

MR. RICHARDSON'S ORATION.

*John G. ...
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ORATION,

DELIVERED IN THE

SOUTH PARISH, IN WEYMOUTH,

JULY 4, 1828.

BEING THE

Fifty-Second Anniversary

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

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HINGHAM,
PRESS OF FARMER AND BROWN
1828.

ORATION.

FOREVER hallowed be the day that gave Independence and Liberty to these United States. Forever hallowed be the day when God gave to the representatives of the people of these States energy and courage to declare their freedom from colonial bondage, and their determination to set before the world the example of a Republican government. Forever hallowed be the day when the principles of devotion to the cause of liberty and to the rights of men triumphed over arbitrary power. Our fathers were not born free, but they had virtue and energy of character to throw off the yoke of their bondage. The invaluable blessings purchased by the revolution have descended to us. We have the proud and happy reflection that *we were born free*. With joy does the venerable sire, who lives to see this day, behold the children whom his own valour has crowned with this honour. With what veneration do children thus honoured look upon their faithful sires and remember

the daring spirit with which they trod the fields of desolation, and suffered the calamities of a war of eight years, rather than bow to the degradation of subjects of arbitrary power. Well may the anniversary of our Independence be hailed with universal joy. That great achievement has already given freedom and happiness to many millions. This anniversary during more than half a century has been the inspiring theme of the patriotic and the eloquent. Around the altar of our country, genius and taste and science and religion have delighted oft to come with their brightest garlands and most sacred offerings. Here gratitude pours forth her richest incense to the God of our fathers; to Him who espoused their cause when they were few in numbers and unskilled in war, and when the power that rose against them was great in resources and unrivalled in arms. The origin, the unequal circumstances, the progress, the duration, the results of the contest for Independence are witnesses, that it is no mere illusion that has taken possession of our breasts.

Here are yet *living witnesses* to the fact, that the Independence of our country was gained, not by accidental expressions of enthusiasm in the cause of liberty, but by a *deliberate* and *fixed* and *persevering determination* not to submit to the injuries and insults of British power and pride,—not to be slaves.

Our fathers were a generation accustomed to patient and laborious industry. Although the great body of them had but slender advantages for literary or scientific acquirements, many facts show that they were accustomed to deep thought and to an extensive forecast respecting the interests of their country and the prospects of their children. They saw that at some period there must be a tremendous struggle, or their children must continue forever to be mere “hewers of wood and drawers of water,” to the very power that their fathers had braved all dangers and hardships to escape. Gratitude and veneration and every sacred principle bound them to fulfil the intentions and hopes of *their* ancestors.

For a long time the people had witnessed the determination of Great Britain, to use her own language, “to *check* the growth and prosperity of the colonies, lest they should throw off their dependence, if not curbed in time.” The pride of power and a mercenary ambition prompted the monarch and his ministers to many unnatural deeds, and to an entire policy which all ingenuous minds must deem farthest from magnanimity. “I must maintain,” said a ministerial leader in the House of Lords, in the debate of the 26th October, 1775, on the King’s Speech.—“that it would have been better that America had never been known, than that a great consolidated empire should exist *independent* of Great Britain.”

Such was the spirit and such the character of the power against which our fathers were compelled by a sense of duty to the memory of those who had lived before them and to the welfare of those who should come after them, to wage war, determined on "victory or death." By many invaluable lives and costly sacrifices victory was purchased. Many of that illustrious race have lived long to witness results of that contest far more glorious than the most sanguine could have anticipated. The high purpose pursued by the pious pilgrims, unawed by the frowns of earthly power, or by a voluntary exile from the civilized world, or by the most appalling dangers that ever were arrayed against human nature and human virtue—the high and holy purpose of that remarkable company devoted to truth and liberty, was consummated by the revolution.

Forms of government, far excelling the best models of Republics in all preceding ages, were established and have been productive of order, freedom and prosperity unparalleled. Here then is the home of freedom, the asylum of patriots and heroes, a broad theatre for the arts and sciences devoted to the advancement of man in political rectitude, in happiness and moral dignity.

But we should not do justice to the day and to the interesting event of the American Revolution, if we should pass without notice the *moral causes*

that led to these great results. The Independence of these States and the founding of this Republic are not the mere accidents of time and chance. They are the results of principles long and deeply fixed, preserved with care and handed down, from the first who landed on these shores, through all their generations.—The love of liberty and an aversion to arbitrary power were deeply engraved in the hearts of their children. The foundation of this Republic was begun more than a century and a half before the superstructure assumed its form and comeliness. The foundation of this Republic and the train of events that shed so bright a glory on the Fourth of July, 1776, was begun, when, to escape the arbitrary impositions of ecclesiastical and civil power, our ancestors resolved to found, in this new world, a free government and a pure church. We celebrate then the triumph of the *principles* our puritan ancestors brought with them to the shores of this wilderness. We honor the elevated christian spirit that animated them to rescue religious liberty from the thralldom of the hierarchy and the throne. We celebrate the illustrious virtues of that patriotic and high minded band of martyrs who recoiled not from severest hardships and dangers to secure to their children the blessings of a free and good government. We celebrate the provident wisdom of our ancestors that led them to devise and establish the primitive

institutions of this country, and to adapt them to the purpose of perpetuating the love of liberty and the abhorrence of arbitrary government.

We celebrate their virtues of patient and persevering industry ; of manly enterprize ; of inflexible adherence to just principles ; of firm attachment to forms and customs essential to cherish correct sentiments, the love of good order and of their country. Though they had not where to lay their own heads with safety, impressed with the truth that knowledge and virtue are the vital elements of liberty and human happiness, they founded free schools and institutions of higher order and churches and temples of the Most High.

Thus actuated by motives and principles of a pure and lofty character, by a long series of well devised measures they prepared the people of the colonies to carry into execution the Declaration by their Representatives, that they were “and of right ought to be, **FREE and INDEPENDENT STATES.**” ‘Like Plato, they were ashamed to be philosophers in theory and not in practice.’ They were ashamed to be friends of liberty by profession and not in deeds of worth and devotion to their country and their cause.

When the Independence of these States was declared, then were put to issue these great questions, Whether this nation should exist? Whether the infant, the fond hope of past ages should be

strangled at its birth ?—*God said, LET IT LIVE!* Admiring nations with compassion and half suppressed joy and low and trembling voice breathed forth a tender prayer, *That it might live.* The shield of Omnipotence was cast around it. A divine energy was breathed into its spirit. Patriots and divines, statesmen and heroes, sires and matrons, the favorite sons of their vows and the loveliest of the daughters, inspired with a heaven-born sympathy, spared no sacrifices to guard its safety or to nourish its growth or give expansion to its powers.

Time will not permit me to relate the artful devices of a power bearing the Christian name, a titled “defender of the faith,” filling a throne professedly sustained by the grace of God, to destroy this nation. Many were the base intrigues employed by that power to effect what could not be done by the prowess of brave armies. It is my deliberate intention thus to mark distinctly those devices and intrigues as utterly unworthy of the *Christian* character and of the magnanimity of a great nation.

The history is too familiar to be repeated, of the many bloody battles that were fought, of brilliant victories gained by brave bands unequal in number, unarmed, undisciplined, oppressed by want and nakedness, and with nothing to bear up their courage but *patriotism, the love of liberty*

and trust in God! And these often proved them more than a match for the bravest and proudest of their foes. Let imagination paint a faithful picture of those scenes, when the devoted sons of liberty in their home-spun frocks girded on their rusty and shattered armour, and summoned by the thundering artillery of a brilliant exulting host left unprotected their wives and babes and hastened to the battle! See them year after year leaving their lands uncultivated, breaking from the endearing ties and comforts of their homes, enduring the distresses of the camp and of fatiguing marches in summer, and in winter, imprinting, in the snow and ice, tracks of blood at every step whilst pursuing their countries enemies! As God is true, a people so virtuous and brave and persevering in their cause could not be left to the fate of slaves, and to suffer contempt and wrath from tyrants. The enemy at length recoiled from the contest that had cost him one after another of his best appointed armies, had exhausted his treasures, and constantly rebounded, with disgrace to his enterprize and despair to his prospects.

The Lord of hosts was on our side. Victory perched with exulting wing and joyful note upon the banner of American Liberty and Independence. Gratitude and filial respect then command us to celebrate the exalted virtues of the great men of our land, whose patriotism and eloquence and

wisdom inspired and animated the people, planned and directed the system of operations, led our armies, and effected the glorious results in which we this day rejoice.

They command us to celebrate the excellent virtues of the more numerous class, formed by early habits of discipline and instruction to the love of just rule, and to respect and obey their own magistrates and commanders, and who from motives and principles the purest and most patriotic, resolved to live free or die. 'This numerous and virtuous class ceased not to pursue, through scenes of calamity and desolation the invaders of their country and their birthright, until the shouts of victory and peace and freedom echoed and re-echoed throughout the vallies and high places, in answer to that solemn appeal they had made "to the Supreme Judge of the world."

Our right to Independence and Freedom was acknowledged by our mortified enemy. Nations bade us welcome to the great community of states and empires. Our patriots and statesmen and men of genius were emblazoned high on the catalogue of great names. The people were deeply impoverished and embarrassed, but their industry and enterprize rapidly repaired their condition and placed them among the most favored and happy of nations on whom the sun in any age hath shone. This story, though oft repeated, can never cease

to be interesting to Americans. It touches a chord that unites the heart at once to the memory of the departed, and to the ascended spirits who rest in Glory.

But we have been pointed to the decline and dissolution of Republics once great and happy. We have been admonished of dangers from unhappy divisions and local jealousies. Under every form of government like evils exist. But where the will of the majority of the people is acknowledged to be the sovereign law, and elections may change the operation of that law and the relations of parties, divisions will seldom threaten serious danger.

In this respect our Republic possesses a safeguard more perfect than has been known to any other. Yet whoever knows the history of governments and loves his country, cannot be regardless of the great question, Whether this Republic shall continue to prosper and flourish? Should you listen to the hoary patriot's secret prayer, you would hear the tenderest supplications for his country, lest a dangerous ambition shall usurp its sway, or misguided counsels shall direct its affairs, or the people becoming reduced to ignorance and a servile dependence on the unprincipled, shall be unwise in their elections, and gradually lose their birthright. The possibility of such an event should excite us to constant vigilance. The spread of

our population and the number of our States have indeed increased in a proportion even far beyond the means of intelligence and moral improvement. But these means, we hope, will rapidly follow in the train. Self-interest in the new States will demand the increase. The great body of the people in all the States are and must be ardently devoted to the cause of free government. They have already too much intelligence to rest without the means of sustaining their relative weight and importance in the Union. This cannot long be effected without improvement and weight of character.—In an age of commotion our country may have experience of events of threatening aspect. I must declare that I feel a faith in a governing Providence too strong to doubt the stability of a government founded as this has been. I would to heaven that this faith may give repose to the surviving patriots of the revolution, that in the expiring hour they may not tremble for the fate of the country, for whose liberties they have tendered their lives as a willing sacrifice.

With some degree of jealousy the rulers in an elective government should be watched. The safety of the people demands this. To do their duty to themselves the people require both correct intelligence and sound principle, to form a mature judgment of the measures of government. Upon the conduct of rulers no restraint can be so effect-

ual as the impression, that their constituents well understand their course.—To those in public trust there is no reward, besides the consciousness of duty, more precious than the assurance that their fidelity is duly appreciated. And they alone are truly honoured,

“Whose *own* acts immortalize their name,”

or gain them just applause.

At the expiration of more than half a century from its commencement in an organized form, the Republic of the United States stands, to the admiring view of nations, an illustrious monument to the virtues of the patriots of the Revolution. The advance of this Union in population, wealth, and enterprize, in the most valuable arts and sciences, and in power, has in history no parallel. This has been an age of tremendous convulsions and revolutions among nations, which for a short season gave to our heavens a lowering aspect. It has passed by, and at this short distance of time its traces are scarcely to be found. The industry and enterprize of our citizens, animated by the spirit and aided by the light of an age which seems to be manifestly approximating towards some great crisis of the world, are pressing forward to new and important improvements. We witness as matters of familiar occurrence, the application of natural and mechanical laws to purposes of business, in-

telligence and social enjoyment, what even twenty years ago would have passed as incredible,—as

“Dropt from the divine hand, with miracles replete.”

We see our government patronizing and protecting important branches of industry, which long have withered beneath the overbearing influence of rival and foreign interests.

The British government, with characteristic sagacity and foresight, has ever opposed the establishment and growth of manufactories in this country. As early as the year 1731, by command of the British parliament, the Board of Trade and Plantations made a report concerning the “Trades carried on, and *manufactures* set up, in the *colonies*,” and recommended that “some expedient be fallen upon to direct the thoughts of the colonists from an undertaking of this kind; so much the rather, because these manufactures in process of time, may be carried on in a great degree, *unless an early stop be put to their progress.*” With the same parental kindness a law was passed in 1732, by that government, “to prevent the exportation of *hats* out of the plantations in America, and to restrain the number of apprentices taken by the hat makers, in the said plantations.” An act of 1750 prohibited, under severe penalties, the erection of iron-works of various kinds. Such

was the policy pursued to keep in a state of subjugation the colonies, and by a spirit of monopoly to aggrandize the *parent* power. Since the declaration and acknowledgement of our independence the same policy has been persevered in by Great Britain. The wealth of the United States has been, to a vast amount exhausted, to reward British and Spanish industry and to support the industry and enterprize of British and other powers, whilst a vast portion of the industry and enterprize of our population have languished under embarrassments. The experience of this country is beginning to convince us of the necessity of maintaining a *practical* Independence. Our citizens have worn the badges of the vassalage of their country until their pride and self-respect revolt from the folly. Neglecting to avail ourselves of the vast aid to industry of mechanical powers and of the advantage each branch of industry offers to the rest, we have surrendered to others some of the most valuable sources of wealth and prosperity. Our statesmen and political economists are beginning to discover that a nation of agriculturists, with trifling aid from mechanical powers, can not compete with a nation of manufacturers who by the aid of these powers cause even the elements to execute their work. Invention has not yet aided the implements of husbandry as it has the spindle and the loom.

This sentiment is becoming prevalent among the rulers and people, that national prosperity depends essentially on a judicious application of resources of power and industry and on the policy by which we may strengthen each others hands rather than the hands of strangers and enemies. The great changes in the political world have compelled this country to a change of its policy. Time and experience are necessary to accommodate it to the various interests of the country. Laws perfectly equal in their operation are not to be expected. But I should be unjust not to acknowledge my belief that the general laws and administrations of the government are as faithfully devoted to the welfare of the nation as they have been at any other period of its existence. I have heard the cry of extravagance and corruption sounded aloud and reiterated in our halls of legislation. Had it not been manifest that it was the cry of party spirit, I should have trembled with the apprehension that this Republic had approached the eve of her dissolution.—The bureaus of the administration were thrown open to the prying curiosity of fell suspicion and the untiring search of rancorous jealousy, until the master spirits of the enterprize with looks of dismay would gladly have found some door for an escape unnoticed and unknown. They began and ended their work with not even

“Their keen purpose in *politeness* sheath’d.”

A new election is at hand. The prize of ambition dazzles the sight of the aspirants. Though clothed with the purity of angels of light, the illustrious man whom the people have delighted to honor with their highest gift must be assailed. It became the duty of public servants to watch with keenest sight the disclosures that were made. These would show that if there were political sins they must be laid at the door of other administrations. The discoverers of pretended corruption seemed for a time plumed high, until investigation showed its results. In such a cause,

“Fame’s trumpet seldom sounds, but like the knell
It brings bad tidings.”

At this crisis in public affairs I should deem myself unfaithful to my trust not to declare my entire confidence in the present Chief Magistrate of this Union; and for his purity of character, patriotism, devotion to our free institutions, ability and fidelity in office, as a Republican, I could not withhold from him the highest meed of honor. In his character there is no approach to arbitrary power. Like Lycurgus, ‘Virtue has rendered him so great as to be above it.’

Under a government such as ours, abuses of power to much extent, in the executive department, can hardly be attempted before exposed. The in-

telligence of the people and the ambition of the aspiring will place around this government perpetual safe-guards. If there be evils more than others threatening the stability of our institutions, the disposition and the facilities to misrepresent the conduct of those in power deserve to be kept in view. Deception is the arch demon of the political as well as the moral world. By it innocence lost paradise. By it Republics have fallen. If ambition by deceiving the people drive from our national councils the purest and most faithful, well may they tremble lest it shall elevate to them bad men.

This day especially reminds us of that band of patriots and heroes whose services have been far too lightly esteemed and too readily forgotten. The song of the minstrel, the pen of history and the genius of eloquence have proudly celebrated their glorious deeds. Our present Chief Magistrate has not failed to commend them to the regard of their country. Yet the reflection must crimson our cheeks with blushes at the dishonor of leaving them who were liberal of their sacrifices and their blood for their country, to languish in age with want and grief.

At this late period, when but a feeble few remain, reluctant justice comes with stinted hand for the relief of a few. If it were not that such

facts are needful to be remembered for reproof, I would to heaven that they were blotted from the history of our country. I will refrain from tracing the shades of a picture that must show to all future ages the ingratitude of free men. To happier themes we turn; to adore the God of our fathers for his protecting Providence; to admire its arrangements in preparing virtuous and illustrious leaders for our councils and our armies. In such a state of dismay and commotion as when the elements of the revolution burst forth, none but men of gigantic mind could have guided the barque amid the tumultuous waves

“And not have sunk beneath them
 Their’s were immortal names
 That were not born to die.”

This day calls us with the happy millions of our country around her altars; to renew our vows of fidelity to our free and excellent institutions, to pledge our support to the wise and virtuous administration of our government; to stand forth in the light and blessings of an age, long desired by the friends of liberty and of mankind. Invaluable are the fruits of our father’s toils and sacrifices. Happy few who yet live to behold their children with countenances beaming with joy

and gratitude rising up and calling them blessed.

“ To bless is to be bles’t.”

May ours be a filial gratitude, ours the patriotism of generous hearts

“ To soothe the keen pangs the aged spirit feels.”

FELLOW CITIZENS—Let us be true to the principles of the revolution and to the revered example of our fathers. Let us remember that Republics fall like virtue, not by one rash act, but by a gradual and unperceived decline of moral sentiment and moral purpose. Our institutions devoted to learning and moral improvement will be the sentinels of our country’s liberties, when we are no more. Let me then exhort my fellow citizens to cherish these, to maintain with generous devotion the institution of Free Schools. See that they are nurseries of learning and science adapted to the improvements and the spirit of the age. Institutions in the name of religion will have a transcendant influence upon the character and destiny of our Republic. We acknowledge not the liberty that knows no God. The purity and order of our worship and the comeliness and beauty of our temples must continue to give their aid to our free institutions or we shall fall from the steadfastness of our fathers.

Even the gospel pleads the cause of liberty when it teaches man to estimate his worth as an immortal being. Here may it long continue to whisper peace,

“ In strains as sweet
As angels use.”

Thrice happy citizens! Many and honorable to our country and grateful to ourselves are the recollections we are permitted to indulge. When the spirit of that illustrious race of men who planted this land animate our breasts, and we review the ways of a propitious Providence, our faith assures us that this youthful nation is destined to a career of glory unsurpassed in the annals of the world.

Let God be praised for this day of festive joy and the animating prespects of our beloved country.

Citizen Soldiers, you are guardians of the public liberties. You are successors of those brave veterans whose valor swept from these shores the invaders of the rights you hold sacred. May you peacefully enjoy them, or if invaded may you manfully maintain them. May no future generation have cause to blush for the indifference or degeneracy of the present.

Carry forward, with a spirit worthy of your descent, the example of a people capable of self-government, and

“Born to no master.”

Animated by the sentiments that belong to this interesting occasion, may our aspirations rise to heaven that the dominion of ignorance and slavery may cease on earth. For the enslaved Greeks we would offer to the Sovereign of nations our sympathy and our prayers, and that the power that oppresses man may every where be broken.

“So shall the praise of ransomed millions rise,
In grateful incense to the echoing skies.”