



# Oration.

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*Brethren of the Washington Benevolent  
Society, and Fellow Citizens,*

**T**HE celebration of events, which have been replete with consequences beneficial to mankind, has long been practised among the nations of the world. Such memorials are undoubtedly rational when formed to preserve unanimity in a nation ; and to hand down to posterity, important eras in its history.

Impressed with this sentiment, and led by the impulse of their own feelings, the Citizens of the United States of America celebrate the day that gave birth to their Independence.

At the recollection of this event, joy animates the souls of thousands, and shouts of joy sound aloud from ten thousand tongues. The old veterans are now ruminating the hardships they have endured, and the battles they have fought for their country ; the matrons of seventy-six are relating to their numerous offspring the long tale of American Independence.

The celebration in commemoration of that auspicious day, brings to the view of you, who were actors in that honorable scene, places of action impossible for others to paint, thoughts indescribable ; and reviews the emotions of former times, which none but you can possibly feel. Fired with one common ardor, the true patriots of America are assembled on the East and on the West ; on the North and on the South,

to review the difficulties and dangers, through which they have once passed ; and to celebrate the national happiness and glory, to which they once obtained.

To speak of all the particular causes of our separation from our mother country, of declaring ourselves an independent nation, and of tracing and exhibiting all the particular measures then adopted by a weak and almost defenceless people, would be relating facts, which you have often heard in discourses on this occasion, and with which every well informed American is fully acquainted. Let therefore, a few of these particulars suffice.

The patriots of 1776, endeavored to show Great Britain that we were born with, and ought to possess equal rights with them ; “ that we were endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights ; that among these were life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness ; that to secure these rights, governments were instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

But they refused to grant our reasonable petitions.

They refused to pass laws “ for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in the legislature, a right inestimable to them, and formidable to tyrants only.”

They endeavored to prevent the increase of population in these States ; for that purpose they obstructed the laws for the naturalization of foreigners. They sent swarms of officers among us, to harrass our people, and to destroy our substance.

They in times of peace kept among us standing armies, contrary to the will of our legislatures.

They endeavored to render the military independent of

and superior to the civil power. And by a long train of abuses and usurpations, they apparently pursued the same object, and seemed determined to subject us to absolute despotism.

But in these times of distress, and oppression, the American patriots, conscious of their rectitude, united their strength, chose the immortal WASHINGTON for their leader, fought, bled, conquered, and became an independent nation.

After we had passed through the revolutionary conflict, our nation was considered to be in a most deplorable situation.

Here were thirteen distinct, unconnected legislatures. Strong jealousies existed between the northern and southern States.

To harmonize these clashing interests ; to make uniform arrangements from such discordant materials, required no common share of human abilities. But from the mild persuasion of Gen. WASHINGTON, the animosities which then existed between the several States, were appeased. By the superior knowledge of Hamilton and others, of the local situation of these States, and of the different forms of government, a constitution was framed, and afterwards adopted which placed us in full possession of all our natural and civil rights ; which laid us under no restraints in acquiring knowledge, property, or the highest honors of our country. Thus every thing was adapted to promote the prosperity, the respectability, and the improvement of the body of the people.

But nothing is so established among men but that it may change and vary.

If we lose that spirit of industry, of economy, of knowledge, and of virtue, which led us to independence, and to empire, then shall we lose our freedom.

When the legislator and the executive magistrates become the instruments of the passions of the people, it is then, and not till then we lose our freedom.

“ True republican rulers are bound to act not simply as those who appoint would, but as they ought; democratic leaders will act in subordination to those very passions which is the object of government to control; but as the effect of this subserviency is to procure them unlimited confidence and devotedness, the powers of society become concentrated in their hands. Then it is that men, not laws govern. Nothing can be more inconsistent with the real liberty of the people, than the power of democracy thus brought into action. For in this case the government is a despotism beyond rule, not a republic confined to rule. It is strong, but its strength is of the terrible sort; strong to oppress, not to protect; not strong to maintain liberty, property, and right, it cannot secure justice, nor make innocence safe.”

Does not the truth of these remarks appear somewhat similar the situation of the people of the United States? Hence if you would take truth for your guide, would you not say that our liberties were in danger?

The fourth of July 1776 ought to be held in remembrance, as long as the United States continue to be a free and independent nation. But in celebrating the return of that anniversary, the real friends of our republic cannot, they ought not to celebrate with that joy and hilarity, with which in former times they were accustomed to do.

We may rejoice and give praise to the patriots of seven-

ty-six, for their courage and bravery in throwing off the iron yoke of despotism, and establishing a government on the pure principles of liberty and equality.

But we should mourn for the degeneracy of our nation ; we should lament that we had conducted in such a manner as to be unworthy to be called the legitimate sons of our political Father, the chief corner stone of our Republic.

We should lament that we have placed men in our National Cabinet, who have denied the political faith of WASHINGTON, and the effect of whose measures are poverty and disgrace.

It has been said that in a government like ours, the minority have no right to express publicly their disapprobation of their rulers, or of their measures : But does not our Constitution guarantee to every naturalized citizen of the United States this privilege ?

“ All will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful, must be reasonable ; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate which, would be oppression. And let us reflect that having banished from our land that religious intollance under which mankind so long bled and suffered, we have yet gained little if we countenance a political intolerance as despotic, as wicked, and capable of as bitter and bloody persecutions.”

It will probably be thought by many, a piece of imprudence in the speaker, on this occasion, to relate facts to the dishonor of some of our principal men, who are, and have been at the helm of Government.

But conscious of the eternal rectitude of truth, and con-

sidering it criminal to keep back what the exigency of the occasion may require ; I shall therefore endeavor to expose some of their fallacies, and represent them as enemies to WASHINGTON, which I will not only submit to your candor, but make a sacred appeal to that Being who rules the destinies of men for the truth of my assertions.

Opposition to the Federal plan of government was openly made soon after Mr. Jefferson took a seat in the Cabinet, as Secretary of State. In 1791 or 2, a National Gazette was established under his patronage, "edited by a clerk of his office, who received a salary from the public Treasury as translator of the French language," and who incessantly labored to undermine the WASHINGTON Administration. The Editor\* of the Aurora, not only slandered the Federal Administration, but scandalously abused the character of General WASHINGTON, for which he was generously rewarded by Mr. Jefferson. But as though his reward was not sufficient, Mr. Madison has conferred upon him one of the most important offices in the present United States' Army.

Did not Mr. Madison when a member of Congress, violently oppose the measures recommended by WASHINGTON ? Did not these men tell the people of the United States that the administrators of our government were extravagant ? Did they not flatter the people, and insinuate, that if they could be placed at the helm of Government, our taxes would be lighter ; and that in a few years we should become immensely rich ?

Did they not say that there were too many pensioners who were drawing money from our public chest ?

Such things were, they certainly were, held forth to the

\* Mr. Duane.

people ; by which means our Revolutionary Officers and soldiers were considered a burthen to the United States.

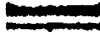
They were defamed for receiving their just dues, " a part of their hire ; and I may be allowed to say it was the price of *their* blood and *your* independence."

Did Mr. Monroe write favorably of the WASHINGTON Administration ? Was Mr. Gallatin a friend to true Republican principles while Secretary of the proceedings of an insurrection ? Was Mr. Armstrong a friend to Peace, to a Union of the people while recommending to subaltern officers and soldiers, a rebellion when the Revolutionary Army was disbanded ?

These, my Fellow-Citizens, are questions of great and serious importance. It is a duty incumbent on you, from the obligations you are under to your country, to enquire with diligence until you are fully assured of the truth of those things, in which they are implicated.

If these allegations be true, and you still continue to support them in the offices they now hold, our independence is but a name, an empty sound. If you will sacrifice your property, your lives, and your country, for the support of such men, then let us bid an eternal farewell to American Freedom. But if we will lay aside all party prejudices ; make use of the honest privileges (and those only) of our constitution ; enquire into the character and conduct of our rulers ; and make choice of men, who will keep aloof from European quarrels, and follow the wise policy of our beloved WASHINGTON ; peace and harmony will again pervade our Country ; commercial wealth will be wafted to our shores by every gale ; agriculture and manufactures will again flourish ; at the return of every anniversary, we will set down to our tables with gladsome hearts,





and chant the joyful songs in praise of our Revolutionary Patriots, who bade America be a free and independent Nation.

And may God in his infinite mercy, grant that we may return to the path of rectitude, and never again swerve from our duty, so long as nations shall exist, or time endure.