

MR. POPE'S
ORATION,
DELIVERED AT ROCHESTER,
JULY 4TH, 1809.



AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED IN THE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL MEETING-HOUSE

IN

ROCHESTER,

ON THE

FOURTH DAY OF JULY, 1809.



BY ELNATHAN POPE.



NEW-BEDFORD :

PRINTED BY BENJAMIN LINDSEY.

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1809.

ROCHESTER, 4th July, 1809.

AT a meeting of the FEDERAL REPUBLICANS of Rochester, July 4th, 1809, for the purpose of celebrating the Anniversary of American Independence: Resolved, That Mr. JOSEPH MEIGS, Major NOAH DEXTER, Col. CHARLES STURTEVANT, Mr. FREEMAN HOLDEN, and Mr. NATHANIEL CLAPP, be a Committee, to wait on Mr. ELNATHAN POPE, and thank him for the elegant and spirited Oration, by him this day delivered; and to request a copy for the press.

COREY TABER, Clerk.

GENTLEMEN,

NOTWITHSTANDING the pleasure that the author may feel in having met the approbation of so respectable a body of his fellow citizens, had he consulted his own feelings, he would have consigned these sheets to oblivion. But after having heard your pressing solicitations, laying all personal motives aside, he submits them to your disposal; convinced, however, that from the paucity of facts, and original ideas contained in them, they merit a very different fate.

ELNATHAN POPE.

THE GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE.

AN
ORATION.



THE causes that led to the event of this day's celebration, are neither few nor unimportant. But their recency and freshness in the memories of those who compose this assembly, preclude the necessity of a minute recapitulation: We have all read them as they are recorded in history, or they have been detailed to us by those whose fortune it was to exist in that awful period of our nation's trial. Some of whom we now have the pleasure of beholding; whose venerable grey hairs declare to all who surround them, that they were witnesses of the 4th of July, 1776. They, no doubt, are able to realize the impressions made on their minds by martial music, the rattle of musketry, and the thunder of cannon, "in those eventful days," when each report portended the destruction of themselves and their country. And they can realize the far different impressions which are made by similar reports, in days of peace and tranquility; when millions of their countrymen are echoing to the roar of cannon—
LONG LIFE TO AMERICAN FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE!
But while we are happy in the presence of a few of the men of '76, we must reflect that the graves of many of them *are there**; that the bones of others are indebted to the ocean for a covering, or whiten upon her banks; that some were lost in the wilderness while achieving
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* Alluding to the Church-Yard.

our independence, whose obsequies were performed by the birds of the air ; and that the blood of others is now fertilizing the fields of their children.—Yet we trust, that though the ocean and the earth engulf their bones and contain their bodies, their spirits are not confinable there ; but led by their WASHINGTONS, their GREENES, their HAMILTONS, and their KNOXES, they will, on this day, leave their starry mansions and revisit the earth ; that they will hover over their country—over this place, and inspire us with that enthusiasm to preserve, which animated and guided them to achieve and establish our independence. O ! may the sacred flame again revive ; catch from breast to breast, until it has run through these United States ; blaze to the heavens ; scatter light and joy over all the *friends of Freedom*, and flash with terrific fury in the faces of all *her foes* ! Then will it be evident to all, that the blood of the slain was not unprofitably shed ; that our treasure was not spent in vain ; that the toils and sufferings of the revolution are amply compensated by the blessings of independence : For our liberty will be safe, and our union secure.

We are all sensible of the many advantages resulting from our independence ; yet there is one that I cannot permit myself to pass over in silence, because it has been so little regarded by the *half-fledged* politicians of the day, who would subject their country to the control of *another power*, because she is hostile to that which once oppressed her. Wretched politicians ; and most destructive their policy ! For, may we not consider our separation from Europe's politicks, as one of the most important advantages obtained by the revolution ; a re-union to which must “send us down the stream again,” and re-consign us to the condition of a province.

We are now no longer subject to the wayward folly of others—We are at liberty to declare war and make peace for ourselves ; and to trade with any nation that we can persuade to receive our produce.—War may rage in *Europe*, and we sit as peaceful spectators and gather the spoils. But look at our situation when colonies of *Great-Britain*—Our trade restricted by a nation that was careful to secure its profits to herself—our people poor, and continually involved in wars ; and not merely their common calamities, but their country made the principal theatre of them. We were invariably made the subjects of attack and defence, which kept us in continual alarms from home and abroad. From without, we were assailed by a powerful foe, who was seeking to subject us to his dominion.—And by his intrigues, he kept the less powerful, but far more subtle and cruel savage our enemy : Beings, to whom the groans of injured innocence are *musick*, and the writhings of the tormented *luxury*. But why should we pursue this loathsome subject further ? We are now free from the calamities of which it treats ; and another of more importance arrests our attention :—How shall we preserve this Freedom ? This is a question indeed, of too great magnitude to be effectually answered in the time allowed us upon this occasion ; but it must not be passed without notice.

Every body politick, like the corporeal body, contains within itself the principles of *life* and *death* ; of *preservation* and *decay*. In proportion to the prevalence of these constitutional principles in a government, may be determined its *strength* or *weakness*. In a republick, the only principles of preservation, are the *virtue* and *wisdom* of
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the people who take an active part in publick affairs ; as these predominate over *vice* and *ignorance*, the government will be strong and healthy.

In the republican virtue of the American people, much, much confidence was placed by the framers of our Constitution ; and perhaps their confidence was not ill-founded. But in order that our free constitutions may be preserved, the people must continue virtuous ; their minds must be enlightened, and their judgments assisted by much reading and reflection. For these important objects, the constitutions contain as many provisions as their natures will admit. Their framers, at the time, must have been sensible of the dangers to which the morals of the people would be exposed. They knew that every state contained its *jacobins* ; and that every free state, would contain a *formidable host of them*. But they would hardly have foreseen the measures that have been adopted by them, to effect their purposes ;—that the people would be assembled in conclave, and taught in all the mysteries of the *morality of politics* ;—that every *means* is to be justified by its *end* ;—that no crime is too atrocious to be committed for what they may be pleased to term the *public good* ; of which, themselves are the only *adequate judges* ;—that the real friends of the people, those who fought the battles of the revolution, who never fled from dangers into which their country's services called them ; who organized the government, and brought us from poverty to plenty, would be stigmatized as “ *old tories, incendiaries, and legalizers of corruption* ;” —that it would be said, that the hair of GEORGE WASHINGTON was “ shorn off by the whore of England* ;” —that he had found a *Delilah* in the lap of *George III.* at whom he had

* See Jefferson's letter to Mazzei.

so lately hurled a stern defiance that shook the monarch's throne ; and to complete their impudence, that they would accuse *these* men of a design to *dissolve the Union*, and destroy the works of *their own hands*. Against the effects of these calumnies, the provisions of law and constitution are vain. Experience has taught us, that their only remedy is the unceasing exertions of *the well disposed*. These exertions, every patriot should consider as due to his country. Political virtue does not consist in *well-wishes* to the government. It can hardly be thought, that the commonwealth will be saved for *ten righteous sluggards*.

Inactive virtue in politicks is like *faith without works* in religion : It is dead. "The condition upon which God has given liberty to man, is eternal vigilance ; which condition, if he break, servitude is at once the consequence of his crime and the punishment of his guilt."

Every one ought to consider, that there is an implied article in the constitution, that requires his utmost exertions in preserving the whole.—The least violation of which may inflict a mortal wound. Should a *miserable town or parish officer* be permitted quietly to enjoy his *petty elevation* contrary to the constitution and laws of the country, rely on it, the time is not far distant, when similar violations will be resorted to for the purpose of placing a President in the chair, and continuing him there in defiance of the people. Such miserable wretches are indeed, not much to be feared. But their acts are experiments upon the political virtue of the people. They are generally, the *servants of servants* of some more considerable villain, who, should the experiment succeed accord-

ing to his wishes, will leap from his hiding-place, like the tyger upon his prey. Opposed to him, then, the weapons of law and constitution will be vain and impotent : down they will drop as idle and ineffectual as a discourse upon a divine subject addressed to the fallen angels ; or the bleating of a lamb under the jaws of a lion. One alternative only can then remain ; *slavery* or *resistance*, by opposing talon to talon, until the vitals of the political monster shall be fairly torn from his body.

Of such importance did *Solon*, an ancient Grecian legislator, consider the activity of the well disposed, that when he revised and established the constitution and laws of *Athens*, he caused it to be enacted, that in publick dissensions, every person should take one side or the other, on the penalty of being declared *infamous* ; of having his estate confiscated and himself banished the republick.— By this means, he designed to check faction in the bud, by arraying all the virtue and wisdom of the state against her. He foresaw, that many of the best citizens would be too much occupied with their private concerns, to lend that timely assistance to the state, which is necessary to counteract the influence of those factious and turbulent individuals, who are always more active in accomplishing its destruction, than its best friends in its support. It was evidently the opinion of this celebrated legislator, that in order to preserve to the people their rights, the first invasion of them, however small, must be promptly resisted ; and that the surest inducement to this, was a perpetual exercise of them.

At this time, will any American say, How shall we act ?
 What measures shall we take for the preservation of our
 rights ?

rights? Let every one determine to act—Let them act according to the best information they can obtain.—Let the several offices be filled with men of the greatest talents, soundest integrity, and most matured understandings; Men who will do business *with open doors*, while the Sun is on his meridian; who, like an ADAMS, will tread in the footsteps of WASHINGTON, because WASHINGTON was right. If you wish your government to be respected, let it be composed of respectable men—from them it will take its character. Weak governments are like weak individuals.—They will meet with insults, because they cannot command respect. Their littleness will appear in their acts.—All their productions will be pigmies of their kind. Why was the administration of WASHINGTON so much respected? Because it was feared. It was known that insults to HIM would be repelled.—His maxim was, “millions for defence, and not a cent for tribute.”—His navy was not fitted for *creeks* and *mill-ponds*.—His thoughts were seldom occupied in projecting *dry-docks*, or the purchase of *wild lands* and *mountains of salt*.—Theoretick speculations are not necessary to evince the necessity of exertion; the blessed fruits of which are just now rising to our view. We have ridded ourselves of a destructive *embargo*; and gained for our country a second Independence. We have escaped a foreign war, and a consequential alliance with a *foreign Despot*, whose touch is *death to Liberty*. The clouds of despotism are dissipating, and the rays of liberty begin to reach us again. Cheered by them, industry revives in the ports and harbours of the United States.—The *ice*, which for fifteen months, bound our shores, has been thawed; and, as we trust, “has passed away” with the chilling influence of its author.

The spring of the present Administration is not
much.—Its seed has been sown in due season. Should
no chilling wind blast its fruit, we may anticipate a boun-
tiful harvest.

But it is *too young* for much eulogy ; as that is always
best timed, when it is out of the power of the eulogized
to cease to deserve it. But should our Executive
Magistrates, both of State and Nation, continue to con-
duct our affairs with fidelity and ability, they will, no
doubt, receive the united support of all their most worthy
fellow citizens. And from what we have seen, may we
not indulge a hope, that HE who guides and directs all
events, will guide and direct, prosper and succeed the
administration of a MADISON, and a GORE, as he has
guided and directed, prospered and succeeded the admin-
istration of a WASHINGTON, an ADAMS, a HANCOCK, a
SUMNER, and a STRONG.



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