-~~

tory and honor. At Erie, at Bridgewater, at Chippewa, at Plattsburgh, at Sandusky and New-Orleans, has been retrieved the lustre of our arms, so shamefully tarnished at Detroit and Castine. On the British frontier, and at the mouth of the Mississippi, the American militia have redeemed their character, plucked the hard won laurels from the veterans of Wellington, and gathered honors which were denied to our brave New-England militia, by the "constitutional scruples" of their governors! Wherever a citizen of this land may sojourn, however conspicuous his virtues, his talents or his rank, his greatest distinction will be the appellation of an AMERICAN. Wherever an American ship may appear, no superiority of strength, beauty or swiftness will distinguish her like the starry flag that waves from her peak!

Enviably is the proud consciousness of the faithful citizen, who can say, "I have contributed, I have toiled, I have bled for this glorious consummation;—or; at least; I have not held back my neighbor from the field; I have not hung a dead weight upon the arm of the government, nor withheld assistance from my country in the day of its distress."

Upon ordinary calculations, we should hope for a long term of peace with England. We should expect much from her sense of suffering, if not from her justice. But England, amongst all the noble qualities that distinguish her national character, seldom includes the wisdom that profits by past errors. We were disappointed in calculating upon the lessons of Bunker Hill, Saratoga and Yorktown, as securities for her permanent forbearance; as we may be again, if we rely too much upon the late admonitions she received upon the ocean, the lakes, and the land. It is undoubtedly true, that the real interests of England would be best consulted by cultivating peace with this country; but history is full of the melancholy instances in which nations have lost sight of their true interests.—If the English people can once bring themselves to believe, that a nation may be well governed, without a hereditary monarchy and nobility—that a nation may have wealth

enough for its happiness without monopolizing the commerce of the world—that a nation may be sufficiently glorious without usurping the ocean, and respectable enough without an overgrown influence in the concerns of foreign governments—nothing will be plainer to them than the entire compatibility of American prosperity with their own. But while England unfortunately believes in the necessity of a king and nobility, nothing can appear more mischievous to her than the example of our free and liberal government. While she grasps at commercial monopoly, nothing can appear more odious than the starry flag of America, waving in every sea and every port of the world. While she seeks to seduce every government to her purposes, nothing can be more mortifying than the repulsive coyness and chilling austerity with which America treats her advances. While she makes naval supremacy a part of her happiness, she may well be jealous of the naval growth of this country. England free, liberal and moderate, has *nothing*—but England despotic, avaricious and overbearing, has *every thing*, to dread from America.—While revenge for the past, and jealousy of the future, continue to influence the conduct of nations, it will be wise, while we yield her all the favors and civilities of present friendship, to be on our guard against her possible enmity.

FELLOW CITIZENS!—This anniversary finds you blessed above all nations. Your Independence stands deeply rooted where it was planted forty years ago. You have a free government, whose stability has triumphed alike over the assaults of foreign war and domestic dissention. Religion flourishes; education continues to extend and improve; and the richest benefits of both appear to be in store for future generations. The God of the harvest has been bountiful beyond our merits; and, though he may occasionally frown, he will not abandon us. Contrasted with the nations of Europe, both conquerors and conquered, every point of comparison is in our favor. You have lately retired victoriously from two successive wars; one with a nation who had more power than any other in the world to annoy us, and the

last with the most formidable of the Barbary powers, to whom all other nations are tributary. So pre-eminent is the terror of your arms; that, within a few weeks past, while Lord Exmouth, with *six British Ships of the line*, and a proportion of frigates before Algiers, was *ransoming* Christian slaves at a *high price*—the diminutive American Squadron, in the same harbor, was defying the Dey, giving the law to his city, and wresting from him privileges denied to the British!!!—If we have not so much gold as the British, we have that which ransoms a slave without it. We have energy, and we have an exalted *national character*. Under all circumstances, who can be insensible to the reasons we have to rejoice on this day?—Broods there any grumbling cynic, this day, over the minor evils of the times? Let him weigh them against our brilliant advantages and be grateful. Tells he us of the blood and treasure which these advantages have cost? Let him consider their *value*, and tell us, if he can, how they could have been acquired cheaper. Grumbles he about the taxes incurred in defence of our freedom? Let him consider the taxes paid by the English people, to support a government which oppresses them, and be silent. Mutters he about hard times? Let him recur to the condition of the country at the close of the *revolutionary war*, and be dumb. Is he ambitious, and disappointed in his hopes of promotion? Let him view the exile of St. Helena, wonder at his fall, and imitate his fortitude. Croaks he about the vexations and evil tendency of party spirit? He may as well complain of the thunder and the wind; for though they all do mischief sometimes, they are equally inevitable and salutary; let him view the fanatical and bloody feuds of degraded France, or the profound and awful calm of eastern despotism; and turn reconciled to his own country, with all its political wrangling. Besides, this evil, which is only such in its excess, has in a great degree subsided. It is highly gratifying to observe the decline of that infatuation which lately rendered so many worthy men blind to their country's interest, and their own renunciation. We now hear nothing of *conventions*;

nor *dissolving the union*; nor of *commissioners* sent to take the President by the beard; and but very little of Washington Benevolent Societies. We hail the delivery of our fellow citizens from political phrenzy, as we would their recovery from a fever, and its attendant delirium.

Some there are, who are not without fear, that the insanity is more permanent, and this composure only a lucid interval. If so (which all the powers of reason forbid) the symptoms will appear in this state, as September approaches. In that case we shall have much idle talk about the military services rendered at Plattsburgh by the new candidate for governor; but we *shall not bear* from the same quarter, of his *approval* of the pernicious defection of governor Chittenden; by which, as far as his influence went, he did more injury with one hand than he could repair with both; neither will *they* tell us, that there were others in that service, at least as capable of governing, in other respects, as general Strong. We shall hear of the late changes in office; but we *shall not bear*, though we may know, that the example had been exhibited by *themselves*. It is barely possible we *may* hear the idle question repeated, "what have we gained by the war?" But I hope not; it will be such an instance of confirmed madness, as will deprive us of all hope of their restoration to reason. We shall hear *much* of the taxes of 1816—but *nothing* of the taxes of 1799!—We shall hear of the Bladensburgh defeat; but nothing of the unmolested occupation of *Castine* by the British! We shall hear much about federal virtues; but nothing of federal vices—much about the faults of democracy; but nothing of its merits. We shall hear many dismal prophecies; but nothing about the falsehood of all their preceding ones. We shall hear how wonderfully well the state government was administered by governor Chittenden and his friends; but we shall not hear, from *them*, that Galusha and his friends have administered full as well. We shall hear of the late legislative "slaughter" of officers; but not a whisper, that they mean to do the same thing, if they get the power! We shall hear that a

President ought not to be taken from Virginia; but we shall not hear one *good reason* why not. We shall hear many contrasts between northern and southern states; but they will not remind us that Washington condemned all comparisons of this kind. We shall hear about the new salary law of Congress; but we shall by no means hear, from the same source, how many of the *federal* members from this state voted for it, and the only *republican* member, against it. All this we shall hear, if the paroxysm of political phrenzy returns. But otherwise, it may be that they will candidly say to us, "we do not expect to rule better than you; but we naturally wish to get *into office*; which we cannot do till we first get *you out*!"

In a few words, the duty of both parties is obvious. Be vigilant. Seek truth. Exercise your right of suffrage honestly and attentively, and then submit to the majority.

AMERICANS!—Your destiny, under God, is in your own hands. Your pursuits must determine the character of your government, as well as yourselves. Pursue not glory at the expence of your republican simplicity. Pursue not wealth at the expence of your morals. You had better be gloriously poor, than ignominiously rich. Choose whether you will be merely a *splendid*, or a *happy* nation. Both characters are too seldom united. If you choose glory, win it and wear it. But let it be no tinsel. All the world agree that plain utility is better than counterfeit, if not than real splendor.

FELLOW CITIZENS!—The remainder of our festivity will be exhibited at the convivial board; where, as well as here, may you annually meet, with zeal unabated, and principles unrelaxed, to enjoy and to renew the harvest of your fathers' labors. And when you are called from this earthly scene, may you leave to your children, perfect as you inherited it, the rich, the glorious legacy of Independence!