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1826

AN
ORATION,

ON THE PRINCIPLES OF
LIBERTY AND INDEPENDENCE.

PRONOUNCED
JULY 4—1808.

*AT THE REQUEST OF A NUMBER OF THE INHABITANTS
OF THE TOWN OF DEDHAM AND ITS VICINITY.*

**In Commemoration of the Anniversary of
*AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.***

—*:*:*—
BY JAMES RICHARDSON.

—*:*:*—
“Felix quem faciunt aliena pericula cautum.”



Dedham :
PRINTED BY H. MANN—JULY 8—1808.

SIR,

THE GENTLEMEN, assembled at Mr. FOLLER'S, to commemorate the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, highly gratified with the spirited and elegant ADDRESS you have this day delivered, have appointed a Committee to request a Copy for the Press. We hope, by a ready compliance with this request, you will afford us an opportunity to extend and propagate those pleasing and animating impressions, which your patriotic ADDRESS is so well calculated to inspire.

By Order of the Committee,

HORATIO TOWNSEND,

Chairman.

JAMES RICHARDSON, Esq.

Dedham, July 4, 1808.



GENTLEMEN,

I SUBMIT the ADDRESS, this day delivered, to your disposal. It being a discussion of General Principles, written with a spirit of Conciliation, I hope it will be examined, as I flatter myself it was heard, with candor.

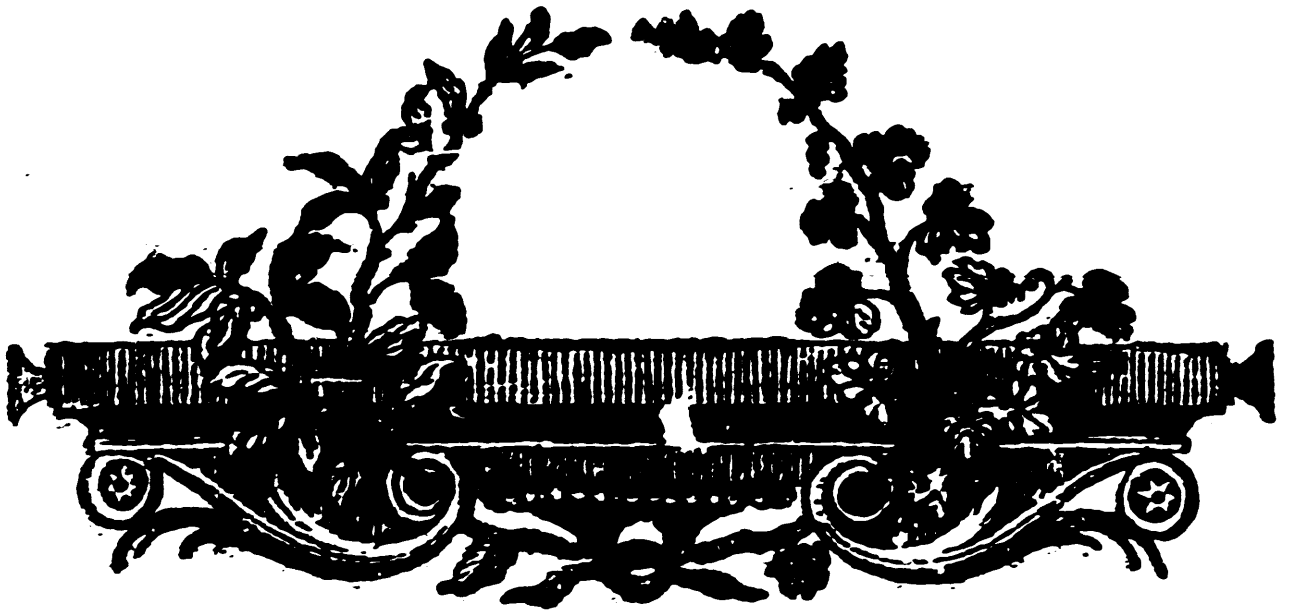
I AM, GENTLEMEN, with much esteem, your most obedient Servant,

JAMES RICHARDSON.

HORATIO TOWNSEND, Esq.

and the Gentlemen of the Committee,

DEDHAM, JULY 4, 1808,



AN ORATION.



NATIONAL Festivals are the seeds and the aliment of the civic virtues. To celebrate the deeds of valor, the sufferings of fortitude, or the triumphs of patriotism, inspires the breast with emulation; and to recount public blessings unites all hearts in grateful acknowledgements, and all hands in defence of public rights. Thus, at the same time, the virtues, that are brightened and quickened in the man, are implanted in the bosom of the child.

THE legislators of ancient Greece, that cradle of liberty, civilization and the arts, were so deeply impressed with this truth, that in their several states we find public institutions established to enliven the virtues of their citizens. Such were the Pythian, Nemaean, Isthmean and Olympic games; where the athletic vied in manly sports, and the Bard and Orator, in recounting the deeds of the mighty.

Hence all became emulous to excel in public spirit. And to gain the prize at the games, or be celebrated in the assemblies of the nation, were distinctions more valued, than to be adorned with the trappings of wealth, or to support the ensigns of royalty.

THE annals of our country furnish no example of similar institutions, but the voluntary rejoicings of this day afford proof, that there is an æra in our history, which we are proud to celebrate, principles and feelings, which we recal and recognize with delight, characters, that we venerate, and actions the theme of our annual praise.

ON the Fourth of July, one thousand seven hundred and seventy six, the sages and heroes of our country, having petitioned and remonstrated, resisted a series of aggressions, and baffled numerous attempts to deprive us of our just rights, and the liberties of English subjects, to bind us by law, without representation, in all cases whatsoever, and to tax us without measure and against our will ; with one hand on their swords, and the other on their hearts, appealing to heaven for the rectitude of their intentions, and praying for strength to support the conflict, declared the bonds that united us with Great-Britain broken forever.

ON the anniversary of such a day, when the mind is filled with recollections at once awful and pleasing, and the heart warmed with patriotism and gratitude, we might employ the little time allotted for this address, in pointing out the *causes*, that led to our INDEPENDENCE, and in detailing the *conflicts* necessary to support it. We might revert to the *Stamp Act* and *Tea Tax*, and mark the spirit they roused among our citizens. We might detail the distresses occasioned by the *Boston Port Bill*, the

ruin of our trade, and the bankruptcy of our merchants, but of this we may now be reminded without the assistance of language. We might then pass to the *Battle of Bunker's Hill*, and the *burning of Charlestown*, view the flames climbing their spires, bursting from the windows of their dwellings, and giving to night new horrors. We might view the conflagration of *Danbury* and *Fairfield*, the defeat at *Long Island*, *Harlaem* and *White Plains*, and the distresses of our citizens, hungry, naked and barefoot in the midst of winter. We might, could we find language, paint the horrors of the *Jersey prison-ship*. We might then direct our view to our successes and triumphs. On the foreground of the picture are delineated the capture of *Burgoyne*, the battles of *Trenton*, *Germantown* and *Monmouth*, the siege of *York-town*, and capture of *Cornwallis*, when the voice of remonstrance was at length heard, and the last hope of subduing us perished in the British bosom. In passing over this hasty sketch, a tear is due to the memory of **WARREN**, **MONTGOMERY** and **MERCER**, and gratitude will compel us to dwell for a moment on the virtues of that man, who led our armies in war, and our councils in peace, whose valor defended, whose prudence saved us; whose wisdom directed our cabinet, and whose last advice will form the creed of every enlightened American statesman. We might take a view of our situation at the close of the war, the spectre of anarchy then walked unshackled, no bond of union connected the states, poverty reared his meager form, public credit fled before him, commerce fell prostrate at his feet, agriculture abandoned the plow and hid himself, and independence seemed the only treasure we possessed. The mind, subdued by this scene, might then be refreshed with a view of the adoption of the federal constitution, the resurrection of public credit, the revival of commerce, the return of agriculture and the arts,

and the unparralleled prosperity of the country for a series of years under a wise and virtuous administration.

HERE too we may be permitted to offer a sincere, though imperfect tribute to the memory of a townsman,* whose eyes just opened on the light of this anniversary, and then closed forever ! To the memory of a friend faithful and beloved ; to the memory of a benefactor of his native town, and a friend and ornament of his country. To the memory of an able and upright lawyer ; an eloquent and sublime orator ; a wise, experienced and honest statesman. Though the tongue, that once enlightened the assemblies of the nation, is now silent ; though the voice, that charmed and instructed all who heard it, shall be heard no more ! yet his name shall live in the memory of a grateful public ; the poor will bless him as a father ; the benevolent will hail him as a brother ; his country will venerate him as a patriot without reproach, and future orators and statesmen will look to him as a perfect and sublime model of eloquence and wisdom !

BUT at a period like the present, when our country, the only assylum of liberty and peace, seems menaced with subjugation, and is palsied by the destruction of our trade ; when our shores are rocking with the convulsions of quaking Europe, when the hand of tyranny is stretching itself across the atlantic and clanking fetters in our ears, it may not be impertinent or unseasonable to take a concise view of our privileges and blessings, to enquire in what our liberty and independence consist, to what dangers they are exposed, what virtues are necessary to support them, and what motives we have for their preservation.

* *The Honorable FISHER AMES, died at four o'clock in the morning of this Anniversary.*

THAT we are willing to be free and independent, requires no argument to prove. But if merely to *love liberty* be a virtue ; it is a virtue that we possess in common with the beasts of the forest, and the wandering Arabs ; it is a virtue, that no nation ever acquired, or can totally lose ; when tempered and directed, it is the spring of national happiness and glory ; when blind and unrestrained, it is a source of misery and degradation ; like the wind, its gentle current may enliven the face and unfold the beauties of nature, or its tempests spread devastation and ruin. But rightly to understand, and bravely to defend their liberties and their rights, wisely to select rulers, and justly to appreciate their services, depends on the genius and character of nations, and is therefore the lot of few. May that lot ever be ours ! May the tree, that our Fathers planted, amid toil and danger, and watered with their blood—whose leaves are fair, whose fruit is pleasant and wholesome, and whose shadow protects us from the heat and from the storm, never be lopped by a foreign ax, nor shivered by the whirlwind of domestic discord !

THAT liberty, which is at once our birth-right and our boast, implies a right to exercise our faculties, without injury to others, for our own emolument, advantage, or pleasure : It likewise implies protection of our persons, acquisitions and characters. Among our faculties is included speech ; and freedom of speech implies a right to speak truth with good intentions, to propagate opinions consistent with religion, the public good, good morals and decorum. But liberty implies restraint. It holds the hand of the assassin ; it keeps the thief from his neighbor's goods ; it protects the simple from the wiles of the crafty, and the weak from the power of the strong ; it withholds the cup from the drunkard ; it prevents the libertine from destroying the peace of families ; it binds the tongue of

the infidel and the slanderer, and restrains the trumpeter of false praise. For if the hand of the plunderer be not stayed, private right is invaded; if the simple and the weak were not protected, they would become the slaves and the dupes of the crafty and the powerful; if profligacy be not restrained, innocence falls a prey; if the mouth of the profane be not stopped, religion and morality receive a wound; if the false tongue be loosed, the poison of calumny seizes on every virtuous character.

In the catalogue of our rights, that of electing our rulers, though in itself a burden, takes a high rank. Responsibility is a barrier to oppression. When rulers are subject to the laws, and responsible for their conduct, and the people vigilant and discerning, the laws will equally protect the rights of all, and the government will be administered with an eye to the public good. Industry, assured of his reward, will be cheerful at his labors; agriculture will change the wilderness into fruitful fields; commerce will plow the ocean in search of foreign treasures. But when rulers are independent of the people, their passions and inclinations know no restraint. The good have a severe trial of their virtues, and the bad are scourges of their people. Avarice will invade private right; ambition will sacrifice millions at his shrine; sensuality will corrupt the fountains of domestic bliss; while rapine, with grasping hand, that never opens, seizes on the hard earnings of toil, palsyng the hand of industry, and banishing hope from the heart.

But the abuse of this right is almost as dangerous to the public liberty as its loss. The wisdom that discerns, the patriotism that desires, and the spirit and energy that pursues the public good, are essential requisites

in a public character. But when a people, poisoned by calumny, and deluded by falsehood, elect to office those who flatter their vanity, inflame their passions, and mislead their judgments, both the public liberty and the public morals are in danger of being destroyed. The monstrous union of public integrity with private vices is a doctrine of very modern date. It is a tenet propagated by the corrupt and ambitious, to establish their power on the ruins of the public liberty. The man, who propagates falsehood to obtain power, will be false to his trust when in office. The man, who sacrifices innocence to sensuality, will sacrifice his country to ambition. The man, who offers a bribe for a vote, will receive a bribe for a favor. The man, who flatters passions and indulges vices to obtain promotion, will make those very passions and vices the instruments of his ambition.

INDEPENDENCE implies freedom from the controul or influence of any foreign nation. It also implies the right of a nation to be governed by their own laws, to establish their own customs and institutions, to form their own manners, to pursue their own interest, and to defend their own rights in a manner consistent with the rights of other nations. When a nation becomes wealthy and ceases to be warlike, when that wealth is devoted to private luxury and magnificence, or squandered on visionary projects and speculations, while their shores are defenceless, their ports unfortified, and their frontiers unguarded, independence is in danger. When the emissaries of foreign powers divide the people by intrigues and cabals, delude them by promises, or corrupt them by bribes, independence is undermined. When a government is insulted and conceals their disgrace, or menaced and fears to resist, the departure of their independence may

be safely predicted, and when they offer their wealth to avert the danger, independence is gone forever.

THE spirit of a nation is the only sure defence of its rights. The little states of Greece resisted the millions of Xerxes, and the proud monarch of the East fled in disgrace before a people, whose whole country was scarcely worth the gold trappings on his horses. Yet the same Grecian states, distracted by cabals, corrupted by bribes, and enervated by luxury and idleness, submitted ingloriously to a monarch, whose wealth and resources were less than their own.

SWITZERLAND, the native seat of liberty, the garden of the virtues and the arts, and in former times the nurse of heroes, deluded by the promises, and poisoned by the intrigues of demagogues and foreign emissaries, sunk under the bloody hand of that power, now self-styled the protector of the independence of nations, and the restorer of the freedom of the seas. And the same hand crushed without resistance the little republic of Venice, who once, with a spirit and success, that covered her with glory, resisted the combined armies of Europe.

WE may therefore hold it a political maxim, that a nation, deaf to the voice of glory, and tame to the insults of the aggressor, who can listen to the solicitations of indolence, and yield to the suggestions of fear, who can calmly count the costs of freedom, and reckon up the inconveniences of slavery, richly deserves chains and fetters, and will soon be deprived both of their liberties and their wealth.

THE virtues, that support the public liberty, are the same that adorn private character. The friend of lib

erty is the friend of truth, the friend of knowledge, the friend of morality, the friend of religion, and the friend of man. Our fathers, in the true spirit of liberty, exchanged their country for a wilderness, provided for the worship of God, established colleges and schools, taught their children the principles of morality and religion, and cherished all the private and social virtues. An enlightened lover of liberty will practise his duties, as well as claim his privileges. Is he a private citizen, he will respect the rights, defend the characters, and regard the feelings of his fellow-citizens. He will venerate the laws and institutions of his country : he will place a just confidence in his rulers : he will watch over their conduct but never accuse them without reason. Is he a magistrate, mild and condescending, he will be indulgent to the weaknesses of humanity, but regardful of the principles of justice. Is he a Legislator, he will be magnanimous and liberal, offering his sentiments with candor, hearing those of others with respect, and acting solely for the public good. He will never condescend to play tricks for party purposes, nor to form cabals for personal promotion. Is he a candidate for office, he will hire no calumniators to blacken his rival, nor emissaries to trumpet his own fame. For he considers the importance of the trust, and feels himself responsible to his country and to his God.

But liberty has many foes in the guise of friendship ; many, who like Judas, betray with a kiss. Who under the pretence of being her friends and her guardians, indulge envy of the rich, contempt of the poor, hatred of knowledge, and jealousy of all power but their own. Jealousy, that bane of republics, the child of ignorance and vice, is the parent of blind and implicit confidence. The bad often attack and ruin the good, by exciting against them

the jealousy of the ignorant. The fomenter of jealousy ever has the confidence of the jealous ; and the blindness of that confidence is in proportion to the strength of the jealousy. Thus the base, the intriguing and the unprincipled, supplant the wise and virtuous ruler, and then abuse the confidence they have so treacherously acquired. The Greeks banished their best citizens at the instigation of their worst, and lamented their folly when they felt the weight of their chains. The Patricians are proud, ambitious and oppressive, said the Tyrant Marius to the Roman People, and afterwards murdered the same people by thousands to establish his own power. Vigilance is a virtue of the republican family, jealousy is the vice and the instrument of tyrants and usurpers. Vigilance is the fair daughter of intelligence and innocence, jealousy the misshapen offspring of ignorance and vice. Vigilance seats herself on an eminence, with a countenance open and tranquil, an eye piercing and steady, a mien firm and resolute, and in an attitude ready to leap at the call of danger. Jealousy is immured in a cavern, shuddering through fear of unknown perils, with a face pale and haggard, and an eye dim with gazing on the phantoms created by her own imagination.

MOTIVES to defend our rights, and preserve our liberties, may be drawn from a review of our privileges and blessings. Health, beauty, vivacity and genius are the productions of our climate ; plenty and variety of our soil. Our country is indented with safe and commodious harbours, and intersected with rivers, that adorn and fertilize. Industry and enterprize characterize our countrymen. The Ocean till of late was white with our sails, and every breeze wafted us the wealth and the luxuries of foreign climates. The adventerous sported with danger in unknown seas, and the whales under the south pole felt the point of the

American harpoon. Inauspicious is the period when enterprise is checked through fear, and industry palsied by law ! Dangerous is the policy that damps the energies, and degrades the spirit of a nation !

But though the fountains of our wealth have ceased to flow, yet the foundation of our liberties remains unshaken, the institutions of our ancestors are still venerated and supported. Though we have lost the simplicity of primitive manners, and deviated from the pure morals, that adorned the infancy of our republic, though we have yielded, in a degree, to the smiles, and been won by the blandishments of a foreign sorceress, who falsely styled herself the goddess of liberty : a goddess, born of vice and delusion, nursed amid blood and crimes, fed with the flesh of her fascinated votaries, and then crushed by the iron hand, that now holds the destinies of Europe ; yet experience has taught us a lesson not easily to be forgotten, and strengthened the cords that bind us to our privileges.

We will love and defend our country, because in it we behold the image of every thing that is venerable and dear ; here our eyes first opened to the light, and our hearts to the emotions of friendship and affection. Because it contains our friends and our parents, our wives and our children, our temples and our altars ; because it was won by the toil of our ancestors, and moistened with the blood of the patriotic and the valliant. Because it is the land of liberty, the land of our choice, the land of our sepulchres.

ARE further persuasions necessary to inspire us with the true spirit of freedom ? Turn to the map of Europe, see Holland, once rich and free, subdued enslav-

ed, plundered ; her spirit broken, her trade gone, and her wealth made the instrument of corrupting and subduing other nations. Italy, Germany and Prussia, distracted in their counsels, robbed of their independence, deprived of their best blood, and parcelled out among the connexions and favorites of the conquerer. Portugal, sacked by a foreign army, her rightful sovereign and rulers driven into exile, and her citizens perishing with famine in her streets. The little virtuous republics of Switzerland swelling the triumph, and her bleak and barren hills white with the bones of the brave !

Do we need example to move us ? Behold the magnanimous Swedes, inhabiting a country but a speck on the map of Europe, chilled by the northern blasts, where the slanting and scattered rays of the sun, scarcely waken a pale and puny vegetation, contending for the honor, and claiming the right to defend their country, and braving with an unconquerable spirit, the united force of the boasted winner of the Iron Crown, and the deluded and treacherous, though powerful emperor of the north.

! WITH such motives and such examples, can Americans despond, and tamely yield up their liberties to any foreign power ? Impossible ! Let us then, trusting under God in our spirit and resources, defend our independence and our rights against every assailant, and knowing that it is better to die with glory, than to live in disgrace ; determine rather to fall in defence of our liberties, than to witness the subjugation of our beloved country !