

AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED

IN THE MEETING HOUSE AT THETFORD, VT.

UPON THE

THIRTY SIXTH ANNIVERSARY

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

JULY 4, 1812.

.....
BY GRANT POWARS, A. B.
.....

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. DEUT. VI. 7.



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.....
1812.

THETFORD, JULY 4, 1812.

SIR,

THE committee of arrangements for this day beg leave to express their thanks for your services, and their entire approbation of the patriotic sentiments contained in your oration. They request that you would favor them with a copy for the press.

Respectfully, Yours,

WM. THAYER, *Chairman of said committee.*

MR. GRANT POWARS.

THETFORD, JULY 4, 1812.

GENTLEMEN,

YOUR tokens of unmerited respect are received, and gratefully acknowledged. It is from a deep sense of my obligations to the gentlemen committee, rather than from motives of public notice, that I am induced to submit a copy to your disposal.

I am in sincerity, Yours,

GRANT POWARS.

MR. WM. THAYER, *Chairman of the committee.*

ORATION.

FATHERS AND FELLOW CITIZENS,

THE voice of reason and revelation proclaim the existence of an infinite God.

They ascribe to him the necessity of existence and infinite attributes, which secure his eternity and immutability.

They proclaim him the efficient cause of all dependant material and spiritual existences.

They proclaim him the moral Governor of the universe, which implies omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence and omnibenevolence.

A being thus constituted, forms in the most unqualified sense, a perfect character.

A being of such attributes is worthy of perfect love, praise and adoration.

We at once perceive, that a perfect display of the essential attributes of God, is the greatest good, attainable in the universe.

Hence we learn the motive which influenced the Eternal Mind in creation.

It was the highest good which moved God in prior eternity, to speak into existence innumerable orders of spiritual existences ; and while the same good required that some of them should be confirmed in endless felicity, and become the winged mes-

sengers, the active and happy vigils of Almighty God ; it also required, that others should be left to precipitate themselves into remediless woe.

It was this same highest good, which moved God in a later period of duration, to commence and perfect this harmonious and stupendous fabric of the material universe.

It was this same highest good which permitted sin to enter our world, and death by sin.

The same highest good brought down the Son of God from the most refulgent seat of glory to the manger at Bethlehem ; from the manger it carried him to the cross at Calvary, from the cross to the tomb, from the tomb to the mercy seat, within the veil, into the holy of holies, where he ever liveth to intercede for perishing sinners. And need we still add, this same highest good will ever so influence a benevolent God, that he will cause all things to eventuate in the advancement of this one desirable and glorious object. For this all things are in progressive motion.

For this, systems with systems roll. For this, the sun, the moon, and the stars move on in willing obedience and tuneful alacrity. For this, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, visit the earth. For this, empires rise and fall. For this, forests bloom, waters run, rocks decay, oceans roll, mountains and vallies teem with life and verdure ; yea, no insect too inferior, no particle of matter too minute, to move and aid in this grand design.

What a theme for rational intelligences ! How extensive and sublime the plan ! How infinite the Author !

Such is the Being, fellow citizens, whom we are this day called to worship in the beauties of holiness. And O, may he, who turneth the hearts of the children of men as the rivers of water are turned, be graciously pleased to hear, to own, and bless !

It is comely for rational beings, individually and collectively, ever to feel and express the obligations they are under to him, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.

With such sentiments, we might recount the mighty acts and wonderful kindnesses of God to our ancient fathers, the patriarchs. We might recount all the succeeding distinguishing events, in which the goodness and abounding grace of God have appeared with transcendent lustre, in redeeming fallen man, and proffering final and universal emancipation from the thralldom of Satan, the prime usurper and despot of the world.

But as such a retrospect could not comport with the design of the present occasion, we shall pass to a commemoration of that day, in which America, under the guidance and patronage of Jehovah, was declared emancipated from the galling yoke of a foreign and tyrannic power, and her national independence registered in the archives of heaven.

The speaker does not presume to impart information to those of his audience who have experienced

the reality he is attempting to describe. No ; to them every thing he may say will be comparatively cool and languid.

But while we bow in respectful deference to the hoary lock, whitened by excessive fatigues, deprivations, alarms, night-watchings, hungerings and thirstings, cold and heat, sickness, loss of friends, and contusions in the field of battle, to gain our country's freedom, we humbly claim that indulgence, which we believe will be most readily granted, while in the feeble strains of inexperienced youth, we rehearse the American story to the listening world. But as most of us here assembled have entered the threshold of life since the eventful period which tried American souls, it may not be deemed inexpedient briefly to sketch the origin, progress and situation of the United Colonies, at the moment of their final separation from Great Britain.

Oppressed humanity, under the reigns of James and Charles I. of England, led our pious ancestors to seek an asylum from ecclesiastical persecution and tyrannic power. With unparalleled magnanimity and christian fortitude, they resolve to quit their native shore, encounter the dangers of almost an unknown ocean, and *here*, in this western hemisphere, to plant the tree of liberty.

Let poets and orators sound the trumpet of fame for warriors and statesmen, while in illustration of real courage and fortitude, we call this audience to that important crisis, when our ancestors embarked for these western shores.

Here we see at the water's side the indulgent father embracing for the last time his lovely daughter with all the emotions of parental affection. Here the mother's bosom swells with unutterable anguish, while she bids a final, a lasting adieu to her only son. Here the daughter in return with a trembling lip and melting heart, doubles all the tokens of endearment to her doting parents, and adds whatever may condole the afflicting scene, or mitigate the severities of declining life, while she turns and points to the altar of freedom, and with devotional ardor, commits her person to the sports of the deep. The sails are unfurled, the crazy ship ascends the boisterous ocean, and while they backward cast an anxious look upon their dear friends and country, they hear, reiterated from the shore, and dying away in the murmurs of the wave, that intercepts them forever, the parting sound—'farewell.'

The angel, who once led Joseph like a flock, now guides their bark to the American shores. Hither they are wafted, not to the bosoms of anxious and hospitable friends, but to a howling wilderness, where for an unknown series of years, the merciless savage has roved indignant at restraint, and altars of human victims smoked 'to an unknown God.'

Here they disembark, and *here* they consecrate the first foot of soil to sacred liberty. *Here* their lungs receive the vital air of freedom, which warms and invigorates their breasts, while the wet and cold surface of the earth make their couch, and the wide expanse of heaven their covering. *Here* they

raise their eyes in humble adoration to heaven, while around them stalk, in wild amazement, the bear, the tyger and blood thirsting cannibal !

But the American Israel is safe, and here she recognizes, in the dispensations of heaven, a renewal of that gracious covenant which secured to the patriarch, and his seed after him, the whole land of Canaan. ‘Lift up thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward ; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth ; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite and the Hittite before thee.’ All this, and more than this, was in reserve for the infant colony. How rich the gift ! How sure the legacy ! But she had yet to learn the value of freedom from her own experience. Numerous were the evils to which she was subjected, during her infancy and minority. Excessive fatigue, cold and nakedness, hunger and sickness, were not her greatest evils. No, the vile and ferocious savage lurked by every path to ensnare the aged and the young without distinction or remorse. And O, how often has the tender babe been torn from the bosom of its fond mother, and she been compelled to hear, as a precursor of her own destiny, its last shrieks in expiring agony !

But America, acquiring fresh strength against fresh opposition, at the close of one century and an

half, found herself in possession of an extensive and beautiful domain, the Canaanite expelled from her dominions, and the number of her subjects amounting to three millions of souls. Thus circumstanced, she fondly anticipated an exemption from evils, which had so long embarrassed her rising greatness, and rejoiced in the prospect of permanent tranquillity. But alas, at this juncture, arrives an unexpected enemy, and lays the axe at the tree of liberty.

England, the cradle of Americans, avaricious in the extreme, jealous of power, and actuated by a love of domination, pursues her offspring across the wide Atlantic, and commences an attack, with the voracity of the crocodile, upon the rights and liberties of her most loyal sons. Deaf to every call of pity, filial importunity, or manly remonstrance, she repeats the lashes of her sovereignty in a duplicate ratio, until forbearance becomes a crime, and acquiescence a surrender of unalienable rights.

By consequence of such oppressions, the representatives in general congress, assembled at Philadelphia, July 4th, 1776, declare, in behalf of these United Colonies, their utter abhorrence of tyranny, their uniform disavowal of the pretensions of Great Britain to the exclusive right of legislation for these colonies, and every species of usurpation, both in the judiciary and executive departments, under which they had so long, and too patiently groaned.

They then declare, that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, **FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES.**

Already taught by dear bought experience not to expect redress of grievances from a foreign and unrelenting enemy, they mutually pledge their fortunes and their lives in support of common right and interest, and having thus resolved, they appeal to arms and the God of battles.

Never was an hour more portentous to America than this. Yes, fellow citizens, thirty-six years have this day completed their revolutions, since the American shepherd took his sling, and ran to defy the gigantic powers of the British monarch ! And even in the hour of trepidation for unassisted reason, we hear him exclaim, “ Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.”

Happy would it be, could we by silence, expunge from the page of history and the kalends of time, the atrocities, which marked the progress of the British arms, during the subsequent period of six painful years. But they still live. They are engraven on every American heart, and in the records of offended majesty.

You who heard the war whoop, and saw the cruelties of the Indian scalping knife and tomahawk ; you who have had your sons pining away, and expiring in prison ships, and noxious dungeons for lack of food ; you who saw the flames of Falmouth, Charlestown, New-London, Fairfield, Norwalk, Danbury, Kingston and Norfolk ; you who heard the dying groans of the immortal Warren, Montgome-

ry, Wooster, Nash, Mercer and Ledyard, cannot withhold the tear of pity, nor fail to deprecate the direful ills of lawless power.

But WASHINGTON ! that dear and venerable NAME ! A NAME we love to repeat ! A NAME unrivalled in the pages of history ! A NAME *terrible* to tyrants, but *DEAR* to Americans, and every friend of virtue, humanity or valor, is the MAN, whom heaven designates to lead America to independence and happiness !

Let the ever memorable actions at Princeton, Monmouth, and Yorktown, bespeak the intrepidity of this HERO, and every action of his life, his wisdom, prudence and magnanimity !

WASHINGTON, with a brave, generous, and ardent soldiery, a soldiery whose patriotism yet speaks from the heights of Charlestown, Bennington, Saratoga, Guilford, and every foot of American soil, where prudence and consummate valor might insure success, at length taught our invaders the useful lesson, that freedom is the birthright and jewel of Americans.

England now, from motives of policy, as well as necessity, extended the *olive branch*, and America, with every emotion of joy, was summoned to take her seat among the sister nations of the earth.

From this moment, America became happy at home, and respected abroad. With her beloved WASHINGTON at the helm of government, she

rode with even keel, her sails expanded to the gentle breeze of prosperity.

Here the tree of liberty hath flourished, and extended its branches from British America to Mexico.

Under its banners, the industrious farmer, mechanic and tradesman, have rapidly increased in wealth and respectability.

Here the wilderness has become a fruitful field, and our sails have whitened the shores of every clime.

Our colleges and schools have been as broad rivers and streams.

Our sons have become as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, and our daughters as the lily among the thorns.

Our professionalists have evinced to the world, that the germ of science is not an exotic in American soil, while Edwards, Stiles, Hopkins, Rush, Smith and Ames, remain the unrivalled models for European emulation.

Our divines, with few exceptions, have been the messengers of truth and peace to guilty men.

Our rulers have been those of our own choosing, whose voice we have pledged ourselves to obey, so long as dictated by the genius of the constitution.

Our numbers have increased from three to seven millions of souls.

In a word, we have realized every good, ever conferred on any nation, with almost an exemption from evils.

For such a profusion of blessings, what have been the returns which we, as a people, have made to a beneficent God? Alas! like Jeshurun, we have waxed fat, and kicked; we have waxed rich through the abundance of delicacies, and in the spirit of self-complacency, implicitly said, Is not this GREAT AMERICA, which we have builded? With such arrogance and ingratitude, God is not well pleased. Already hath he suffered a great eagle, with great wings, to mount up in search for the twigs of the cedar in America.

For many years have the old and depraved nations of Europe viewed our rising greatness with a jealous eye.

America, pacific in her nature, has ever been disposed to attribute the violation of her rights to contingences, rather than to motives of determined hostility.

But from the year 1806, to the present moment, we have witnessed a more wanton abuse of power, and a greater disregard to law and equity, than are recorded in the annals of history.

The great belligerents of Europe, hurled into confusion and violence, by conflicting animosities, have not ceased to violate every principle of right, ever recognized by the laws of God or man.

Not content with spreading destruction and carnage throughout their own dominions and dependences, they have alternately endeavored to draw all nations into the general vortex. To this end, the most fulsome flattery, base threats, and authorized outrage, have been practised upon the people of these United States.

We have had our commerce, by fire or confiscation, swept from the ocean.

We have had our citizens impressed and murdered in our own jurisdiction.

We have had our foreign ministers insulted abroad, and our cabinet at home.

We have had mercenaries sent to spy out our liberties.

We have had the cruel barbarian excited against us, and already have the poniard and tomahawk reeked with the purest blood that thrills and warms the American bosom.

Amidst such a complication of insults and cruelties, America has sought redress in vain. I say, *in vain*, because, as yet, we are subject to the same spoliations and infractions of our rights and liberties.

France, with her accustomed duplicity, which every true American *abhors*, is granting us redress no further, than *specious* but *violated* promises may requite us; and England declares her intention to persevere in those measures which she acknowledg-

es untenable upon any principles of equity or humanity.

For considerations like these, the congress of these United States have avowed their right and intention again to seek redress for past, and security from future, injuries, by an appeal to arms and the God of justice.

Fellow citizens, the present is a momentous period. It requires candor. It requires unanimity. It requires perseverance. It requires valor.

But never can it be necessary to stimulate American sons to defend those rights which their fathers bequeathed them. No, they have too long enjoyed the sweets of freedom, to suffer the laurels of Charlestown to wither on the plains of independent America.

Then, when the sighs of your brethren are wafted to your ears in the eastern breeze, or the dying groans of the matron from the west, your breasts will throb with ardor, until you teach licentious monarchs to respect your rights, and painted sachems to esteem your friendship.

Sons of Columbia, your fathers have this day assembled to recognize your heirship. *Here* are your mothers, *here* are your wives, *here* are your sons, your daughters, and your lovers ; will you secure to them, and transmit to posterity, your rights and liberties inviolate ?

Every heart responsive—cries—*we will*. Then this day prepare to acquit yourselves like *men*, like *christians*, by deep repentance, and a humble reliance on the arm of Jehovah to redress your wrongs. March forth in the name of Israel's God, and your bow shall abide in strength ; for he will make your faces as the faces of lions, and your feet as swift as the roes upon the mountains.

But fellow citizens, while we look to heaven for protection, and deliverance from our enemies, may our hearts be united in fervent supplication, that the God of peace would shortly bruise Satan under our feet ; that wars, and the occasions of wars may cease from under heaven ; that the silver trumpet of the gospel may speedily sound an universal jubilee ; ‘ and all the ransomed of the Lord return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads.’