

1870

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Abridgement
Maine.

A literary curiosity.

AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED AT NORRIDGWOCK,

ON THE FOURTH DAY OF JULY,

1805.

BEING THE ANNIVERSARY OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY SPENCER PRATT.

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1805.

NORRIDGWOCK, JULY 5, 1805.

DOCTOR SPENCER PRATT,

SIR,

HAVING been requested by a number of respectable gentlemen, we take the liberty to request a copy of your patriotic Oration, delivered yesterday, for the press; we confidently hope that the same spirit of Patriotism which pervaded your Oration, will incline you to comply with our request.

With consideration of esteem,

Your humble servants,

JOHN HARLOW,
BRYCE M'LELLAN,
ITHAMAR SPAULDIN.



NORRIDGWOCK, JULY 5, 1805.

GENTLEMEN,

UNDER an impression that my Oration is far inferior to thousands, which have been published on the occasion, the impulse of a moment would deny me a compliance; but when I consider that it is by my most peculiar friends, that a copy is requested, and that the perusal is submitted to an indulgent public, whose circumspect character has heretofore been rather to pardon than to reproach, I am induced to comply with their solicitation; at the same time informing them, that some few alterations are thought necessary to be made, not however in the least to change or vary the sense from the original. Further I would observe, that nothing pointed to any political class of men, the enemies of our country excepted, was intended.

From their sincere friend,

Most obedient and very humble servant,

SPENCER PRATT.

JOHN HARLOW,
BRYCE M'LELLAN,
ITHAMAR SPAULDIN, ESQs. }

AN

ORATION.



THE august appearance and noble deportment of this large assembly—the beautiful uniformity and dignified eclat of the cavalry—the enlivening hilarity and sparkling mien, which glistens refulgent in all countenances present, are striking proofs that the same permanent, asbestotic fire for liberty, which inflamed the minds of the noble patriots of '75, is not extinguished for want of fuel, nor by the torrent of liquid faction which is continually pouring upon it from the engine of slander; but still burning in our minds, and has stimulated us this day to assemble, for the purpose of celebrating the anniversary of the ever memorable event, which wrested Columbia from the thralldom of British tyranny, and gave her a standing among the independent nations of the globe. The anniversary of that glorious day, which burst asunder the ties that bound us to a cruel parent. The birth day of an empire, the day of liberty, the day of freedom, and a day of jubilee to all true Americans. The speaker is sensible that thousands of abler pens have been employed on the occasion; and that it would require the purest mind, and the most enlivened imagination, to depict any ideas but what have been penned on this joyous event. A diffidence of his abilities, would have forbidden his appearing as a speaker on this occasion, had he not been confident of enjoying the exercise of all your candor.

The 4th July, 1776, is a glorious epoch in the annals of time, a day ever dear and sacred to Americans; the anniversary of which will be celebrated till time is no more, for on that day, British tyranny received sentence of banishment from the land of COLUMBUS.

We are assembled not to boast, but to realize and testify our sense of gratitude and thanks to that Omniscient Being, by whose power we have obtained this inestimable blessing. Perhaps history cannot furnish us with a mind so replete with the principles of liberty, (all circumstances took under consideration) as that of CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS; who, in search of a northwest passage to India, in 1492, discovered this continent. Every parent ought to read the disappointments, sufferings, and shameful abuses, which this most worthy man received from the cruel hand of tyranny and oppression, to their listening children, "till tears of pity" leave their chrystal home.

Let us next come to the year 1620, only one hundred and eighty five years ago, and view our venerable and worthy ancestors making their first attempt to land on this then barren and howling wilderness, which was inhabited with nothing but wild beasts and savage foes; parting with their parents, their brothers, their sisters, their country, their friends, their property, and in fact, with every other thing which human nature holds dear, for the sake of liberty, for the sake of escaping from the despotic land of tyranny and oppression, to some uninhabitable wild, where they might peaceably enjoy those precious rights implanted by nature. View the perils and dangers that lay in ambush for them, the sacrifices which they made, and you will easily imagine the worth of liberty.—But, alas! how soon, all too soon, did the evil tyranny which they fled from, pursue them.—Despotism soon took to herself wings, and with an uncontrollable boldness, ventured to cross the wide and boisterous atlantic; the contemptuous and arbitrary demands of Great Britain, grievously oppressed us again. The famous Stamp Act of '65, by which we were obliged to make use of stamped paper for all our notes, bonds, &c. &c. and on which paper there was a heavy

duty laid : the villanous Tea Act of '67, by which a large duty was imposed on all teas shipped to the American colonies, and the impious Fishery Bill of '75, are no doubt deeply impressed on all our minds, but more particularly on the minds of some heroes present in this house, who were actors in obtaining the day we celebrate. We were then, after repeated petitions, solicitations, entreaties, and prayers to Great Britain, "for a redress of grievances," obliged in the infant state of our country, (only one hundred and fifty-five years from the first settlement of Plymouth) to regain our *liberty* by force of arms. The same zeal for the "Rights of Man," which glowed in the breasts of our ancestors and roused them to leave their native country, again warmed the hearts of our worthy heroes in '75 ; weary of British oppression, our hearts beat "to arms"—we engaged in the conflict—we declared ourselves an independent and free nation—we finally conquered, and liberated America from those tyrannic chains that clogged her, after a long and tedious contention, in which much blood was shed, many of our active, valiant, and valuable fellow-citizens, fell victims to the invaders of our rights ; the expences of the war were enormously great, and the hazard extremely imminent.

Is it possible for us, fellow-citizens, to take a retrospective view of the dangers, the perils, the sacrifices of life, property, friends, and every other enjoyment which our ancestors made ; the seas of blood through which we waded ; our dangers, our trials, our enormous expence, the slaughter of many of our bravest citizens—Can we reflect on those scenes and say, that the object which we acquired thereby, ought to be trifled with, or that we can be too cautious that it be not wrested from us ?

It is not possible, my young friends, for us, who constitute the greater part in this assembly, and who were at the time of the American revolution, scarcely ushered into existence, to imagine to what a pitch the furious rancour which pervaded the minds of the people at that time, buoyed them. But being nursed from early infancy in the lap of political liberty, those im-

pressions which were deeply made on our young minds by our parents, in favor of our country, and in detestation of British despotism and its advocates, have "grown with growth and strengthened with strength."—The flames of Charlestown, the lamentations of Boston, and the thunder of British cannon on Bunker's Hill, are now reverberating in the ear, and cause the very blood to chill; and the auditory nerve is seized with a trepidation at the recollection of the groans of the wounded and cries of the desponding.

The blood of Lexington, spilt by the lawless violence of the British banditti, has scarce lost its crimson dye, while the "glittering arms" of the mercenary "dogs of war," still clatter in imagination; and white-robed chastity, calling for protection from the brutal ferocity of British barbarians, leaves a frigid horror in the mind, and those feelings which history will excite in the breast of every American, who in future times looks into the records of '75. These are not high wrought scenes, fostered by a fertile imagination to melt the heart, and call the tear from the eye of sensibility; but allusions to historic facts, which will instruct posterity, and warn them of the miseries of those of their fellow men, who are the subjects of military oppression, and teach them how to value a government, which can rest safe on the virtues and intelligence of the people, while it relies on a militia in time of peace, as the only safe defence of a free nation.

We are assembled, not to pride our national vanity by a splendid rehearsal of past achievements in the cabinet or in the field; but by taking a retrospective view of the honorable part already performed by our illustrious countrymen, from an accurate examination of our present critical situation, and from an anticipation of the intricate scenes that remain in future, to be developed. To learn and familiarize the duties that are dependant on us as citizens, as soldiers, and as true Americans.

Casualty has frequently been the focus by which revolutions have been effected in other countries.

The faculties of human invention and the prerogatives of human nature, have often become the sport of chance and the plunder of ambition—and when the people, warmed with innate principles of liberty, rose with indignation and burst the iron bands of slavery, to the destruction of one tyrant, it was only to make way for another ; of which, a more striking example than France, cannot be produced. They have guillotined their king, they have waded through oceans of blood, endured every horrid scene and dismal catastrophe which the mind of man could invent or tongue speak, to obtain freedom : but after they had gained it, ignorance, the worst of foes to man, would not suffer them to keep it, and they have wallowed back into a worse mire than they were before, if possible—they have crowned an Emperor instead of their King.

This was the effect of the ignorant, imperfect, and uncultivated understanding of the rabble, which induced a total inability of foreseeing the improvement of civilization, or of adapting the government of the state of social refinement.—Not so with the Americans at the time of our revolution, they were an enlightened, knowing, and an aspiring people ; too wise to be duped by the Britons, and too crafty to be caught in their trap. The task of superintendency which devolved on the fathers of America, was quite unexampled and unknown to the legislators of other nations.—This country being immensely large, and almost without bounds, the people of course were extremely divergent and thinly scattered over a vast territory, owners of the land on which they lived ; a people nurtured in liberty, professing a mild and benevolent religion, and, as I have before observed, not ignorant in science and civilization.—To conduct such a people through all the winding labyrinths of a revolution, the address ought to be made to reason in preference to the passions ; and to reason, to the clear understanding of the enlightened Columbians, the solemn address was made.

The Americans, who, from infancy, had been caressed in the bosom of liberty and taught in the school of wisdom, and who were capable of comparing causes with their most remote

effects, waited not to have the British yoke of bondage riveted on their necks ; which they knew would be a certain barrier to them in managing a regular opposition.—But at a time when their minds had verged to the pinnacle of the greatest happiness and prosperity, when all hearts were nearly replete with the increasing opulence of their fertile country, and all tongues as one, ejaculating praises to their parent state and her patriotic king. When various incidents, as multifarious as the luminaries of the ethereal sky, combined, which would have rendered an ignorant people careless and secure to their future happiness :—at this moment the Columbian Argus, with his numerous eyes open, was set to watch the invasion of the American rights.

It had no effect—it was to no purpose—we foresaw their nefarious machinations, notwithstanding we were often told that the money to be raised by taxation, was to be expended in this country, and for the sole use of Americans :—Equally frivolous was the plan of the British parliament, in beginning their project by a very small duty, and that only on a few articles.

It was not the sum of money, it was not the mode of dispensation, but it was the justness of the demand which was altercationed ; this subject, the people in a cool, circumspect, slow, deliberate and dispassionate manner, combed over and over : and with the firmness of Socrates and courage of Hannibal, they opposed it in every shape which the Britons could devise, for more than ten years before they brightened their muskets or unsheathed their swords. So singular a circumstance as this, aside from the greatness of the object or issue of the contest, will give an unfading lustre to the American revolution, and note it as an achievement not to be equalled in the records of mankind—that sober reason and candid consideration “ have done the work of enthusiasm, and performed the miracles of Gods.”

If we should survey far into the records of antiquity, and suffer our minds to pass through all the various rises and falls of states and empires, it is not probable that we should find, like the Americans, another nation of laborious and agricultural farm-

ers and mechanics, at ease under their own vine and fruit trees, secure and far remote from the encroachments of fleets and armies ; who will reason before they feel, and from the mandates of duty and knowledge, suffer dangers, poverty and distress, for the sake of obtaining a government of independence and peace for their progeny, who, perhaps, as soon as their fathers were gone hence, would, by the fascinating charms of office-hunting tyrants, be induced to barter their inherited liberty for credulity, and allured into the vortex of tyranny.

The toils of ages, and the fate of millions, were to be borne by a few hands. The unborn sons of COLUMBUS, called aloud for protection—"but it was a still small voice, the voice of national reflection." Here was no ROBESPIERRE, to inflame the people with bigotry and zeal—no BONAPARTE, to coy his followers with false promises of liberty, equality, riches and honor—neither was an enlargement of territory any motive to the contest.

Pride, avarice, ambition, superstition and power, the universal firebrands of war, never shone in an American field of battle. But the solid principles of sober prudence electrified the minds of the people, and galvanized them to assume their rights, and steered the helm of the revolution—and left us in possession of a goodly land, whose every fanning zephyr wafted salubrious particles from the serene hills—and every wind that blew, scattered to their original nihility, the poisonous vapours which were exhaling from the bowels of the earth ; and whose fertile soil was tuming with every requisite for our support, health, ease and comfort. A country, diversified with every romantic scene and beautiful object which would delight the mind or please the fancy.

It was on the 30th November, 1782, that we ended our long and bloody contest with our British foes, and on that day the preliminaries of peace were signed, in which Great Britain acknowledged us to be a free and independent nation.

At this time the American Eden began to flourish, and the lilies of its vallies to send forth their odoriferous flavours. Here were cultivated and uncultivated lands in abundance, which seemed to invite the farmers to be industrious, and that they would be happy. Here materials for all kinds of mechanics asked their masters in the voice of nature, to work and be rich ; and the meandering streams solicited manufacturies ; and all nature seemed to whisper her American sons to become studious and learned. It must be extremely pleasing to us, that no people have outvied us in learning and improvements, nor is there any country in the known world that can boast of having so industrious and happy farmers, rich and flourishing mechanics, as the land of COLUMBUS.

It is not the part of the speaker this day, to enter into a political disquisition, but it may not perhaps be considered amiss, just to hint on the present unhappy domestic division which exists among our fellow-citizens.

Soon after we became an independent nation, the germs of Toryism began to start up and show their hideous heads, and being joined with the infernal monster Slander, and all her accursed train, they stalked about our country with gigantic strides, vomiting fire and defamation on the happy people.

It was this faction who urged, at the time of our forming our constitution, that we must have an hereditary Prince, or at least a President and Senate elected for life. They pretend that America cannot long remain a free government, because all republics have fell into the whirlpool of destruction and tyranny.—And it truly behoves us to take every precaution in our power, and as far as in us lies, abilities, to prevent these miscreants from pouring down our throats the intoxicating draughts, which will cause us to run on to the quick-sands of credulity and sink into the gaping gulf of domestic war. We ought to shun the evil road which led our sister republics into the quagmire of despotism, and avoid the bewitching charms of

these syrens of America, who, with their melodious voices, are using their utmost skill to allure us into the bottomless pit of tyranny.

We ought by all means to put out the eye of prejudice, and assume to ourselves the candid eye of reason and judgment; or rather all that is wanted, is to retain the eye of sensibility and reflection legacied to us by our fathers.

Why all this jargon and disputing about names? as if the name was all the curse. For if I am called a federalist, a jacobin, a republican, a democrat, an aristocrat, or what not, and have not the true genuine principles of '75, I am a traitor to my country and ought to be banished from it.

It is this same slanderous banditti, who wish to divide the northern from the southern states.

An union of sentiments, is essentially necessary either to produce any great or good effect in society. A division of our states will ever destroy any thing we wish to support. It is told us in holy writ, that a divided house cannot stand. "Divide and conquer," was a favorite maxim of the Father of confusion, and it has been too successfully adopted and practised in modern times, by some of his legitimate offspring. It is the duty of every American, who prides himself upon the happiness of his country, to do all in his power to keep the states of America united. For as soon as there is a division, so soon will this country be cursed with a civil war—that of all wars to be the most detested; for often in such contests do we see father, son, and brother, taking up arms against each other. Thus will the shafts of war be unbound, and instead of cultivating our farms and improving in arts and sciences, we shall learn the manoeuvres of war, and enure ourselves to human slaughter.

A time like this is much to be feared and hideously to be dreaded—when we shall all be blended in one confused heterogenous collection, dealing death and destruction on our proximate, whether friend or foe; when blood and carnage is all the

theme, and not a rustling leaf that moves, but what makes us stand amazed, our hair stiffen with fear, and our voice cling to our jaws. When the alabaster bosoms of our dear comforts and beautiful friends, are reluctantly pouring out their lives through the narrow fissure of a wound, inflicted by the hand of an unfeeling foe ; or, O horrid to tell ! perhaps by the hand who most would dread it. The air resounding with their piteous cries and dismal groans, and the tender affectionate moanings of our dear infants, will make drops of sweat distill from the very hair.

“ Forefend us heaven and forbid it man.”

What would be the frowns and indignant exclamations of the illustrious Washington, could he look from the mansions of the blessed in heaven, upon the wilds, intrigues, and deadly hypocrisy of these enemies of liberty and human prosperity, these usurpers of America ? What a horrid sensation would seize the patriot’s mind, upon a contemplation of the parricidal enormities of these *wish to be kings*. Who would have conjectured that the most impressive injunctions of the Father of his country, to hold the Federal Constitution inviolate, could have so soon been forgotten—so soon despised ? This immortal warrior has been deposited in the sepulchre but a few short years, before these royal monsters have attempted to undermine and overthrow all those popular privileges for which he had fought and conquered in a field of honor !—To bury merits and services of the wise and exemplary, in the roaring eddies of detraction, that the baneful arts of the *curst few* might be effectual ; while talents, usefulness and integrity, are swept away by the besom of tyranny, in one rude and undistinguished storm of calumny. The match of the imperial traitor is to be placed at the magazines of public virtue, and that fair edifice of freedom, which a WASHINGTON raised, and a nation established, be blown to chaotic ruin.

It must be preeminently pleasing to all in this assembly, that these demagogues of monarchy, have not had it in their power, to deprive us of this day’s liberty and freedom. Freedom ! all hallowed name ! Thou friend of man ! At thought of

see, our hearts are warmed with thy celestial fire ! Already do
I behold a host of thy heaven-descended offspring :—

When BACON, “ from the gloom of cloistered monks,
and jargon-teaching schools,

*Led forth the true Philosophy, there long
Held in the chains of words and forms,
And definitions void,”*

thy victorious benignant hand guided his illumined : When he
marked out the limits of human knowledge, thou didst inspire
him.

When NEWTON, greatest sage ! calculated, thou wast
with him.

When BAILE, became the advocate-general of philoso-
phers, thou didst give a subtlety, and inspire a confidence un-
known to man before.

When LOCKE, made all the mental world his own, thy
liberal genius conducted him through the winding labyrinths,
and pointed out the way to truth.

In MILTON, immortal name ! thou didst teach man-
kind, that disobedience to the divine will of heaven, is the only
and true cause of all the tyranny and misery in this world.

When CLARK and BUTLER, by moral demonstration,
proved to bewildered men the truth of that religion first taught
in Judea, by JESUS of Nazareth, which carries in its divine bo-
som, peace on earth and good will to men ! Thou didst dispel
the darkness of superstition.

When HAMDEN, RIDLEY, SIDNEY, RALEIGH and RUS-
SELL, expired in sealing the truth with their precious blood,
thou, O Freedom ! didst consecrate their names in the sacred
temples of virtue, honor, and fame.

PRIESTLY, illustrious sage, who, like our ancestors, was obliged to quit his native country and come to America : The fruitless efforts to save a sinking realm, was his crime : The greatness of his virtues and his sufferings, prove the despotism and misfortunes of that nation, whose history his future fame will adorn. He, O Freedom ! hath fought, successfully fought, under thy holy banners, and broken the fetters of reason ; by him hast thou confounded the blind partizans of antiquity, and demolished the antique pillars of the temple of superstition.

When WASHINGTON, FRANKLIN, HANCOCK, WARREN, and all that bright phalanx of patriots and heroes, arrayed in the divine panoply of reason, waged successful war against the *many-headed monster*, British tyranny—thou, O Freedom ! didst nerve their mighty arm with more than Herculean strength. These are the men whose fame will never die : These are the benefactors of mankind : Their glory will embrace all the future generations of men. Who can stop the progress of their works ? What can check the progress of truth ? As soon might man stretch forth his feeble arm, and say to yon bright orb of day, retire and cease to shine. These heroes, all uttered their voices strong as reason and sublime as heaven, saying : Let America be free, and America was free. Under the auspices and for the celebration of that freedom, in this house, are we now assembled.

* AAAAAAAAAAAAAA *
 THE END.
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