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**ORATION,**

DELIVERED BEFORE THE  
*Newport Moral and Literary Association*

CALLED THE  
**HYCARPEDIAN SOCIETY,**

ON THE  
**FOURTH OF JULY, 1808,**

BEING THE  
**THIRTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY**

OF

**AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.**

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**BY I. B. PEIRCE.**

Man knows no master, save creating heaven,  
Of those whom choice and common good ordain.

THOMPSON.

'Tis Liberty alone that gives the flower  
Of life its lustre and perfume;  
And we are weeds without it.

COWPER.

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**NEWPORT, August 1, 1808.**

**DEAR BROTHER,**

**WE** the Committee appointed by the Newport HYCARPEDIAN SOCIETY, do, as directed, present you their unfeigned thanks for the excellent and appropriate Discourse delivered on the fourth of July, agreeable to their request, and solicit a copy for the press.— We remain, with sentiments of love and respect, your Brethren,

**HENRY GARDNER,  
CHARLES PITMAN,  
THOMAS M. READ.**

*I. B. Peirce.*

**NEWPORT, August 2, 1808.**

**GENTLEMEN,**

**UNWILLING** to disappoint your ardent wishes, however incompatible they are to my own, I therefore am constrained from the love I bear you to grant your request; and do hereby transmit to you a copy of my Discourse, accompanied with the same diffidence which attended the pronounciation.—I am, Dear Brethren, with unfeigned esteem, yours, &c.

**I. B. PEIRCE.**

*Messrs. Henry Gardner,  
Charles Pitman, Thomas M. Read.*

# AN ORATION.



**A**LTHOUGH the material sun is obscured by clouds, and its brilliancy hid from our sight, yet has the sun of liberty arisen with cheering consolation, and shot forth the beams of gladness and joy on this her sanctified festival. On this day does the incense of her hallowed altars rise to heaven, with gratitude which flows from the bosoms of adoring millions! This country is the only refuge left for that benignant goddess; the only asylum of safety for her fugitive children! Here we dare to adore her, and erect altars to her name!

Thirty-two revolving periods, my brethren, have past, since the sages and benefactors of our country in convention, possessed of all the wisdom of an aristocracy, and of all the virtue of a democracy, with unparalleled fortitude, dared to declare us a free, sovereign and independent nation, and consecrated in the face of tyranny this holy sanctified festival; and for the maintenance of which they pledged to each other and to their country, their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor! O may we their children never tarnish the lustre of their glory, by basely submitting our independence and freedom—"so dearly bought, the price of so much blood!"—O never let it perish in our hands, but piously transmit it to our children.

We are convened, brethren, to pay a tribute of gratitude to heaven, and to celebrate the anniversary of that all auspicious day which gave freedom to millions, and established one of the greatest, wisest and happiest republics that exists, or can be found in the annals of history. On this truly glorious occasion does not every heart beat high with the noble enthusiasm of liberty and virtue, which are as inseparably connected as the arteries and blood are in animal nature? Virtue is the only foundation on which the temple of freedom can be reared with sufficient strength to withstand the ever mutilating hand of faction and treason, and the only sure bulwark to a State. Then, fellow-citizens, build up this great republic of ours, which excites the admiration of the world, and is the boast of every American, upon the durable and permanent basis of virtue!

Morals will ever preserve the liberty of a people, and just laws guarantee its duration.— Consult the annals of faithful history, and what do they present but the most incontestible proofs of our assertion, that true and real liberty is founded upon virtue, and can only be preserved by morals. Rome, once mistress of the world, once the pride of the virtuous and delight of the good, remained free only so long as her sons were virtuous and her laws just.— Contemplate her rise, her zenith, and her fall; and you will find sufficient instruction to avoid the fatal shoals of faction, and the still more dangerous quicksands of vice and immorality; and likewise learn the important lesson, so necessary for the citizens of republics to know, to guard against that disastrous passion of unbrid-

led ambition, crush the envenomed viper in its bud, suffer it not to grow in a land of freedom, nor to lay its sacrilegious hand on the temple of liberty.

The ambitious man, whose soul is absorbed in the darling passion of his heart, lets a loose to its gratification, and proudly disdaining the restraint of morals and of laws, involves himself, his friends and country, in one undistinguished ruin! Thus he destroys not only his own happiness, but his friends' and country's, as far as the influence of his ambition extends, or if he possesses the means to indulge and gratify it. Ruin, infamy and woe, is the end of this despicable passion of mad ambition.— But for the disastrous passion of unrestrained ambition, *Aaron Burr* might to this day have stood high in the esteem and affection of his country. But alas! how has it changed him! from the second magistracy in the union to the criminal at the bar! and from the supreme judge on the bench to the suppliant culprit!— It surmounts all the ties of nature and domestic affection; it breaks asunder the cords of friendship and humanity, and tramples on all the endearments of social life: not even suffering innocence can alter its purpose, nor the dignity of virtue dismay its guilty soul. Be wise, therefore, my countrymen, and learn from the awful fate of ambition, to evitate the glare of false glory, nor suffer the allurements of popular fame to cause you to depart from the pleasant paths of patriotism and virtue.

I need not farther draw your attention to the contemplation of those deluded votaries of des-

pötic ambition, to convince you of its pernicious tendency in any government; but more particularly in a republic: considering likewise the general diffusion of republicanism in this country, I think it not necessary to enter the wearisome field of arglment to convince you of its blessings; or to shew you the happy tendency of elective governments; for a republican government; although not the most natural, is the most philosophical, just and reasonable; and of course best calculated to promote the knowledge of science, and to preserve the freedom and happiness of a nation: it is liable to the fewest inconveniences of any whatever. In this country the truth of our assertions are demonstrated by the most irrefragable proof.— Here, heavenly freedom rears her refulgent banners with unclotided brightness and glory; and the rich and the poor bow to her shrine, and worship at her altar, with unaffected love and ineffable joy! all are protected by the common government; and virtue and genius receive their reward.

Our dear country, with extended arms of endearing humanity and benevolence, invites the persecuted patriots of every clime and nation, to come to her bosom as an asylum from tyranny: no misanthropic alien law now denies to the unfortunate patriot a happier home: no detested sedition bill, the haggard offspring of midnight caucusses, gags the mouth of suffering innocence, and glories in the affliction of the virtuous. No—we are happily delivered from the reproach occasioned by these, which disgraced our republic—being the nefarious acts of monarchical policy, under the mask of republicanism!

Our country now, magnanimously opens her gates to strangers from a thousand shores, and proffers them the richest blessings, liberty, safety and peace! How does the charity and benevolence of our country gladden the hearts of her sons, and brightens the gloom of human misery. Let us be virtuous and prize our privileges, and the blessings of liberty, for they can only be secured by morals. Virtue and wisdom ought then to be the primitive object of our attention; for in proportion as we are virtuous, we are happy and free.

At the name of liberty does not your enraptured souls feel in extacy? and can you be backward in laying such exquisite felicity upon a durable and permanent foundation? No; if you are wise, if you are prudent, you will not neglect to look well to the basis of your republic. When the roar of cannon announced the arrival of sol at the meridian, did it not recal to your minds that momentous period, when the murdering cannon of British despotism sounded in your ears? Can you recollect the feelings of your souls, on that occasion? Did not the heavenly voice of liberty cheer and comfort your souls under your heaviest calamities; and did it not add strength to your arm and toughen the sinew, to throw the javelin with furious impetuosity at the black host of British savages? When faithful memory enables us to retrace back the horrors of that long, cruel and bloody war, when liberty's children contested against despotic oppression; when all the horrors of war and devastation ravaged our country; when our cities were rapt in fire, and the shrieks of our murdered citizens

floated on the bosom of the midnight air—how does our hearts glow with gratitude to divine providence for the success of our arms, for the prosperity of our righteous cause, and the establishment of our glorious independence, and the long enjoyment of our liberties! Let us annually crowd our temples with pious joy and songs of thanksgiving to the Most High, for the preservation of the noble few who fought in the cause of humanity, in the cause of our country, and for the happy reign of peace and liberty!

It is not my intention to lead you back to review the miseries our fathers have endured; nor to revive in your imaginations the horrid cruelties of Englishmen. Let us thankfully enjoy the blessings we possess, and not disturb our tranquillity by the recollection of past sufferings; nor by contemplating a nation rendered haughty, cruel and oppressive, by its wretched polity and absurd constitution, imposed upon that people by the successful sword of William the conqueror, and perpetuated by a host of despicable tyrants, who have sat upon that throne for centuries, amid the dying groans of injured innocence. Often have those merciless wretches waded to their imperial dignities through torrents of blood, which flowed from the bosoms of expiring patriots, whose groans were hymns to British tyrants, and whose lamented end a feast to their savage souls!

Will you follow me with the eye of imagination to Erin! once happy country—now the dismal abode of tyranny and wretchedness; view there, my brethren, in holy obscurity, the



hallowed tomb of the unfortunate Emmett, consecrated by his patriotic virtues!—and there conspicuously appears the sad effects of England's so much extolled constitution—though tyranny has denied to his merit a superb monument, such as she perpetuates the memory of her votaries by, yet shall thy worth, O injured shade! ever have a place in our hearts.

Now turn to our own native land; but as you turn let the tear of philanthropy be dropt at the fate of hapless Ireland; and forget not to cast a look of compassion on the ill-fated shores of India! and to complete the picture of British barbarity, let the sepulchre of eleven thousand five hundred kindred martyrs rise on the gloomy shore of Long-Island to your view. Alas! they died not in the field of battle, covered with glory, fighting for liberty; but they patiently endured, with American fortitude, the refinement of British torture, on board (to use the words of a late author) 'that hell afloat,' called the Jersey, a prison-ship of that merciless, nay more, brutal, savage enemy! But although they reaped not the fruits of their toils and sufferings, yet shall their memory be blessed, and we their children and friends will honor and esteem them.

“Ye martyr'd shades, behold the land,

“Enrich'd by consecrated blood!

“See freedom's empire fast expand,

“Where late uncultur'd forests stood.”

Now let us draw the curtain over England, where the hydra despotism sits surrounded by

suffering thousands ; let the melancholy scenes of their misery and wickedness be hid from our eyes ; for

“ Had I an hundred mouths, an hundred tongues,

“ A voice of brass, and adamantine lungs,

“ Not half the mighty scenes could I disclose ;

“ Repeat their crimes, or count the dreadful woes.”

Let us endeavor to stop our vivid imaginations from bringing back to our view those tragical scenes of British rapacity ; but can we dismiss this subject without dropping a tear of sorrow to the memory of those sainted patriots and innocent victims who bled in our righteous cause ? Does not your blood congeal in your veins at the recollection of the horrid scenes ? when the savages of the forest, joined by the more savages of Europe, hurled the tomahawk of destruction, and brandished the murderous scalping knife, and rushed upon defenceless men, women and children, when the little smiling infant, unapprehensive of danger anear, was torn from its mother's breast and inhumanly butchered—its mother violated and then murdered, while the partner of her bosom, far distant from the once peaceful cottage where the cheering beams of contentment smiled on his youthful days, but now left an easy prey to wanton inhumanity, as he fights around the standard of liberty for his country's rights ; and the aged sire expiring beneath the repeated strokes of the tomahawk, bearing the venerable marks of four-score years. At the review of this truly British tragedy we must stop, to let the tear of awakened compassion and fraternal

sympathy roll down our cheeks to express the emotions of our afflicted souls—Enough!!! but here let us draw our consolation and alleviate the smart of sorrow, and dispel the anguish of our souls—that they now rest from their labors, and their good works have followed them to the mansions of eternal felicity; and with the keen eye of faith we behold them, even now, affectionately entreating us to be united, virtuous, happy and free! Let us ever cherish in our minds this advice of our murdered friends; and swear by the sacred altar of liberty to bow to no tyrant the knee; but ever hold in just abhorrence monarchs, and vow eternal hatred to their governments; and ever be it our duty to crush the envenomed serpent faction, the overturner of states and republics, and the deadly destroyer of freedom.

Too long has infernal faction's foul breath of infamy disturbed our repose. Already has the monster, under a specious name, importing union or confederacy, reared his proud head, roared at our liberty; snarled at the best of men; even Jefferson has not escaped his malice.—With outstretched fangs has he aimed at the foundation of our holy republic and sacred union: arise ye that are Americans in principle, and confront him with the shield of truth, and the irresistible spear of liberty; and hurl the darts of patriotism, which will never fail to strike terror and dismay into his guilty soul.

Yes: this monstrous principle, which alas! too much diffuses itself in this country, would betray you to your inveterate enemies, to the murderers of your fathers and friends. Can

we extend charity to those who vigorously fight under its standard, in order to extenuate their crimes; while their guilt is aggravated by their impious boasting, that the reign of liberty is short in this country, and that e'er long we shall groan beneath the weight of British fetters, or wear the Gallic yoke. No: we should criminate ourselves if we did; and justly merit the severe condemnation of every friend to humanity, in every part of the universe.— Let us unitedly detest and resist oppression, let it assume what appearance it may, or under whatever mask it may conceal its cupidity; even should it borrow the plain, honest garb of republicanism. Let us be wise to discern the machinations of British and French agents, and courageous enough to repel and resist the assaults of faction and treason in any way. Let us remember, that while Europe, Asia and Africa groined beneath the galling chains of tyrants, and all their shores were enshrouded in the sable curtain of oppression, America stood firm and undaunted, and dared to assert and maintain the rights of man and the blessings of liberty.

Our country by such magnanimous conduct roused the indignation and hatred of tyranny, who sent to our shores of peace and liberty a host of merciless savages, to burn, ravage and destroy, the productions of art, industry and peace. But our fathers, disdaining to wear the yoke of servitude, or to surrender to tyranny their inborn rights, headed by an American Hannibal, met the invaders, and argued at the mouth of the cannon in defence of their dearest privileges. Terrible indeed was the conflict;

but virtue and valor prevailed over slaves and despots ; and liberty shone forth in all her native loveliness and majesty, on the arms of her sons. In that glorious revolution, the beams of joy and gladness shot forth to the very shores of Europe ; and O may America, by her wisdom and valor, maintain her independence, and perpetuate her freedom to millions unborn !

The same active spirit of resolution and courage that enabled our fathers to acquire such glory, and all the blessings of liberty, may, in the versatility of human affairs, again be called for to defend our dearest rights. Peace has beamed her brilliant sun over our heads, and liberty and justice have long reigned in our land. We have enjoyed the richest blessings heaven can bestow upon a nation ! and let us endeavor to merit a continuance by our gratitude and virtue. And if the crimson veil of war is again thrown over our country, let us rally around her standard, and hold it fast, even with the iron grasp of death.

“ For our country shall bow to no tyrant the knee—

“ Great God, we are only dependent on thee.”

The gloomy clouds of war have already overcast our political horizon ; vapors of faction float aloft in our atmosphere, and the hoarse thunder of treason is heard at a distance. That haughty and imperious tyrant, who now directs the tempest of war and all its terrors in Europe, seems to have cast his insidious eye across even the boisterous Atlantic, and views with dissembled jealousy the prosperity and approx-

amating grandeur of our country. His insatiate appetite for power is boundless. Are those to be trusted who are perjured? and how often has that Bonaparte sworn eternal hatred to crowned heads? and how has he covered himself with infamy by basely riveting the chains of wretchedness still faster around the neck of France? and pusillanimously has he prepared for himself a crown, and all the empty and foolish insignia of royalty!

May we not adopt the language of Cato, the Roman patriot, and say to the partisans of Bonaparte as he did to those of Cesar—“Alas! your dazzled eyes behold that man in a false glaring light, which conquest and success have thrown upon him:—Did you but view him right, you’d see him black with murder, treason, sacrilege and crimes, which strike our souls with horror but to name them!” All his high sounding words of friendship and peace are as a net hung out to catch the harmless and unsuspecting bird. In vain does he attempt with fascinating eloquence to lull us into a state of seeming security; the spirit of enquiry is awakened, and Americans begin to suspect his malignant intentions. Let us be circumspect, and place no confidence in his emissaries, who with a lullaby tone cry, peace, peace; the great Napoleon has clemency!—while daggers are concealed beneath their hypocritical cloaks.—Believe them not, and we shall avoid the calamities that have befallen those nations which have given credit to his tales. The fate of Portugal stares us in the face, and the dishonor of Spain is not to be forgotten!

Upon the hypothesis of transmigration, we have evidence, from the affinity of dispositions, to believe, that the soul of ancient Cesar resides in modern Bonaparte, who is as consummated a tyrant as George the third, and as notorious a villain as Frederick of Prussia! Let us not be deceived by French generosity, nor by British clemency; but let us trust to American wisdom, magnanimity and valor! which, under the blessing of all-gracious heaven, will, with a Jefferson at our head, be adequate to oppose the mighty torrent that menaces destruction to our country: for amid the roar of the British lion and the vain boasting of the Gallic cock, our government has by one salutary law, which, while individual inconvenience is unavoidable in our secular concerns, our citizens and property are protected from the rapacious grasp of foreign piracy; and we as yet enjoy the blessings of peace and plenty. Every good man in this country, of what party soever he be, will approve of the wholesome embargo law. The predecessor of our present illustrious chief seems to have put on the beautiful garb of real patriotism, and highly approves of the wise measures of the present administration. The noble Senator! the regenerated Adams! by his late conduct evinces that he is changed;—the old man is put off; and his virtues appear bright as the morning star, which cheers the benighted traveller. The rancorous abuse of his abandoned party reaches not his exalted soul; it falls harmless, like the furious waves against a rock: the film of delusion has fallen from his eyes, and the principles of democracy appear lovely to his sight. He is one of the few who remember, “there is more honor, and much

more utility, in the relinquishment of error, than in the retention,"

It is peculiarly our duty on this day to pay a tribute of gratitude to the fathers of our revolution. The hallowed names of Warren, Montgomery and Greene, shall never be passed over in silence on this day ; for their valor and virtues will consecrate the fair pages of history, and descend with progressive brilliancy to the latest posterity, who with loud acclamations will shout benedictions ! We could easily enumerate a host of warriors, philosophers and statesmen ! but their services and worth are written on the tablets of our grateful hearts.

At this morn, when the orient sky arrested your attention, arrayed in the majesty of Aurora's livery, how did your bosoms beat high in the joyous anticipations of this day, and how did your hearts leap within you when first the golden beams of Phebus smiled in the east, and gladdened creation ? This day have our fathers celebrated, with the noble ardor of patriotic pride ; you yourselves have done it, and do it ; and teach ye your children its sacred obligation—that it may descend down to posterity with all the energy and power it at present possesses ; that their hearts may be glad ; and that the annual festivity of liberty may survive the ruin of empires, and the downfall of tyrants ! And do not fail, my beloved brethren and friends, to impress deeply on the minds of your children, the unparalleled virtues of the immortal Washington, the pride and glory of every American ! Many of you, perhaps, present, have experienced his fatherly attention and



brotherly love ; we all have experienced the happy effects of that unequalled valor and magnanimity, which marked his conduct in all conditions ; the undaunted courage and calm fortitude that characterized him in the sanguine field of battle ; and the wisdom, propriety and prudence he displayed in the senate : these shall ever be the theme of our hearts : but my feeble abilities will add no glory to him who is the boast and pride of millions, and the admiration of the world ! O Washington ! thy monument is reared in the hearts of thy countrymen. It is there inscribed with the indelible characters of love, gratitude and esteem ; and there it is fixed on the immutable basis of human existence ! !

Perhaps the part I have taken in the celebration of this day will be censured, and my discourse traduced with envenomed satire ! I appear here in compliance with the request of my brethren ; though incompetent to the task ; yet cheerfully did I accept to take a part with you in keeping with holy hilarity this sacred day !

To every true American, to the candid and unprejudiced, aught is unnecessary to say by way of apology ; but as for the would-be nobility, I neither court their applause nor fear their detraction. One would dishonor the humble orator as much as the other !

Little did I expect that my feeble voice would be heard on this day ; yet as my voice is pure, having never flattered tyranny, I feel that confidence in the rectitude of my motives, which produces true tranquillity, and that peace of mind which the world cannot give.

“ One self-approving hour whole years outweighs  
“ Of stupid starers and of loud huzzas !”

And now, my brethren and friends, with grateful hearts, let us give thanks to Almighty God for the numberless privileges and blessings we have enjoyed ; and with pious hope look forward for a continuance thereof, trusting always in the love of our benevolent creator !