

AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED AT WOODSTOCK,

ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, A. D. 1803,

Before the Society of Columbian Brothers,

AND THE

Citizens of the first Society in *Woodstock*,

IN COMMEMORATION OF

American Independence.

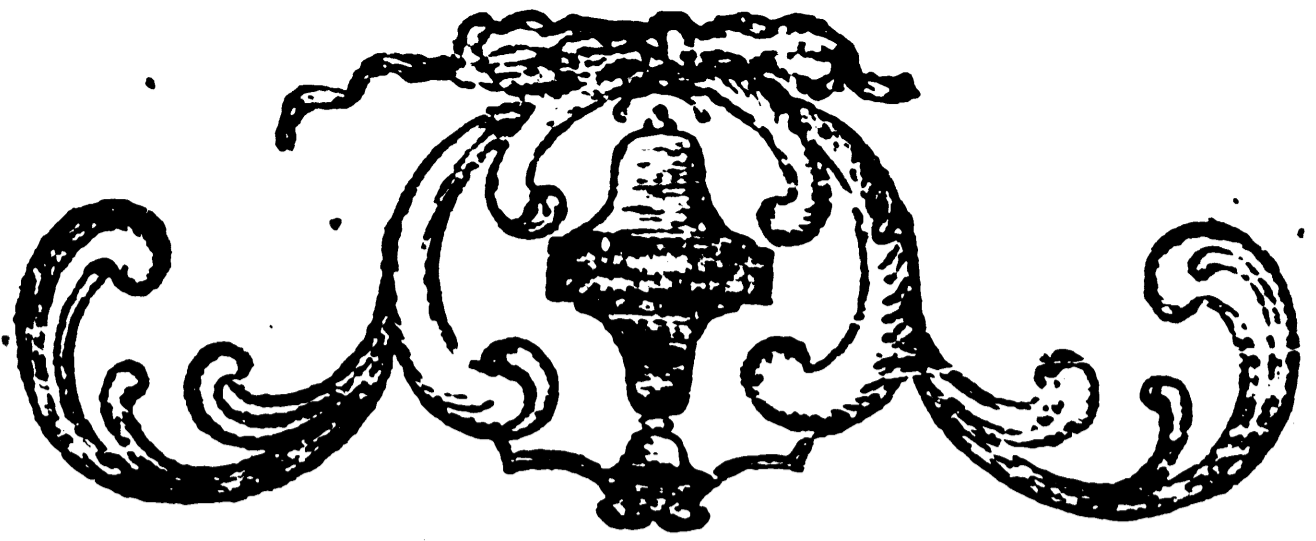
BY JASON PARKE.

" Thus Heaven decrees : a swift elapsing time
Shall here behold an Empire rise sublime !
While *COMMERCE* boldly shall unfurl her sails,
And court the polar and solstitial gales ;
Or seek for treasures on the wave, where NIGHT
Throws her dark mantle o'er the god of LIGHT."

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AN ORATION.

Fellow Citizens, and Brethren,

A **N**OTHER revolving year bears round the birthday of American Freedom. Whilst the heart of every patriotic American thrills with extacy at the recollection of the ever memorable fourth of July, 1776, when our political fathers dared to assert their injured rights, to throw the gauntlet, and "bid defiance to the gigantic greatness of Britain;" permit me to congratulate you on the return of another Anniversary of our National Independence.

Our hearts, if not adamantine, must dilate with gratitude to that Being, who controuls the fates of nations, who sways unbounded the sceptre of the universe, that we have in so great a degree experienced his paternal care, ever since our venerable forefathers forsook the luxuriant soil of Britain, risked their fortunes and their lives on the boisterous ocean, and took up their residence in the dreary wilderness, surrounded with ruthless savages, whose brutal souls delight in murderous deeds.

When we contrast our privileges with those which are enjoyed by Europeans, we have the greatest reason to rejoice that we were born Americans. We

Behold the ancient institutions of the old world subverted ; revolutions, like the restless waves of the ocean, rolling on in rapid succession, urging forward, and obliterating the traces of their predecessors.— LIBERTY and EQUALITY, two spectres of horrid aspect, offspring of Chaos, reeking with blood, lead the van of destruction. They brandish their magic wand, and palaces change to cottages ; learning is prostrated at the footstool of ignorance ; property becomes the common stock of man ; vice receives the appellation of virtue, and all rational government and real religion are overwhelmed with a flood of calumny, and sink in ruins. All obligations, natural, civil, and moral, are discarded ; idleness revels on the spoils of industry ; power and right become synonymous ; usurpation and tyranny, with all their concomitant evils, are termed the happy reign of Liberty and Equality ; and the laws of God and man, are trampled under foot with all the marks of sovereign contempt.

Shall we not then rejoice, that our political state of probation is still prolonged ? that true Liberty, offspring of heaven, has not yet winged her flight from our happy shores ? Making these United States the temple of her residence, she has shielded us from the envenomed shafts of our enemies, and enabled us to preserve inviolate, the independence transmitted to us by our fathers, whilst the fertile fields of Europe are drenched in blood, their cities enveloped in flames, and desolation, with haughty strides, wanders over the solitary wastes.

The return of another anniversary of our National Independence, prompts us to pause, to take a retrospective view, to recall to mind the glorious achievements of those patriots, who fought, and bled, in defence of their country's rights, to hail the memorable day, when a nation, whose patience had been exhausted by reiterated and unprovoked insults and

abuses, deeply impressed with the consciousness of their own rectitude, and appealing to the supreme arbiter of events for the justice of their cause, determined on manly resistance, resolving to live free or die.

The situation of America has been of a peculiar nature. We cannot say with any nation on earth, we were once oppressed with the galling chains of despotism, but having burst them asunder, we have emerged from slavery to liberty, from darkness to light. No ! We will not insult the manes of our fathers, by asserting, that they were ever in bondage to any power on earth ; but we will declare with the illustrious Washington, we were “ born in a land of freedom.”

Our fathers, driven by persecution from their native home, explored and settled the uncultivated wilds of North-America. The love of freedom stimulated them to endure every hardship, that human nature could sustain, rather than bow their necks to the yoke of bondage. They preferred the “ humble cottage, whilst blest with liberty, to gilded palaces surrounded with the ensigns of slavery.” They were compelled to struggle with many hardships, before their residence became fixed and permanent. On one side, they beheld the wide spread ocean, separating them from their mother country ; on the other, either wild beasts prowling thro the wilderness, or the cruel savage, whose unrelenting soul smiles horribly at the tortures of his unhappy victim, with uplifted tomahawk prepared to crimson it with their blood.— In this forlorn condition, whilst the pestilence which walketh in darkness, thinned their feeble ranks, they banished all desponding cares from their breasts, and whilst they bravely stemmed the torrent of multiplied hardships which threatened to overwhelm them, placed their reliance on heaven, and dared to hope for success. A few revolving years changed the scene.

The lofty forests were levelled, and converted into cultivated fields, and the savage inhabitants driven back. Cities now rise where once the savage hunter roamed, Commerce spreads its canvass to the propitious gales, splendid mansions are now beheld where once the lonely cottage stood, and opulence succeeds to poverty.

Mutual love and esteem existed between the mother country and the colonies, and the benefits resulting to both, were reciprocal. Whilst Britain furnished us with her manufactures, and afforded us protection against both civilized and savage foe, we, with filial love and gratitude, acknowledged her beneficence, and in return, furnished her with the productions of our soil. Thus, whilst we were in the full fruition of felicity, under the resplendent rays of the sun of Liberty, the infernal counsel of Lord North, appeared like a dark and portentous cloud; whose menacing aspect filled our minds with "gloomy care and discontent." From the year 1765, when the impolitic plan of taxing the colonies without their consent, was adopted, we may date the unhappy contention between the two countries, which forever dissolved the bonds of amity, with which we had been united, and terminated in our Independence. It was then, that the stamp act was passed, which raised an universal resentment in the breasts of Americans. The next year this odious tax was repealed; but not content, satan-like, they must further try the patience of the colonies, and the following year produced the tea act. The storm now began to thicken apace, and soon overspread the horizon. At Lexington, in 1775, the decisive blow was struck, which inflicted a wound that baffled the skill of all who attempted to heal its malignity. Here flowed the first American blood, that was shed in this unnatural contest. Here was the first oblation at the shrine of Liberty. This was the fire, which, like the electric fluid, shot through the

land, and fired the breasts of all with revenge, from Main to Georgia ; from the shores of the Atlantic, to the rapid waves of the Mississippi.

“ Having exhausted the cup of reconciliation with Britain to the last drop,” the people of these states, by their delegates in Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Ruler of the universe, for the rectitude of their conduct, and the justice of their cause, on the memorable 4th of July, 1776, declared, that
 “ THESE STATES ARE, AND OF RIGHT OUGHT TO BE FREE AND INDEPENDENT.”

The Rubicon was now passed. The fatal die was thrown, which forever severed the two nations, and could not be recalled. Britain, too late opened her eyes to behold her former folly, in adopting coercive measures. She soon offered to treat, but America spurned her insidious offers with manly contempt, and would negotiate only as an independent people. Trusting in Him who had ever been to them a wall of defence, and a munition of rocks, they ranged themselves under the standard of the immortal Washington, and defied the menaces of their aspiring foes. On one side, was seen the regular troops of Britain, with their auxiliaries, marshalled in dread array, for the avowed design of subverting the liberty of a free people. On the other, a virtuous and magnanimous nation, with LIBERTY OR DEATH, on their lips, contesting manfully for their constitutional and inherent rights, and struggling to escape the fatal grasp of despotism. On one side, was beheld the veterans of Europe, trained to the art of war from their earliest years, and conducted by the most celebrated commanders of the age ; on the other, an undisciplined militia, unacquainted with the science of human butchery. Thus, without any efficient government, destitute of arms, without a treasury, without a navy to protect our long extended shores from the ravages of an ene-

my, we contested manfully for our rights ; and returning peace, with wreathes of laurel, crowned us triumphant, and enrolled us on the list of Fame, as a free, soveraign, and independent Nation.

When then do we behold the time that we were slaves ? Who will accuse our fathers of ever dastardly crouching to the uplifted arm of despotism ? Was the iron yoke of bondage ever laid upon their necks ? or were they ever manacled with chains ? No ! no sooner did they hear the clanking of chains intended for them and their posterity, than the shrill clarion sounded, and all America was roused into action.

France, to humble the pride of Britain, aided us in our revolutionary contest ; but her views were mercenary, and when her hellish plans were ripe for execution, she threatened us with destruction ; presenting to our view the miserable condition of those European republics, which she had basely rifled of all they held most dear.

The long catalogue of insults and abuses which we have received, are too recent to be forgotten. I shall therefore pass over them in silence. The wasting hand of time shall never blot them from our remembrance, but succeeding ages shall rehearse them, after many generations shall have slept "in dull cold marble," and mouldered into dust. Happy was it for America, that she then had a wise and energetic administration, whose language was, "MILLIONS FOR DEFENCE, BUT NOT A CENT FOR TRIBUTE."

The hollow trumpet sounds, TO ARMS ! TO ARMS ! and the patriotic sons of Columbia, with the coruscant weapons of destruction, range themselves under the unfurled standard of their insulted country, and the immortal Washington is again beheld in front of the embattled ranks. Our infant navy launches into

the deep, and sweeps the ocean of her enemies.—
 The doubling thunder of Truxton, echoes through
 the vast expanse, and intimates to France, what tri-
 bute must be expected from the hardy sons of free-
 dom. Gentle zephyrs waft our navy to victory over
 the cerulean deep, whilst the tricoloured flag, which
 had been planted in triumph on the ramparts of the
 strong holds of Europe, and which ever foreboded de-
 struction to all opposition, wherever it was unfurled,
 now droops at the approach of the American Eagle.

After this brief retrospect, can any one who has
 that AMOR PATRIÆ glowing in his breast, which
 warms the bosom of every true patriot, can he view
 with calm moderation the unprovoked insults, which
 have been offered us by the Europeau powers? Can
 he forget that he is an American, and huzza their
 victories? The seventeenth of July, 1798, is an im-
 portant era in American affairs. It was then, that
 our connections with France were dissolved, and
 those dire bands which bound us, rent in pieces.

We are now free from all entangling alliances.—
 We have escaped the expanded jaws of the British
 lion, and eluded the fraternal embrace of French
 equality. Whilst Britain and France in their contest
 for power, have covered Europe with desolation,—
 whilst the fleets of Britain have whitened the ocean
 with their canvass, and riding triumphant, have swept
 the azure deep of all opposers; whilst the strong arm
 of ambitious France, has smote the continental pow-
 ers of Europe, humbled the pride of Germany, crush-
 ed the power of Spain, engulfed the independent
 Republics, and converted herself into a Golgotha;
 America, with men of firmness and wisdom at the
 helm of political affairs, has effectually resisted the
 power of British and Gallic arms, and evaded the
 poison of French philosophy. The direful torch of
 discord, which was enkindled in the Gallic nation, is

pointed towards Holland, and she expires in the fraternal embrace of her sister Republic. It is hurled at Genoa, Geneva, Venice, and the confederate cantons of Switzerland, and property is wrested from the hands of the owners, their cities and their villages are crowded with Gallic pillagers; churches, and houses, "sink in floods of fire," and the liberty established by Tell, expires in the fraternal hug of French equality. The ragged cliffs of Switzerland, once moistened with the blood of oppressors, and whose bones still lie "whitening over the fields," becomes the slaughter-house of patriots. It was pointed towards America, flashed across the broad Atlantic, where, cherished by Genet, and his hellish coadjutors, it threatened soon to be fanned into a flame. But our rulers, by their wise and magnanimous conduct, warded off the impending storm, rent the mantle of darkness which was fast encircling us, and a calm again succeeded.

CITIZENS OF COLUMBIA! You are now free: but be not lulled into a fatal security; for your independence is in jeopardy. Remember, that on you devolves the important duty, of transmitting to your posterity uncontaminated, the freedom of your ancestors. If you would maintain your independence, adhere strictly to the morals and religion of your pious forefathers. It is a solemn truth, which experience verifies, that without religion, no nation can long exist. The facts which have appeared in the world, will stand as everlasting monuments to the truth of this assertion, whilst the fine spun theories of infidels, will only exhibit the folly of their projectors. We are amply supplied with materials for proving, that public happiness cannot be maintained, where the hydra of infidelity, rears aloft her many heads, and impiously triumphs over the sacred institution of religion. Let a nation be once persuaded that there is no God but Reason, and that death is an eternal

sleep, and they will be prepared for the most atrocious villainies, and nothing will deter them from committing crimes of the blackest die. All incentives to virtue will be removed, all barriers in opposition to vice broken down, when a new scene will open to our view, too dreadful to relate, too horrible for the imagination to conceive. Turn your eyes for a few moments towards France, that nation of infidels, that sink of wickedness, that contemner of God, and terror of man, and you will find the truth of this assertion exemplified. This nation began its awful career, by denying the existence of a God, and a state of retribution, which duly prepared them for the perpetration of crimes, the most atrocious, that could be devised by the united counsels of Pandemonium. The hallowed temples of God were demolished, the holy volume of inspiration was offered up in sacrifice on the altar of Reason, while millions of the human race breathed out their souls beneath the bloody guillotine. Thus was this shattered bark tossed upon the **STORMY SEA OF LIBERTY**, besmeared with the blood of the murdered, and resounding with the groans of the dying; whilst the infatuated crew were amused with the fascinating sound of Liberty and Equality.

The vast influx of foreigners, and their elevation to places of trust and profit, is another source, from which our independence is endangered. If a nation is once overrun with foreign renegades, candidates for the gaol and gibbet, she stands on the verge of destruction, ready to take the fatal plunge, and sooner or later, must fall a prey to these outlandish villains, whom she has received and cherished in her bosom. That patriotic love, which glows in the breasts of native citizens, is not felt by these migrating cosmopolites. They arrive in this country with their passions heated in favor of some European power, which they view as a grand luminary, around which America, as a satel-

lite revolves. They are the fit tools of ambitious demagogues, and may be seen in every insurrection, where the prospect of gain is held up to their view ; and they would equally regret the overthrow of our national government, and the subversion of the Turkish monarchy.

Fellow citizens, rally round your violated constitution, your ark of safety, and suffer not yourselves to be stripped of your dear bought rights, the inheritance of your ancestors. The blood of thousands, who fell in your defence, is heard,—“ LIVE FREE OR DIE.” If you would maintain your Independence inviolate, be prepared for peace or war. With union for your motto, extend with one hand the olive branch of peace, and with the other brandish the flaming sword of power. Be resolved, that you will never behold the American eagle checked in its towering flight, and unfledged to decorate a British coronet, or a French cap, with its brilliant plumes ; but that your Independence shall be commensurate with your existence.

F I N I S.

