

A N
O R A T I O N,

PRONOUNCED

July 4, 1801,

AT THE REQUEST OF THE

INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN OF

BOSTON,

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF

American Independence.

BY CHARLES PAINE, Esq.

Heu Pietas ! heu Prisca Fides ! invictaque bello
Dextera !

VIRGIL.

Dii probos mores docili juventæ,
Dii senectuti placidæ quietem,
Liberæ Genti date rem, prolemque,
Et decus omne.

CARMEN SECULARE,

BOSTON :
MANNING & LORING, NO. 2, CORNHILL.

Vote of the Town.

At a Meeting of the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the Town of *Boston*, duly qualified and legally warned in public Town-Meeting, assembled at *Faneuil-Hall*, the 4th day of July, A. D. 1801 :

On motion, *Voted*, That the Selectmen be, and hereby are appointed a Committee to wait on CHARLES PAINE, Esq. in the name of the Town, and thank him for the elegant and spirited ORATION, this day delivered by him, at the request of the Town, upon the Anniversary of the Independence of the United States of America ; in which, according to the Institution of the Town, he considered the feelings, manners, and principles, which led to that great National Event ; and to request of him a copy for the press.

Attest. WILLIAM COOPER, *Town-Clerk.*

BOSTON, JULY 4, 1801.

GENTLEMEN,

IN complying with your request, to which custom has given the solemnity of a claim, I trust my imperfect performance will find an apology in the purity of my intentions.

I am, with great respect,
Gentlemen,

Your very obedient servant,

CHARLES PAINE.

The Selectmen of Boston.



Oration.



NATIONAL sentiment, although frequently the result of circumstances, is yet the subject of education. Bold and irritable, it is pliant to the touch of eloquence ; resolute and untractable, it yields to the discipline of reason. In periods of revolution it incurs the crisis of its susceptibility and caprice. It is then we behold it in its most unfavourable aspect. Roused at every alarm, no opiate is strong enough to compose it ; existing only in its own change, it scarcely outlives the definition of its character. Such, however, perilous and volatile as it is, becomes the magical director, which guides the master wire of the cabinet in all countries, where the people claim a portion of the right of legislation. It demands respect ; for its office, though despotic, is lawful : It merits cultivation ; for its errors, though fatal, are involuntary. In all popular governments it is also the principal instrument by which the administration acquires energy, and one of the great functions by which law strengthens its authority. In moments of political hazard, created by foreign aggression, with confi-

dence we resort to its honest zeal, to rally the phalanx of the passions, and to subsidize the pride of man in the defence of his injured country. But in seasons of civil serenity, though we may suspect their plausible treachery, the tone of national temper is no longer to be raised by appeals to the popular sensibility. It is then our duty to convince, not to inflame. Surrounded by circumstances of so peculiar a nature, the return of this auspicious anniversary, while it inspires our enthusiasm and revives our gratitude, arrests us amid this war of sentiment, invites us to reflection, and leads us back to principle. It points us to a time, when we were "all brethren and all Americans," in truth and in honour, without being seduced into the affinity by the necromancy of words.

AMERICANS ! to this period let us return for a moment ; and while we trace back our footsteps to the goal from which we have started, we will cast a veil over the images of horror, which crowd on our retrospect, and mark with fidelity our aberrations from the path of our fathers.

THE "feelings, manners, and principles," leading to that great national epoch, which we are now assembled to commemorate, have annually been the theme of fervid orisons and heartfelt gratulations. What subject can be more animating, what more useful to an assembly of enlightened freemen ? Animating, because it inspires us with a veneration of that unimpeachable virtue, that magnanimous constancy, and that undaunted courage, which originated the settlement, which

protected the progress, which asserted the independence of America. Useful, because it teaches us those principles, upon which are founded our national dignity and happiness, and without which we can neither efficiently support nor duly estimate them.

WHAT then were those feelings, what those manners, what those principles, which gave birth to this auspicious era? They were the independent feelings of men, who had obtained their liberty at too dear a rate to be despoiled of it but with their lives; whose manners associated industry with integrity, and virtue with piety; whose principles were an unbounded attachment to liberty, prescribed and sanctioned by law; inspiring an equal hatred of tyranny and anarchy; and uniting loyalty to their constitution of government with a determined opposition to the smallest encroachment upon their personal rights.

DRIVEN by ecclesiastical oppression from the land of their nativity, where lay inherited the relics of their departed ancestors, our venerable forefathers committed themselves to the ocean and to God, in search of some secluded residence in this then howling wilderness, where they and their posterity might enjoy those civil and religious immunities, which they had long and unsuccessfully struggled to obtain on the shores of Britain. Liberty, their cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, directed them to this her chosen seat. America was already destined in the councils of Heaven to be a great and mighty empire. This vast continent, fertile and salubrious, which

had for ages remained unvisited but by the necessary foot of the savage, would probably at this day have been scarcely known even on the map of the world, had not its wilds been peopled by persecution and cultivated by banishment. But it had been reserved as the consecrated spot, on which should be erected the temple of liberty, when ecclesiastical bigotry and civil despotism had rendered the old world untenable by her pure spirit. In that inveterate oppression, which exiled our ancestors from the abodes of civilized man ; in that relentless vengeance, which pursued them even into these inhospitable forests ; in that fortitude and patience, which supported them amid the dangers and the hardships, which harassed and encompassed their infant settlement ; we behold the finger of Providence, pointing to the rising greatness of this western world. But in this operation of second causes, the blind calculations of human foresight were baffled and bewildered ; and even the philosophy of later ages has been astonished at the effect. From this example the oppressors of mankind might have learned, that the correct and steady virtue of principle acquires new strength from the pressure of opposition which surrounds it, and enriches its triumph by the spoils of those efforts, which are employed to defeat it.

SEPARATED from the mother country by an ocean of fearful and almost untried navigation, the Colonies pursued the object of their emigration without great interruption, until their rapid improvements, their increasing strength, and their

widely extending commerce, attracted the envy, and excited the ambition and avarice of Europe. Britain, who before appeared regardless of our condition, now assumed a more despotic tone. Not content with those voluntary contributions, to which alone she was entitled, her exactions increased in proportion to the ability of the Colonies to sustain them. A cruel monopoly of our commerce was succeeded by a still more unjust attempt to raise a revenue from our trade. This claim, imperious and arbitrary as it was, was rendered more iniquitous and oppressive, by a standing army stationed in our metropolis to enforce it. At the throne of a deluded monarch the entreaties of freemen had no avail. *It was decreed, that the tyranny of Britain should produce the freedom of America.* The parliamentary assumption of a right to bind us in all cases whatsoever, and the abrogation of the charter of Massachusetts, extinguished the last obligation of our allegiance, and with it destroyed the only tie of bootless servitude. The spirit of freedom flashed indignant through the continent; the manacles of oppression were burst asunder; America arose from the cradle of colonial infancy, and assumed the dignity of national manhood. In vain were the skill of the veteran, the allurements of bribery, and the terrors of proscription, combined to subdue the perseverance, the integrity, and the firmness, of that spirit of patriotism, whose object was not to extend the boundaries of an empire, nor to effect a revolution in the morals

of man ; but whose pursuit *was Liberty*, and whose hope *was God!*

THE horrors of the revolutionary conflict will ever be remembered by Americans as the price of their independence. What hardships did ye not endure ; what miseries did ye not suffer in this unequal contest ? Unequal, I say, because it was a contest between the hirelings of despotism on the one part, and the virtuous cultivators of the soil on the other. It was a war between the *myrmidon*, whose attachment to life was involved in his scanty stipend, and whose death could in no way affect the social or political relations of his country but by an erasure of his name from the sum of its inhabitants ; and the industrious *yeoman*, whose life was not staked at a mercenary peril, who lived not for himself only, but for his parents, his wife, his children, and his country, and whose death would make a chasm in society, by depriving its physical and moral force of the energy and example of an useful citizen.

THE American revolution, unparalleled in the history of nations, for the moderation with which it was conducted, and the momentous importance of its object, was merely defensive. It was not the mad purpose “ of tearing the world from its poles and commencing a new era for the human race,” but a deliberate plan of adherence to their ancient charter of rights, and of opposition to the attempted impositions of Britain. Compelled by the mighty interest of such motives and views,

the assembled Patriots of America declared, that the arbitrary conduct of the mother country had dissolved her authority over the Colonies, and that the United States were, and of right ought to be, a Free, Sovereign, and Independent, Nation. America then exhibited an august spectacle. An infant country, without a government, without laws, without any bonds whatever, excepting the charm of liberty, boldly proclaiming her independence, and maintaining her sovereignty against the most haughty and most powerful nation on the globe !

As the revolution originated in principle, so it was conducted with a distinct reference to its object. From the correct unity of design, which distinguished all its lineaments and parts, it should seem, that the philosophers and patriots, who conceived the mighty project and ripened it for execution, were either endued by presentiment or enlightened by prophecy, to mark its precise boundaries, and calculate its immediate effects. Through all its vicissitudes and perils their foresight appears to have tempered its conduct and directed its issue. The scope of their enterprize was neither to create nor to destroy : its humble office was to repair and preserve. If to the purpose of their councils the spirit of innovation could in any sort be ascribed, it is, that they sought to disencumber our Tuscan pillar of its Corinthian capital ; but they left its majestic shaft uninjured. To them reformation was an

anxious, arduous, sacred, task. Their plan of improvement was chaste, and was practical. It courted not the perplexity of theory, merely because it was scientific, nor delighted in the magnificence of ruin, merely because it was sublime. They repaired the roof of an ancient and venerable edifice, enlarged the number of its lights, amended the style of its architecture, and cemented the rocks of its foundation. But they employed no Samson to collapse its pillars, no Eratosthratus to burn its temple. Thus they escaped the most fearful destiny of revolution, the most horrible abyss of confusion and misery, into which a misguided people can be plunged by delusion. They escaped the "deadly passion for making political experiments on abstract theories and untried systems." "Never in the whole course of the revolution were the rights of man appealed to for the destruction of the rights of a citizen, never was the sovereignty of the people used as a pretext to undermine the foundations of social security." Here was no strife of jarring factions, contending for preeminence, "whose voluntary crimes could only be covered by necessary misdeeds," and with whom "the end would always justify the means." Here patriotism did not consist in extirpating the finer feelings, and dissolving the social connexions of man. Here it was not considered necessary to overturn religion, before we could erect a government, or to abolish a future state, before we could establish our temporal independence. Notwithstanding our revolution was necessarily with the confused noise of the warrior, and with garments

rolled in blood ; yet those institutions, both civil and sacred, which our fathers had erected as the palladium of their liberties, were inviolably preserved. Ours was not a war of avarice against wealth, of ambition against power, of vice against honour, of infidelity against religion, of atheism against God ! It was a war of principle against injustice ; a war of temperate, virtuous, liberty against the attempts of invasion and intrigue to corrupt her purity and destroy her existence. It originated in a noble spirit of ancestry, which inspired the heroes of its scenes to emulate their fathers in an attachment to their altars, their country, and their laws ; and by the same principles which produced it, it was conducted through all its convulsions, its horrors, and its dangers, to the object of its commencement.

THE political debility, which ensued this paroxysm of energy, and the general distress, which succeeded the declaration of peace, severely tried the virtue, and almost baffled the patriotism of Americans. The storm had subsided ; but it had left on our shores the wrecks of its vengeance. We had indeed gained our independence, but we had almost lost the power of preserving it. Overburdened with debts, which we were unable to discharge, borne down with taxes, which we were unwilling to bear, without money, without credit, without resources, we were impoverished by the miseries of liberty, which we were too independent to control, and walked trippingly over the embers of the late volcano, though conscious that the flames of civil war were kindling beneath our

fect. But the overthrow of the colonial government was not the ultimate object of the revolution. It was not an absolution from the obligations of law, or the duties of citizens, which Americans fought. Had this been their object, here then they might have revelled in all the philosophic confusion and mad intoxication of anarchy. It was a government uniting liberty with order, and individual right with public restraint, for which they nobly struggled. Such a government has arisen upon the ashes of the revolution composed of the best materials, which learning, virtue, and patriotism, could furnish, founded on the will of the people, and having for its object their security and happiness.

UNDER this government, administered by the virtue, the abilities, and the patriotism, of the two illustrious Statesmen, whom Americans have placed foremost on the scroll of their affections, and front on the pages of their glory, our country has advanced to a state of learning, opulence, and power, unequalled, in the lapse of so short a period, by any nation renowned in historic registry. Those convulsions, which have shaken Europe to its centre, and uplifted the deep rooted governments of antiquity, have indeed threatened to involve America in their extended confusion. But the wise, pacific; yet firm, policy of our Executive, which led to the declaration of our neutrality, and to the adoption of conciliatory measures with the two great powers of Europe, who had alternately and most unjustifiably depredated upon our commerce,

have hitherto preserved us from an actual declaration, but not from the prudent preparation for a war. The disgraceful embarrassments, which attended the negotiations with one of those powers, owing in a great measure to an injurious and dastardly disunion and want of patriotism among ourselves, it is hoped will teach Americans, that the claims of an injured nation, however moderate and reasonable, will always be dismissed with disdain, unless the justice of their demand can be enforced by the rhetoric of their cannon. Peace can never be solicited with honour, unless the fixed alternative be war with energy. No nation, perhaps, ever experienced so much to arouse its energies, and to call into action its resources, at so early a period of its existence as has already fallen to the lot of America. The embarrassments, into which she was plunged by the revolutionary war, would ere this, in all probability, have been erased from the catalogue of our national concerns by the excellent system of financial relief, which was adopted by the Federal Government: This system had satisfied all those at home, who had any claims upon her; established her credit abroad; and raised her to respectability in the view of foreign nations. But her commerce, which then whitened either pole with its canvass, held out too strong a temptation, and offered too easy a prey, to the spirit of plunder, to permit her to retain her neutral situation, unimpoverished by spoil, and undegraded by insult.

THE war in Europe, though it has introduced views and principles, obnoxious to order, and dan-

gerous to our liberty, has greatly benefited the United States, not merely in a commercial and pecuniary view, but in a point more interesting and essential to our honour and existence. It has aroused the spirit of the nation, by the infliction of wrongs, which might else have been lulled into a fatal security by the fascinations of luxury and the oblivion of ease. It has exhibited to the world, that peace is not our object without independence, and that the proud forests of America contain a barrier to all encroachments upon her rights. Our navy, though shackled by the inexperience of infancy, and limited in the field of its action, has, during the short period of its existence, demonstrated, not only its intrinsic capability, but its absolute importance to a commercial country. It has already put a period to the depredations of pirates in the form of civilized men, and has now to contend with pirates by profession. May it be cherished and protected as a school of maritime education, as a nursery of able officers and hardy seamen, as an encouragement to industrious and useful mechanics, and as a terror to the ambition and avarice of foreign nations.

Much praise is merited by the abilities, the integrity, and the patience, of our Envoys, who, after two abortive attempts, have eventually adjusted the existing differences between this country and France upon terms, which are considered compatible with the honour, interest and dignity of the United States. How much more exalted an eulogy is due to the prudence and foresight, which

watched the treacherous crouching of the Tiger, and arrayed our country in warlike habiliments to resist the subtle and meditated grasp of his poisonous fangs. This magnanimous policy, encountered yet not disheartened by the arts of intrigue, the ingratitude of faction, and the baseness of calumny, has protected us from the mighty ruin, which impended, and, we trust, has placed us beyond the crisis of those political convulsions, which have agitated Europe and the world.

BUT, Americans! having foiled the attempts of our foes, we have now to guard against ourselves. We have destroyed the viperous insect of foreign perfidy, whose cancerous tooth had blighted the foliage of our glory; we have now to cauterize the wide spreading roots of domestic faction, which have nourished their rank vegetation on the strength of our soil. Escaped by great mastery and exertion from the sweeping tide of the ingulphing cataract, we render thanks to Heaven, that we have not now to toil against the headlong precipitation of the torrent; but little shall we have gained by this mighty preservation, if we have not learned from trembling experience to correct the course of our navigation.

WHAT is the boasted strength of empires? Where are now the mighty republics of antiquity? They are all levelled with the dust, and can now be traced only by their ruins, which remain as monuments to posterity of that forgetfulness of

principles, in which they have met their fall. Nations, like individuals, when arrived at the maturity of their greatness, easily forget the means by which they have obtained their eminence. Affluence, the fruit of industry, brings with it luxury, the bane of morality ; and even learning, the source of liberty, has for its companions sophistry and faction. A government, exercising the power in obedience to the will of the people, of all public compacts founded upon necessary restraint, affords the least occasion for jealousy. Under such a Government the people should be jealous of themselves as well as watchful of their rulers ; for, if its administration be corrupt, that impurity has its source in the people ; as they not only delegate authority to their rulers, but also furnish the rulers themselves. A government, originating in the sovereignty, and depending for its support on the virtue of the community, calls aloud to its citizens, Beware of unreasonable jealousy, that Samson in republics, lest he take away that confidence, which is my main pillar, and I fall and crush you in my ruins !

AMERICANS ! We possess a country, extensive in its domains, happy in its situation, fertile in its resources, and still richer in its prospects and its promises. Its laws, by their distribution and protection of property, afford ample encouragement to industry ; its institutions secure to us the enjoyment of liberty and order, by the general diffusion of learning, the cultivation of urbani-

ty, and the support of religion ; its government has already become the anxious admiration, and, by our adherence to its essential principles, may yet be the permanent boast of the world. Can we appreciate these inestimable privileges ; can we contemplate these ripening glories of our country, and not remember whence they have arisen ? Shall we riot in luxury, in philosophy, and faction, and forget the heroes and the patriots, who projected and completed our independence ; who reared and ornamented our federal edifice ; who have secured the sources of our national wealth, preserved our fisheries, and extended our commerce, to the limits of the world ; who have conducted us amid the convulsions of war, the overthrow of empires, the confusion of opinions and interests, the visionary projects of closet politicians, and their experimental essays on the perfectability of man ? Shall the Gothic hand of an infidel philosophy extinguish those luminaries of learning and religion, which irradiate our land ? Shall Vandal faction overrun our liberties by the inroads of barbarism ? Shall the spirit of party withhold from the Man, who lately presided in our councils, that gratitude and veneration, to which his patriotic, arduous, and efficient, services for our country so justly entitle him ; whose virtues, talents, and exertions, have honoured his country more than she can honour him ? Should the common fate of republics be the destiny of America, and her name be added to the catalogue

of fallen nations ; amid the ruins of her greatness, the passing traveller would read inscribed on the monument which should inclose the ashes of that venerable man, *Ingratitude, thou bane of republics ?*

THE audacious spirit of party has invaded every man, who was either respectable for his virtues or venerable for his services. To the dark and recreant agency of this spirit was doomed to be sacrificed the luminous and unimpeachable reputation of that Christian Statesman, the Patriot of Hampshire ; but the mild, yet inflexible equanimity of his truly republican administration disarmed the malice of party. The ghost of toryism was conjured up to appal him in his career ; but it fled at his approach like the goblins of fancy at the dawning of light. Oh Massachusetts ! thou pride of liberty, thou bulwark of order, thy virtue is not tarnished, nor thy glory diminished ! The patriot, and civilian, whose wisdom and example nerved thy country's arm, and assisted her struggles in the infancy of her empire, whose talents and whose influence contributed to the construction of her government, whose life of long and eminent services has been watchfully devoted to the promotion of her prosperity, and the cultivation of her honour, is again recognized in the affection and gratitude of thy sons, again presides in thy councils, and brightens thy renown !

THE same spirit, which originated, can alone preserve our independence. To our fathers, who planted, to the heroes and patriots, who reared

and defended our empire ; to our posterity, who will rightfully claim, as an unincumbered inheritance, the full enjoyment of those liberties, which have descended to us, we owe a rigid adherence to those manners and principles, and the sacred preservation of those institutions, which are the mighty bulwark of our nation's peace. Would we secure these, we must oppose the arts of that courtezan philosophy and assassins infidelity, which are combined to disorganize society, to demoralize man, and even to dethrone the Deity. We must guard against the insidious attacks of atheism on our religion, the only cement of society, and the main pillar of all governments. We must preserve and encourage our happy system of education, the only sure source of correct opinions, just principles, and pure habits. We must revive that ancient spirit of patriotism, which does not, like the patriotism of the present day, falsely so called, confound all countries and all crimes in one common chaos of general good, but whose object is to maintain the dignity and independence of its own country upon those broad principles of just and equal policy, which alone are compatible with the peaceful intercourse of nations. America stands alone, dissimilar in government, in habits, and in principles, and superior in privileges, in improvements, and resources, to every other nation on the globe. Rich in civil liberty, in extensive commerce, and mild laws, she exhibits the only relief in the sombre picture of nations. The past centu-

ry has exhibited on the stage of the elder continent scenes, which have astonished the boldest philosophers, and baffled the skill of the wisest politicians. War, horrid war, has drenched her fields with the blood, and choaked her rivers with the carcases of millions. The oldest monarchy in the world has been tumbled into ruin, and minor empires within the vortex of her influence have been unbalanced in their governments and shaken in their independence by convulsions, which have been ascribed to the spirit of liberty; that same spirit of liberty, which originated our independence. Americans! can this be true? Can that principle, which produces order and happiness, produce also confusion and misery? Does the same cause, which engenders the thunder to purify the atmosphere of its noxious vapours, produce also the wild tornado to desolate where it spreads? The sun, that warms and illumines the universe, may sometimes by the intensity of his rays produce the pestilential drought; but by what power in physics can he leap from his centre and conflagrate the world? The spirit of your fathers rises indignant at the comparison. The liberty, of which we boast, consists in the security of our lives, our persons, and our property, in a modified restriction of individual will harmonizing with a public and equal right to do whatever experience has declared to be compatible with social order or the voice of legislative authority has pronounced to be lawful. This liberty is not the fantastic creature of

an imagination, distempered by visionary schemes of happiness ; but it is the product of cool, deliberate reason, operating upon the past miseries of mankind, and grown wise by the folly of ages. This, Americans, is the liberty, for which your Statesmen have toiled, and your Heroes have bled ! Will you barter it for the wild projects of dreaming philosophers and moonstruck politicians ? Will you abandon those sound principles, sanctioned by experience, those industrious habits and pure morals, the rock, on which are built your nation's freedom, strength, and greatness ? No, my fellow citizens ! Here is our country, here are our father's sepulchres, these are our liberties. While we enjoy and are grateful, let us remember and be wise. While with filial wonder and festive admiration we gather around the altars of our country, to devote and to consecrate this day of empire to national glory, let us celebrate and hallow it as a day of recurrence to national principles. Carried back in imagination and in sensibility to that era, when this multifarious continent, with all its classes of interests, its gradations of knowledge, and its variety of rivalships, was united in one common zeal and was preserved by the compact, let us, when convened in this annual assembly to revive the recollection of our dangers, while we re-act the triumph of our liberties, blush at the apostacy of our patriotism. Whether recalled to duty by reflection or reverted to principle by local inspiration, let us unite in deprecating the curse of foreign in-

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fluence, that Aaron's rod, more powerful than all the other serpents of democracy ; and impressed and humbled with a sense of our Cameleon greatness, and catching some portion of the holy spirit of our ancestors, let us renew our solemn obligations, to venerate the memories of our fathers, to preserve their institutions, to emulate their virtues, to defend their inheritance, to cultivate a national character, to glow with pride at the name of our country, to become only AMERICANS !