

AN
ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE TAMMANY SOCIETY, OR COLUMBIAN
ORDER; TAILOR'S, HIBERNIAN PROVI-
DENT, SHIPWRIGHT'S, COLUMBIAN,
MANHATTAN, AND CORDWAI-
NER'S SOCIETIES

IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK.

ON THE

FOURTH DAY OF JULY, 1812.

—*—
BY SAMUEL B. ROMAINE, ESQ.

.....“Determin'd hold
Your Independence: for that once destroy'd,
Unfounded, Freedom is a morning dream
That flits ærial from the spreading sun.”

THOMSON.

—*—
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.....
1812.

ORATION.

Fellow Citizens,

IN a representative government, where the freedom of speech is tolerated in the fullest extent ; where the liberty of the press is unshakled by the fetters of despotism ; unawed by the arm of arbitrary power ; and only circumscribed by the boundaries of truth, different ideas on questions of national concern must necessarily be entertained. Hence arises the division of our citizens into two distinct parties : both, professing to have the good of their country only in view ; and both, perhaps, equally sincere in their patriotic attachments. Although this diversity of opinion ferments to a considerable height at our frequent elections, yet, so far from exciting alarm or threatening destruction to our invaluable constitution, it is deemed a salutary check to the encroachments of either predominant party, upon that palladium of our liberties.

But is there not a day, when local disquietude and political prejudices should yield to the paramount consideration of patriotic duty ? Is there not a day, when every bosom glowing with sacred ardor, will veil in oblivion internal

dissentions and make a generous sacrifice on the altar of patriotism? Is there not a revolutionary veteran who bears me, starting from the crutch which supports his aged limbs, and pointing to his scars, will exclaim....Yes, my countrymen, there is one day, in the celebration of which, all who claim the American character should cordially unite, and by your indissoluble unity convince the world, that the fourth day of July '76 not alone gave birth to a nation of freemen, but that their sons are determined to preserve the inestimable inheritance, while an arm remains to shield, or a heart to bleed in its defence.

The theme of Independence, though always exhilarating, at this day, scarcely admits of novelty; yet should we be highly culpable did not each successive year, that witnesses our prosperity, also bear testimony of our undiminished gratitude. Already had our remonstrances been contemptuously spurned, our supplications disdainfully rejected; already had the blood of our fathers crimsoned the verdant plains, when, towering in the native majesty of freedom, the immortal Congress, with resolute fiat, pronounced **us FREE**. At once, bursting the bonds that connected the colonies with Great Britain, dissolving that allegiance which inculcated submission to her despotic control, and recognising the transcendent maxim, "that resistance to tyrants, is obedience to God." This magnani-

mous opposition to the encroachments of tyranny, for which neither Greece in her highest glory, nor Rome in the meridian of her splendor, affords a parallel, was the signal for undisguised hostilities.

When we reflect upon the situation of the parties, at the commencement of the struggle, with what reverential homage must we admire the lofty spirit which risked life and fortune in the unequal conflict. A spirit, which famine could not subdue, misery diminish, nor the most poignant distresses subjugate. The inflexible firmness of our countrymen, and their undaunted valor, tempered by the deliberate intrepidity of a peerless hero, were not evanescent phantoms which shrunk from the attack of power. The love of liberty had disarmed death of its terrors: and though our patriots fell, the sullen grave could boast no victory.....To detail the vicissitudes which occurred, in the progress of the revolution, is unnecessary....the prominent events are too deeply engraved upon your minds, to require the relation. It would only be a narrative, of acts of inhumanity, often inflicted with cruelty, and supported with an heroic fortitude never before evinced.

In pondering over the miseries and privations endured in the momentous struggle, how utterly impossible is it to prevent the mind from looking forward, with exultation to its glorious result:

producing a mingled sensation of joy and grief, delightful, yet indescribable. Though the tear starts, the smile advances, and contends for empire....we weep, while we rejoice....while we exult, we grieve....we triumph, while we mourn. Many illustrious heroes shone in the bright constellation of revolutionary worthies. To relate the exploits of any individual, might seem partial; to recount the valorous deeds of all, would be impossible.—There is one, however, whom not his country alone, but the world reveres, as the first of patriots, the best of men....One, whose character was spotless, and against whom slander has scarce dared to wing her envenomed shaft. In the cabinet, a profound statesman: an incorruptible politician....In the field, discerning, yet fearless; brave, but not rash; intrepid, but not precipitate....In private life, dignified, without austerity; affable, without humiliation; reserved, without sullenness; and great, without ostentation. Though the monumental marble, that proclaims *a warrior rests below*, moulder into dust, his name shall long outlive the trophied tomb.....Let empires be dissolved, crowns subverted, and monarchs deposed, WASHINGTON shall survive the shock, and shine with refulgent splendor, *the Glory of America*.

To those venerable patriots, who bled in the mighty achievement of our Independence, be the heartfelt tribute of a sigh and a tear. Their memories shall be enshrined, in our

bosoms, and their names emblazoned on the glittering list of virtue's sons.....Busy Fame shall promulgate their renown, while pensive Liberty watches over their sepulchral urns, and waters with her tears the laurel that shadows their remains.....Oft shall the rising generation, in some hallowed sanctuary repeat their eulogy, or chant the solemn dirge to their departed spirits, and posterity be taught to pause over the sacred sod that inurns their ashes, and shed the holy drop of affectionate remembrance!

In revolutionary contests, the success of the enterprise, too frequently determines the righteousness of the opposition.

Sons of the emerald isle! Fired with the same fervid enthusiasm, that animated the American breast, ye seized the sword to avenge your wrongs, and emancipate your country from ignoble bondage. But the arm of oppression was too strong for your might. Unfortunate champions of your island's freedom! Weep not; Erin may revive. Though now heavy and chill is the sleep upon her, she may awake from her slumbers. Like the lion in his strength, she may burst the chains that enslave her, and crush the proud oppressor, who exults over her fallen greatness.

Our inimitable constitution, framed by the patriot sages of America, consecrated by the blood of our sires, and sanctioned by the voice

of the nation, is a splendid monument of political wisdom. Be it ever remembered, that virtue is its basis; the happiness of a free people its object; its grand design, security to the rights of man. While we remain pure and uncontaminated, despotism under its auspices may be boldly defied: should venality and corruption pollute our annals, then must the magnificent fabric be levelled with the dust, and after ages see the first light of heaven, through the toils of tyrants. Fostered beneath the mild influence of this unrivalled character, agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, the vital springs of national prosperity, have preeminently flourished. Indulgent nature has bestowed a prolific soil, with a genial temperature, which only asks the vigour of industry richly to reward the diligent husbandman. Commercial enterprise, in particular, characterises our citizens. They have explored the most distant regions of ocean's dreary waste....have visited every clime. The eastern gales have swelled their unfurled canvass, and the setting sun has beamed his latest ray upon their waving streamers. The torrid zone has not set bounds to their daring emulation; neither has polar frost chilled their dauntless ardor. The inveterate hostility of Europe to the thriving commerce of the United States, has compelled them to enlarge the sphere of domestic trade. Already has the smooth Ohio, with his tributary streams, become the active agent of internal traffic, and soon shall our numerous ships

ride in stately pomp on Superior's majestic waves. Huron's broad bosom shall receive the venturous bark, and the tranquil Michigan bear the countless vessels of a prosperous people. Manufactures, though formerly neglected, have now become an object of national importance. The anticipated obstacles to their advancement have either proved visionary or vanished before perseverance; and their present promising state justifies the belief, that in a short time, foreign supplies will be unnecessary.

The literary reputation of our countrymen daily advances; the arts and sciences rapidly progress, and the European opinion, that nature here had worked upon a mean and narrow scale, has been successfully exploded. America, 'though but a child of yesterday,' proudly boasts a Rittenhouse, in Astronomy. Philosophy acknowledges her brightest ornament, in our beloved Franklin; he who grasped "the lightning's fiery wing," and snatched the sceptre from tyrants. We claim a Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton in the cabinet. In the field, where is his competitor, a Washington, the mighty conqueror, with a host of worthies. Perfection is not the business of a day; let revolving centuries roll, and America shall dispute the palm of superiority, with the united world.

The unbiassed enjoyment of religious tenets, inviolably secured by the constitution, is a distinguishing characteristic of American philanthropy. It is astonishing, that enlightened nations should still persist in the vain attempt to stifle the dictates of conscience. It is the divine elasticity implanted by the creator, for the wisest purposes; and to our God alone appertains the right and power of restraint. Shall presumptuous man usurp dominion over that which belongs to the empire of heaven? Shall insolent mortality contend with immortality? Say, ye remorseless persecutors of ancient days, did the myriads, immolated by your sacrilegious hands, serve to eradicate the godlike emanation? Did the blazing faggots obtain the victory? And ye too, haughty Britons, who boast your freedom and your equal laws, have your relentless persecutions banished from the Catholic breast, the inspired monitor? Or have they hushed its clamors?...No! conscience is invincible, and like the foaming cataract spurns control. The rack may distort the agonized frame, yet conscience shouts triumphant. The scaffold may terrify the shivering traitor, but conscience derides its impotence and defies its power. May this dearest privilege ever be cherished; may it never be yielded but with life; and may the path to eternal bliss never be obstructed by the thorns of human regulations.

The old world still presents a **spectacle** of sanguinary horrors. The aspiring despot, who brandishes the sceptre over prostrate millions, pants for universal domination; and this wish gratified, then like Alexander, would he weep that his ambition could find no more worlds to conquer. The monarchs of Europe, have, in rapid succession, tamely submitted or feebly opposed his giant strides: Even the trembling Autocrat of the North quakes on his inglorious throne. Hail! Spain and Portugal! ye stand alone in gallant resistance to the yoke. Though slaughter and desolation mark every vestige of your invader; though rapine and plunder devastate your luxuriant fields; though midnight conflagrations affright the startled mother, and disturb the repose of cradled innocence: still is your firm spirit unbroken, still are your stern hearts undismayed. May success crown your efforts; may you not be rescued from the fangs of one tyrant, to sink into the arms of another; and may bigotry and superstition never sully the fair fame of regenerated Spain.

France, towards the United States, has acted with consummate injustice. Under retrospective orders, she has seized and confiscated our property, in the moment of unsuspecting confidence. Under the Berlin and Milan decrees, our seamen have been imprisoned....our vessels burnt and sunk, on the highway of nations.....

Should the pending negotiations with France prove unsatisfactory, these flagrant spoliations and atrocities must be retaliated; the aggressor punished, and the honour of the American name vindicated. England, with more extensive power, has perpetrated commensurate enormities; but the day of retribution is at hand. Let no man assert, that the government has been precipitate in declaring war. Do you ask the causes? In part, read them in the charter of your Independence. The identical grievances, to redress which our fathers fought and bled, have been repeatedly inflicted; and shall we cast an indelible stigma, upon their conduct, by submitting to the same indignities? Our national character has been tarnished, by protracted delay, and must be redeemed. Injury has been heaped upon injury, until the accumulated mound became insupportable. The law of nations has been unblushingly violated, and neutral rights utterly disregarded. Great Britain has never forgotten, that we once were colonies, and jealous of our prosperity, she has left no artifice unemployed, by which we might again be reduced to colonial vassalage. With superior force and without provocation, our public vessels have been attacked, the national banner prostrated and steeped in gore, and the commercial flag nearly swept from the ocean. Our territory has been often invaded, and our maritime juris-

diction again and again infringed. The untutored Indian, who knows not the obligations of civilized society, has been instigated to deeds of direst horror. Emissaries have been commissioned to foment insurrection, and to tender assistance, in effecting a dissolution of the confederacy. At the very entrance of our harbours, she has displayed her hostility by murdering our defenceless citizens, in the prosecution of their lawful avocations, and in the flagitious crime of man-stealing, she boasts an undisputed pre-eminence. To those, who deem these outrages insufficient reasons for declaring war, be it loudly proclaimed, that with supercilious insolence, as the indispensable preliminary to an adjustment of differences, she requires us to abandon our Independence, to relinquish our neutrality and fight *her* battles, and those of every neutral power on earth. Breathes there the American who would comply with the humiliating requisition? Does the apostate live, who would acquiesce in the vile degradation? If any such there be, in some secret cavern let him hide his recreant head; his father shall blush to own he has a child, and his mother mourn in silent sadness, the degeneracy of her offspring.

War is indeed a deplorable calamity; but the cup of reconciliation has been exhausted, and longer forbearance had stamped *coward* on every forehead. The olive branch has been extended.

until its leaves are withered, and its blossoms faded. Studious to preserve peace, in vain have we sought relief by entreaties; in vain have we appealed to the justice of the British government; in vain, by restrictive measures, have we addressed their evident interest. Although tumult and rebellion stalk through her devoted land; although her starving populace are daily butchered by a ferocious soldiery; although savage assassination has commenced its horrific carnage, infatuated and blind, she still persists: and remonstrance must peal from the thundering cannon. Had we longer forborne, we had become the scoff and derision of the world... The keen-eyed eagle had not winked at our baseness, but despising our pusillanimity, had soared to more congenial climes. The constituted authorities have honestly exercised, a vested prerogative, and unless we desire to change our republican system, to elect a despot, who shall *coerce* compliance with his measures, we *must* support them. Buried then be internal animosities, obliterated local distinctions, banished political prejudices.... Let concord and unanimity prevail; let unity be shouted, and the shrill echo resound it from Orleans to Maine. Let the winds bear it across the Atlantic, to apprise the mad monarch of modern Carthage, that we are not a divided people; that when our adored country calls, one common interest unites us: we are all federalists, all republicans. The crisis has arrived, when

the son shall emulate the glory of the sire. When the sweet calm of peace, must be exchanged for the rough reign of war; exchanged domestic festivity and the family fire-side, for the din of arms and the tented field; exchanged the happy mansion and the social circle, for smoking ruins, and embattled hosts. Not long, and curling flames may indiscriminately envelope our dwellings. Soon may our soil imbibe the gore of slaughtered thousands, and our ears be stunned with the groans of death. At such an awful period, can division exist amongst us?....No! Dead to the glow of patriotism must he be, who would not now defend his country, and lost to those lively emotions which exalt humanity, he who breathes disunion. Citizen Soldiers! Has your virtue flown? Does one drop of patriotic blood swell your veins? View the ghastly shade of murdered Pierce; see the purple current still streaming from his breast....Hear him upbraid your tardy vengeance....hear him reproach your supine sluggishness. If one spark of feeling warm your bosoms, it must brace every fibre to deeds of atonement. Do your souls shrink? Does the sword fall from your nerveless grasp? Listen to the moans of your brethren immured in tartaren dungeous; the cries of their widowed wives and orphan children must pierce the deepest recesses of your hearts, and kindle manly resentment into a destructive flame. Heroes of '76! are your energies unstrung? Yes. debilitated nature con-

fesses the burden of years, yet your valiant souls experience no change. Although your war-worn frames admit not active service, ye have a solemn duty to perform. Let your fervent prayers ascend to the throne of mercy, for a speedy and honorable termination of the existing conflict: while we, like you before, on the memorable era, the anniversary of which we celebrate, pledge to each other, our "lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor," not to sheathe the gleaming blade until our rights, so long trampled upon are firmly established, and our wrongs fully expiated.

FINIS.