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AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED AT THE

C E L E B R A T I O N

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

At Salisbury,

FOURTH JULY, NINETY-SEVEN.

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An ORATION, &c.

THE rise and fall of empires are events, with which the happiness or misery of millions are connected: They constitute the most important objects which can employ the exertions of man, and furnish a dignified subject for his contemplation. To trace the steps, by which the celebrated nations of antiquity, from their first rude beginnings, rose to dignity and empire,—and mark the causes which occasioned their gradual declension and subversion, is a pleasing, instructive, and melancholy employment. But it is in a still nearer, and more interesting point of view, that we are now invited to contemplate the subject. Our own country has lately assumed the rank of Empire; and this day, the most important, perhaps, in the annals of mankind, is consecrated to commemorate the event.—No circumstance, which attended this important transaction, is uninteresting or trifling. When the Resolution, for the Declaration of Independence, was first moved in Congress, the magnitude of the object filled every mind, in that august assembly, with ideas too big for utterance. The fate of an extensive empire, and of unborn ages, was now to be decided. In fixed contemplation, each appeared to forget his own existence, and stood a living statue: In which expressive attitude, as drawn by the masterly hand of a TRUMBULL, they still seem to remain. After this solemn pause, the motion was ably, and deliberately supported,

against every objection which could be raised, and at length received their unanimous signature.

Hail, illustrious Patriots! who dared, in defiance of a host of foes, with all their vengeance pointed at your devoted heads,—appealing to the SUPREME JUDGE of the world for the rectitude of your intentions, to declare, “*That these COLONIES were, and of right ought to be, FREE and INDEPENDENT STATES;*” and, for the support of this declaration, did pledge to each other, “*your Lives, your Fortunes, and your sacred Honour.*”—May your names be transmitted to future ages, as examples of fortitude and heroism, when the *Alexanders* and *Cæsars* of mankind shall be buried in oblivion.—Forever sacred be this Anniversary: Let this day be devoted, through all succeeding ages, to commemorate the important events, with which it is connected. Tell the interesting tale to your children, and leave it in charge, that they tell it again to theirs.

When the bravery of our countrymen had conquered their foes, and our Independence was established, a more important victory was still to be gained,—a victory over ourselves.—When we consider the discordant materials which composed our Empire, and the disorganizing principles, which are the constant attendants of all revolutions,—the establishment of our National Government is a matter of the highest astonishment.—This was the greatest triumph of Reason, over the passions of selfishness and ambition, that was ever exhibited by the human race.—To behold an extensive em-

pire, like this, in a time of peace, collected by their Representatives, and uninfluenced by the ambition of individuals among themselves, or the intrigues of foreign nations, calmly deliberating upon, and at length exhibiting to view, a form of government, so well adapted to the genius and circumstances of our country,—so well combining energy with liberty,—and after this, to see it adopted by the great body of the people, with scarce a single instance of riot or confusion, must have been a pleasing spectacle to superior Intelligencies.

Every circumstance, attending the revolution, and the establishment of our government, derives a new importance, when contrasted with the tumult and horrid carnage which has attended, and still attends, the French revolution.—O Liberty! how has thy sacred name been perverted!—The mind is disgusted at the sound, and the grating terms of Tyranny and Despotism, are music to the ear, when compared with French Liberty and Equality. In vain has the present age boasted of its refinement, and of the progress of reason;—in vain have we looked forward, with pleasing expectation, for a speedy termination of war, among the nations of the earth: The delusive prospects are vanished, and human nature sinks, degraded, into its lowest state of depravity.

It affords a pleasing source of reflection, that this country has, in so great a degree, escaped the convulsive storm, which has shaken Europe to its centre; and that, in spite of all the attempts of foes from without, and traitors within,

our Independence, and Government, have been hitherto supported; and we have enjoyed a high degree of national prosperity.

A further consolation will be afforded to the mind, in contemplating the wretched state of European nations, from the consideration of a superintending Providence; which often, in the most unexpected ways, brings about events, of the highest importance, to the happiness of mankind. But no circumstance of past success, or of present prosperity,—no tokens of Divine interposition in our favour, or ideas of a superintending Providence, can excuse us from a vigilant attention to our duty, as citizens and as men; nor can any of these considerations, prevent a deep anxiety at the storm which threatens us.

Think not, my countrymen, that you are now at liberty to sit down in indolence, or that the blessings of Liberty, and good Government, are to be preserved without your attention.—Your Independence, your Rights and Liberties, your Government, so highly valued, are endangered: An ambitious, unprincipled nation, fired with the rage of universal dominion,—intoxicated with their victories, and governed by men puffed up with insufferable vanity, are exercising the highest insult towards our government,—are committing the most wanton spoliations on our commerce, and threatening us with the vengeance of their arms.—An attempt to prove to this audience, the injustice of their complaints, would be an insult to their understanding. To add to our danger, a powerful

Faction, of our own Citizens, are, by misrepresentation, and all the arts of intrigue, aiding the wicked designs of these domineering Despots. Their disorganizing principles have poisoned the minds of many of our citizens, and corrupted our councils. Instead of those venerable Fathers, who conducted the Revolution, and whose wisdom and integrity commanded the admiration of the world,—too large a proportion of inexperienced youth,—of factious demagogues, and dupes to foreign influence, compose our present councils.—Hitherto a virtuous majority have saved us from ruin; but, in repeated instances, the contest has been long and dubious,—and the final success the seeming effect of mere accident.—While our most important rights are thus threatened, and subjected to the quibbles of faction, it behoves us to prepare the means of defence.—The millennial state, when swords shall be beat to plough-shares, and spears to pruning-hooks, is not yet arrived. A long period of war and bloodshed,—of nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, is probably to intervene, before any settled order of things, or regular system, will be established, that will lay the foundation of a permanent peace among the nations of Europe;—and, whatever may be the success of our present earnest endeavours to preserve the peace of our country, yet, until that event shall take place, we are exposed to the danger of war,—and exposed, in proportion as we neglect the means of defence.—Let our youth be trained to arms, to order and discipline.—War, when considered merely as a field for military achievements, without regard to the justice of the cause

for which it is undertaken, is a disgraceful employment;—but when it is considered as the means of defending our rights from an unjust invasion, and of transmitting them to posterity, it becomes a noble art; and the foldier who defends these rights, is intitled to the highest possible gratitude of his country.

Ye Young Men, the eyes of your country are fixed on you for its means of protection. While you were engaged in your youthful sports, your fathers and friends have bled and conquered, to secure the rights which you now enjoy, and to establish the Independence, which you this day celebrate. Should this country again be called to defend its Liberties and Independence, a worthy band of experienced veterans, will once more unsheath the sword, and conduct you in your turn to the field. Prove yourselves the worthy sons of the conquerors of Britain. Fear not to engage any nation which can be employed against you. Confirm the solemn Resolution of this country, expressed by our Representatives in Congress, at the most gloomy period of our former contest,—that “ We will
 “ never be hewers of wood, or drawers of wa-
 “ ter, to any nation under heaven; and are re-
 “ solved, with one mind, to die freemen, ra-
 “ ther than live slaves.”

The imposition of cowardice is more to be dreaded than death: Should you hesitate to defend the Liberties and Independence of your country, when unjustly invaded;—the ghosts of a hundred thousand Americans,—your fathers, your brothers and friends,—whose mangled

corfes have ftrewed the ground, from the plains of Abraham to the Eutaw fprings,—will rife to haunt you:—Posterity will execrate your memories, and the ftings of your own confciences will be your perpetual tormentors —Should you, on the other hand (which I have no reafon to doubt) prove yourfelves, on all occafions, the able defenders of the rights and the Independence of your country, your names, and your deeds, will be recorded, for the praife and imitation of fucceeding ages,—and your own reflections will be a perpetual fource of refined fatisfaction.

While our country ftands firmly prepared, for any event which may take place, let us not neglect the arts of peace.—Diffufe ufeful knowledge among all claffes of citizens. Here, tho' young in empire, the United States ftand foremoft among the nations of the world. This is the firm pillar which fupports our Republican Government, and if neglected, it will foon tumble in ruins.

The French nation, furnifhes a melancholy example of the dangerous confequences of introducing a Republican Government, where the great mafs of the people are in a ftate of ignorance, and unacquainted with the rights and duties of citizens. What will be the final event of the experiment in France, I will not undertake to predict; but this may with fafety be afferted, that under whatever name a government is adminiftered, fo long as the great body of the people continue in ignorance, they are in a ftate of oppreffion. They have no will of

their own to exercise, and are the mere tools of the designing part of community.

The idea, that a fine-spun, theoretical form of government may be made, which will suit any people, without regard to their former habits, and state of improvement, is so absurd, that it ought to have been understood without sacrificing a million human lives to acquire that knowledge: As well may a garment be fitted to your body, by examining the qualities of your mind. The principles of Republican Government, in this country, did not proceed from the learned heads of closeted politicians: They were established, in the first settlement of New-England, by men who had certainly no extraordinary advantages (except plain common sense) to learn the science of Legislation. The government arose from the necessities of the people, and grew up with them;—it was, of course, exactly suited to their circumstances.—No regulations were adopted, unless their immediate necessities required them; and they were continued, or rejected, as upon trial was found most expedient.

The rigid, puritannical principles of the first settlers of New-England, and their banishment, and persecution of other sectaries, so often ridiculed and condemned, had an essential influence in uniting the people, and forming them into towns and societies, where the interests of the whole community were consulted by each individual. Here began the most pure Democracy that ever existed among men: A Representative Democracy necessarily arose, as they increased in number, and such a degree of power was delegated as was sufficient for regulating the

general concerns of the whole. By this means, each individual acquired habits of thinking and acting for himself. The strictest regard was paid to the promotion of knowledge, and every member was at once acquainted with all the necessary science of government, and the pompous "Rights of Man." These principles have been improving from that time to the present, according to the increased interests, and necessities of the people, but never have suffered any material change. And I would here observe, that the experiment which Politicians and Philosophers have so anxiously desired to find exemplified,—Whether there is Virtue and Information enough among mankind to support a Republican Government?—has received the test of a hundred and seventy years experience, in the New-England States, thro' all the perils and dangers to which any government could be exposed;—and with habits and information thus acquired, any other people may support a Republic.

But it is still a serious question, Whether our present form of government can be supported, in connection with the Southern part of the Union. The habits and principles which are there acquired, by holding in slavery a large proportion of their fellow-men, together with the unequal distribution of property, which are its natural attendants, are hostile to the genius and spirit of a Republic.—The history of a Southern Election, is a burlesque upon a Representative Government: Bribery, whiskey, and clubs, are the powerful arguments, which are employed to support a Candidate for office: And yet these

are the men, and thus are they appointed, who with shameless audacity, are loudly clamouring, in favor of liberty and equality,—are styling themselves the Patriots of America; and with an absurdity, equal to their audacity, are accusing the Northern States, and the Executive of the General Government, of being the partizans and friends of Monarchy and Aristocracy.

From this general description of Southern politics, we are happy to find exceptions; and entertain the pleasing hope, that the native spirit of the great body of the people, in that part of the Union, will soon be roused to the support of their just rights; and that they will no longer suffer themselves to be the dupes of faction and intrigue.—Let the vile business of Electioneering be abolished through the United States.—Place not your confidence, my Countrymen, on greedy seekers for office.—Consider the man, who solicits your vote, as unworthy your confidence; and every attempt to influence your choice, as a base insult to your understanding. Select to important offices the most worthy of your Citizens, and do not hesitate, from mistaken principles of economy, to afford them such compensation, as will command their services.

Cultivate a spirit of Industry.—Idleness and dissipation go hand in hand, and are the parents of ignorance, pusillanimity, disease, and every vice which debases human nature. No people can long remain free, where idleness, with its attendants, are indulged. Agriculture stands foremost among the useful arts of Industry.—

Ever encourage this honorable employment, as the source of health, order, wealth, knowledge and virtue. Let the proud simpleton, who considers it beneath his dignity to cultivate the soil, be treated with deserved contempt.—Behold a WASHINGTON, whose character I shall not presume to describe, retiring from the most dignified station, which a mortal could fill, to the noble employment of CULTIVATING THE SOIL: No art or science can furnish such an unbounded field for improvement,—and none, perhaps, is more rapidly improving.—Teach it to your children as a necessary part of a finished education. Let the various arts of usefulness and elegance, receive encouragement in proportion to their respective importance.

With industry, join frugality and economy. Be not the imitating dupes of foreign frippery and extravagance. Let your fashions, your customs, and your amusements be *American*.—And here, ye fair Daughters of America, is an ample field for the display of your patriotism. Let the Needle, and the Distaff be never considered as disgraceful to your delicate hands,—nor the cares of house-wifery beneath your concern. Let your minds be stored with useful knowledge, and be the early, and attentive instructors of your own children. Encourage with your smiles, the virtues of industry, temperance, fortitude, and fidelity in our sex; and kill, with your frowns, the ignorant, idle, pusillanimous Coxcomb.

Let Religion and Morality be ever considered as the only sure support of our happy government. See the dreadful consequences of trampling under foot, even the corrupt Reli-

gion of France.—Murder, robbery, debauchery, and every crime that disgraces human nature, have increased, in that devoted country, beyond a parallel.—The perpetrators of these horrid crimes have even reduced their villainy to system; and I had almost said, that this was the only system that existed among them.—While I am happy to believe, that there are very few Americans, in whom the moral principle is so far extinguished, as not to look with horror at this dismal scene; yet think not, my countrymen, that you are secure from the consequences attending a subversion of the Religion of our country.—Alarming encroachments have already been made, upon this palladium of our government, and every exertion, which malice, villainy, and artful sophistry can devise, are employed for its destruction.—Let the name of *Payne* be execrated on the earth; and so long as mankind shall want striking examples of villainy and treason, to which they can direct their indignation, let them be pointed to *Arnold* and *Payne*.

The connection between moral virtue, and political happiness, is evident, not only from their natural relation, but also from their providential; and the mere statesman, as well as the divine, is bound to enforce the principle.—To point out all the striking interpositions of an overruling Providence, in favour of this country, from its first settlement, to the present time, would be to write its history. That a WASHINGTON should be raised up, to lead our armies to victory in the field, and to conduct our councils in time of peace, is an event, which clearly evinces the overruling hand of Provi-

dence. In repeated instances, in the course of the war, our destruction was evidently prevented, by an Almighty arm, which was stretched out for our deliverance.—Since the establishment of our government, the hand of Providence has frustrated the designs of wicked and ambitious men. The deep laid plots of treason have been detected, and the peace of our country hitherto preserved. Here the anxious mind finds a consolatory hope, that notwithstanding the cloud which threatens us, we shall not be forsaken by the God of our fathers, but that the government, the peace, the religion, and the happiness of our country, will be maintained against all its enemies.

Let us, then, my countrymen, while pursuing the path of duty, indulge the pleasing prospect, which is unfolded to the view, by contemplating our present state, in connection with futurity. Behold an extensive, fertile country, capable of producing all the necessaries and conveniences of life,—intersected, in a wonderful manner, with navigable rivers, for the facility of commerce,—inhabited by five million intelligent, enterprising citizens; and capable of supporting twenty times its present number,—all united under one government, a government of their own choice, whose excellency is not to be determined by mere theoretical speculation, but which has already received the test of eight years experience, and more than answered the expectations of its framers.—See the astonishing effects of these advantages, in the rapid improvement of our country. Towns and cities have risen into view like magic. The den of the tyger, and the haunt of the savage, have

already become the peaceful abodes of wealth and industry, where elegance and taste are cultivated, and beauty displays its irresistible charms. Our population has increased beyond a parallel, and we are already, in commercial importance, the second nation in the world.—With a hopeful prospect, that this state of political union and prosperity will be perpetuated, let us look forward a single century, and behold a hundred million inhabitants, united under one form of government, with a vast inhabitable country still beyond them, successfully pursuing the arts of peace, and bidding defiance to all the petty nations of Europe. That such an event will finally take place, and be rendered conducive to the establishment of a general system of peace, thro' the nations of the world, is not improbable.

Animated with this sublime prospect, let us, my countrymen, consider no toils, or dangers, too great to be encountered for the security, and preservation of the inestimable privileges we now possess, and for the attainment of those blessings which are kindly presented for our acceptance. And may the Supreme Governor of the world, by whose will empires rise and fall, still continue his smiles to this happy country, avert the storm which threatens us, and make the United States of America a perpetual theatre, on which shall be exhibited to the admiring universe, the delightful prospect, of a numerous people, governing themselves by wise and wholesome laws, progressing in knowledge and virtue, and by their influence, and example, ameliorating the condition of the whole human race.

E N D.