

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED

AT NEW-BEDFORD,

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AN ORATION.

WHEN we contemplate the grandeur of created things ; when we extend our views to numberless worlds, rolling in splendour, furnished with thousands of thousands of intelligent beings, formed with capacities for endless bliss ; we are surrounded with exhibitions of infinite wisdom, majesty and power ; we are surrounded with exhibitions of one God incomprehensible and full of glory. This God is our father, our friend, our shield, and our defence. He holds us in the palms of his hands. All nations are at his disposal. He reigns in the armies of Heaven ; he rules among the inhabitants of earth. No one can stay his hand. With one frown, he can sink nations to the centre of despair ; with one smile, he can exalt them to pinnacles of glory. This being is self-existent ; by him were we created. He is almighty ; by him we exist. He is omnipresent, always with us ; he is omniscient, he knows our every thought. The secret design of every heart is under the immediate inspection of that being who is a "God of knowledge, and by whom actions are weighed." Sons and daughters of America ! revere the God of your fathers ; adore the majesty of Heaven. Are you called to celebrate the birth of your country's glory ? speak and act as under the superintendence of an all-seeing eye ; throw off the filthy garb of calumny ; adorn yourselves with the splendid robes of

humility, moderation and justice. Let your every deed be qualified with love to God, and love to man. These are blessings which breathe unity and peace ; these are blessings which add charms to friendship, and raptures to love ; blessings which sanctify the soul, and clothe man with the dignity of his maker.

In taking an historical view of nations, from the origin to the present period of society, we are entertained with the ideal presence of scenes awful and pleasing. Awful, in beholding the fair fields of nature crimsoned with the blood of innocence. Awful, in beholding cities on fire, empires tottering, republicks dissolving, piety persecuted, innocence injured, the calls of justice despised, and the God of nature abused. We are entertained with scenes pleasing, while we behold justice victorious in the redemption of liberty and the rights of man. Pleasing, in beholding millions bursting the bands of despotism, emerging from the abodes of slavery, unfurling the standard of freedom and embracing the blessings of liberty. Every day, in the revolving year, is an anniversary of of similar important events. Every day is commemorated with joy or sorrow. This day is, with many nations, a day of sorrow. Methinks I hear a haughty foe, with sorrow exclaim, On this day was lost the richest jewel of my crown ; on this day did I persecute piety, injure innocence, and, for dominion, sacrifice justice on the altar of revenge. Thousands, veiled in darkness, are, this day, suffering the tortures of slavery, begging in vain for freedom, and even repenting the day that gave them birth. To America this day is a day of peace, a day of joy, a day of triumph. We are assembled, not to mourn the impiety of lawless ancestry ; not to weep over the ruins of a country ; not to celebrate acts of monarchy to enslave nations ; not to worship spectres of tyrants, and phantoms of despots. We are this day convened to celebrate the triumphs of justice, the dawn of liberty, the emancipation of the world, the independence of America. This is the birth-day of Columbia's glory ; this day she arose from

the mansions of slavery; triumphed over the powers of imposition, bid defiance to the trembling thrones of monarchy, and declared to the world that "she was, and of right ought to be, free and independent." Although this day is terrible to tyrants, it is joyful to republicans. Its celebration dwells on every American tongue.

A threatening cloud once darkened this western world. Time was when the iron arm of despotism banished from this western clime all the blessings which constitute terrestrial joy. Time was when the necks of free-born Americans were riveted under the chains of British tyranny. Time was when this beautiful part of nature was a theatre of unmerited slavery. At that gloomy period, the valiant sons of Columbia arose, swore eternal hatred to monarchs, trampled the titles of lords and nobles under their feet, and took a standing with the independent nations of earth. These acts of remonstrance brought upon them the indignant frowns of a haughty foe; the flood-gates of cruelty were opened against them; they flew to arms, took their standing on the bulwarks of their country, and swore, rather than yield, to be laid down in the cold bosom of the grave. New scenes of horror immediately opened to their view. War, with her dismal train, surrounded their shores; they beheld their cities in flames, their vallies buried in blood. All nature seemed to conspire against them; the waves of the ocean were vocal with terror and death; every breeze whispered carnage and murder; their own brothers drew instruments of death, and lodged them in their bosoms; all, that can be horrible in thought, filled their souls with despair. At this awful juncture the portals of heaven were expanded; the hand of Deity appears; drops on the sons of America a laurel of omnipotence, and crowns them with glorious victory. Then were the proud sons of monarchy brought to bow to the sceptre of justice; then, those instruments of calumny and oppression, those indignant ministers of sanguinary revenge, acknowledged the colonies of America free, sovereign, and independent states; then those

cruel mercenaries, who caused the childless parent to weep, the orphan to mourn, were driven back, covered with shame and contempt, to the abodes of monarchy, from whence they emerged. Liberty then erected her temple on the ruins of slavery. The American standard, which trembled in the battle, now saluted every clime with tokens of triumph.

History already proclaims these important events. From the flames of Lexington to the last struggle at Yorktown, it speaks of the tortures of unmerited injury ; it tells us of British rapacity, of the slaughtered patriot, of injured innocence, of traiterous cruelty, of suffering virtue, of the fall of tyranny, and the resurrection of liberty.

A new scene now opens to our view ; the enemies of our country are conquered, liberty and independence obtained. No more are Americans subject to the sign-manual of British ministry ; no more do they breathe the air of slavery ; no more does an unjust war agitate their land and bury their vales in blood ; no more, from the floating prisons of cruelty, does the silent breeze waft to their ears the awful groans of their expiring countrymen. But, although the foes of our country were conquered, and independence established, yet another important object of the conflict was to be obtained ; another arduous task was to be accomplished ; a frame of government was to be formed. This called forth the talents of eminent characters, who soon offered to the world a specimen of superior wisdom, the present constitution of the United States ; a constitution consonant to the principles of christianity ; a constitution embracing political blessings, which only are worthy the applause, respect, and patronage of man. Free from monarchy, tyranny, discord, and anarchy, it secures the peace, prosperity, and equal liberty of every citizen. Its basis is justice ; by it, opposite interests are adjusted on the scale of equity ; by it, individuals enjoy equal rights ; it includes protection of person and property ; its energy dispenses justice to the guilty, and commands conformity to its precepts. It encourages industry, it ad-

vances knowledge, it creates refinement ; it gives exercise to the finest emotions of soul. Far from converting religion to an engine of political purposes, it establishes its institutions on a basis ever productive of those voluntary emotions of piety, which alone are agreeable to divine acceptance. Thus, by a long and arduous struggle, the grand objects of America were obtained, independence was established, and with it a constitution of government adapted to the dignity, preservation, peace and liberty of a great and extensive nation.

Fellow-citizens, on this day remember the fathers of your country. Remember those patriots, who exposed their breasts to British steel ; those who fought in defence of their just rights, braved the tempest of battle, prostrated the power of Albion's force, and offered to America the charters of liberty. The poet, the orator, and historian have already registered their glory in the records of fame. On every vestige of our country, even nature and art seem to unite and laud their worth ; the vocal canvas, " the breathing brass and speaking marble " utter their praise. Their memories are already embalmed in the bosom of their country. Their names are venerated on earth, and shine, with brilliant characters, on the margin of eternity. Among this band of intrepid patriots we behold a bright ornament of society ; the delight of man ; a brilliant gem in the council of justice ; a hero victorious ; a warrior unrivalled ; a man unparalleled ; a god-like character on earth. This was the illustrious WASHINGTON ; the friend of God, the friend of man, the first-born of freedom, the glory of America. He it was who conducted our fathers, through scenes of carnage and death, to the independence we this day celebrate, to the joys we this day realize ; and, though WASHINGTON is no more, he still exists in the grateful remembrance of his children. In leaving this world, all this patriot could yield was his breath. The memory of his greatness lives eternal in the " spirit " of his country.

The independence of America, sealed with the blood of patriotism, is the great original of our national glory.

Who, then, can view the present prospects of our country, and not celebrate her independence? Who can contemplate the liberties we realize, and not feel his heart swell with joy? With our national independence, constitution, and administration, we stand by our own strength. We are prosperous; we are happy. We enjoy all those rights our fathers died to redeem; under their fostering care, we realize those blessings, which render this life pleasing, and the prospects of futurity glorious. Literature, religion and every art, adding charms to nature, here flourish and increase; our commerce, with elevated wing, embraces the fruits of distant climes. Our nation rises in dignity. Here liberty has fixed her residence. Unto America the persecuted, of nations, retire for repose; here the oppressed find an asylum; here the weary are at rest. Unparalleled, in the history of ages, is the situation of our country. Her rising character eclipses the dazzling splendour of ancient grandeur, while modern nations call her blessed.

If the theme of this day's celebration is the original of our national enjoyment, let us not pass over, in silence, the acquisition of Louisiana: a country adding dignity, wealth and safety to the republic of Columbia. In what manner became we the independent proprietors of this new world? Was war to desolate our land; were our brothers to languish and die in the floating dungeons of monarchy; were Americans to mourn over the mangled remains of their slaughtered brethren; was the best blood of America to be shed; must a Warren die, a Montgomery expire, before Louisiana could be ours? In the full enjoyment of national blessings, without a groan, without a sigh, we obtained this treasure of wealth. By mutual contract, founded on justice, we are the independent proprietors of this rich, extensive, variegated part of nature. The cession of this territory to America gives her importance among the nations of earth. It adds energy to her independence; it exalts her above subserviency to foreign tyrants; it extends the rights of her commerce; it ad-

vances her arts ; it increases her spirit of industry. It opens unto America inexhausted sources of wealth ; it adds security to her government, and enlarges her prospects of national felicity. In other points of view, it is capable of filling the patriot's breast with more exalted and sublime emotions. Americans rejoice in the rights of men ; they glory in the happiness of nations. The cession of Louisiana brightens the prospects of creature happiness. Our nation, in extending her limits, rises above the examples of ancient kings and lords. Not like a Grecian murderer, not like a Roman tyrant, does she array herself in terrors of war, marching on conquering and to conquer, subjecting savage worlds to slavery, and robbing them of every thing dear in connexion, and precious in friendship. From the fertile plains of Italy to the frozen shores of Norway, Rome extended her victories. This progress of conquest was not to make mankind happier ; it was not to disseminate peace, liberty and the rights of man throughout the world. It was to aggrandize that phantom, called a king ; it was to add power to that curse of nature, styled a tyrant. Those Gothic tribes, under the dominion of Rome, enjoyed no privilege in government ; they were treated worse than beasts ; abject slavery to a monster of cruelty was all the joy they realized. How pleasing, how striking the contrast in our country ! The rights and privileges of America are co-extensive with her limits. By the acquisition of Louisiana she extends the boundaries of human happiness ; she invites a savage world to the temple of liberty, and bids welcome countless numbers to all the joys of freedom.

The attainment of this new territory is not only a human, but a god-like work. Has Deity created this variegated part of nature to subserve the cause of human wretchedness ? Has he furnished its outline with harbours agreeable to commercial intercourse with the world ? Has he formed, within its limits, a variety adequate to the existence, prosperity and happiness of millions ? And has he

done all this, but to increase the volume of misery, to preserve in existence a savage race, that may exterminate bliss from earth, brutalize the world, and blaspheme the honour of his name? Must this beautiful portion of nature be doomed to everlasting destruction? Must her extensive rivers forever meander their waters in awful silence? Must the horrid yells of savage ferocity forever silence the sweeter sounds of social joy? No, my countrymen; Deity was not so unwise in his creative designs. All worlds were created for the happiness of man. The natural grandeur of Louisiana was created for noble purposes; it was created for a happy, and an exalted state of being. The cession of this territory to America approximates the accomplishment of these glorious designs of its author. By it commences the civilization of this heathen world; by it we antedate the time, soon to arrive, when this extensive desert will blossom like the rose; when, eager for the happiness of their American brothers, her coloured tribes will awake from their savage slumbers, taste the joys of independence, lay down their heathen idols, and speak the praise of their God.

Thirty years ago, behold our country, small in population and extent; *now* view her, extending almost from ocean to ocean, peopled with millions, all happy in their situation, socializing the world, converting instruments of death into implements of peace, extending glad tidings of salvation, illuming savage minds with christian knowledge, and, in a variety of ways, rendering our earth a habitation of bliss. The more we contemplate the character and prospects of America the more do our hearts swell with joy, the more do our souls burn with flames of patriotism, unknown to tyrants. In pleasing ecstasy we with a just pride exclaim, Happy, thrice happy is America, whose God is the Lord. To be an honest citizen of our country is more joy, more true honour, than to wear crowns of kings, or sit in splendid palaces of tyranny. The character of our country is not confined: it is known by all. The valour of America extends beyond the ocean; the

glory of this western clime reaches the extremities of the world. Well, well do assembled millions, this day, celebrate the offspring of their joys, the independence of America.

Our labours are crowned with reward. Independence here carries in her train every blessing worth a "wish, or a thought." The situation of our country commands the envy of every nation on earth. The tyrants of Europe tremble at her importance. They know her internal strength is formidable ; they know her success is brilliant ; they know her trophies are victorious ; they know her citizens are happy. If this is our character...these our blessings...the voice of heaven commands us to be vigilant in studying and disseminating those things, which will perpetuate and advance the rising glory of our country.

In a government like ours political knowledge and vital religion constitute the only basis of national felicity. Ignorance ever was a source of misery. It is the invariable voice of slavery, Where ignorance dwells there is my country. It is a truth, worthy the most solemn attention, that it has been the immediate cause of the slaughter of thousands, and the slavery of millions. History is replete with instances. Bring to your view the scenes of the eleventh century ; they form a valuable monument in history. At that period, Europe, by ignorance, was sunk in savage cruelty ; liberty, which gives exercise to the christian faculties of the soul, was then a wandering exile ; a superstitious fanaticism clothed base characters with authority...created insurrections, and gave patronage to parties, who were a scourge to liberty and a disgrace to the world ; a bold impostor, a mad enthusiast need only open his mouth to crush millions in slavery. A gross stupidity and blind credulity were the characteristics of the age. The accomplishments of society were unknown ; there was no safety for individuals ; there was no independence, no liberty, no peace ; every prospect was a vision of human wretchedness. The recollection of these scenes must sink deep in every breast ; they must create ardent

exertions to diffuse political knowledge throughout our land. Such is the state of our nation, that, the moment ignorance universally prevails, our liberties expire. In our government there are no birth-right orders ; the path to office and power is open to all. The executive, judicial and legislative authorities depend on the virtue and knowledge of the people. Furnish, then, your minds with information suitable, not only for the election of worthy officers, but with information adequate to exalted stations in your country's cause. This will form a barrier against the progress of the ambitious and aspiring ; it will capacitate you for acting in a manner which will render permanent your blessings, and transmit them, untarnished, to succeeding ages.

But political knowledge, unless subservient to the dictates of religion, serves to weaken the arm of justice, to aid the cause of iniquity, and perpetrate deeds of the most atrocious nature. It is only under the restrictions of religion, that knowledge, of any nature, can be of extensive good. Religion comprehends and inspires all that is just, patriotic and pious. It is the only bond of unity ; it includes that virtue which exalteth nations. Clothed with celestial energy, it adds sanctity to law and creates awe and reverence of Deity, which humble the aspiring passions and unite man to man. Splendid with native excellence, it rises above the mean employments of calumny and deception ; it ever ends in the happiness of man, and the glory of God. Renounce religion, and you sunder the ties of individual and national compact ; you rob justice of her authority, virtue of her charms ; you pardon the assassin in the shedding of innocent blood ; you transform parricide to virtue ; you canonize infidelity with her accursed train ; you demolish the bulwark of your liberties, and resign your country, with all its blessings, a sacrifice to slavery. You may conquer, with martial valour you may subjugate the globe, but, if destitute of religion, every victory will be but an increase of misery.

The source, from which has arisen the destruction of nations, is the abuse of liberty. This is the origin of all evil : from it has proceeded all the misery that ever visited our earth. Had liberty never been abused, man, this day, would have been an angel, earth a heaven. For this, our original parents were excluded the bliss of paradise, and doomed to toil, trouble, sorrow and death. It is the offspring of individual and national calamity ; party-spirit, irreligion, slavery and death are its federated companions. It ever was, and ever will be, productive of human wretchedness. That it should be inseparable from misery, is, in the moral system, a just, eternal and unchangeable law, ratified by Deity before worlds were created. We may as well attempt to command the vast engines of nature, in their majestic courses, as to make abuse of liberty the offspring of any thing religious, patriotic or pious.

We are favourites of Deity. He has not only communicated to us powers of mind, capable of knowledge and happiness ; but he has eminently blessed us in a national view. By the goodness of heaven, we are independent, with a constitution of government adapted to the highest degree of national felicity, and an administration rendering eminent the American character—an administration, under whose patronage we, this day, live in the complete fruition of those blessings our fathers purchased with the price of their blood. The ensigns of slavery are not hovering around our country—the standard of monarchy is not erected in our land—but the principles of republican virtue, with their concomitant blessings, are here vindicated and enjoyed. If then we rise up against our national administration, by whose labours all these privileges are enjoyed ; if we come forward, bloated with calumny and adversity, using every art of deception and fraud to prostrate it in the dust ; are we not abusing our liberty ? Instead of celebrating, are we not despising our independence ? Are we not setting at nought the enjoyments of our country, are we not sacrificing the martyrs of our

freedom afresh, are we not opening all their wounds, are we not guilty of ingratitude to the author of every favour? If we abuse our liberty, our country may fall; the flames of Troy may yet burn on Columbia's shores; the splendour of our rising country may cease to lustre the annals of history; the glory of America may depart for ever. Our fathers have fought for justice, they have bled for victory, they have died for freedom—for that freedom we this day enjoy. Cease, cease then to abuse your liberties. Let your freedom, won by the blood of your fathers, and now vindicated by the administration of your country, be for ever yours to favour and defend. Let party rancour be lost in universal patriotism; then the honour of your country will endure; then, then will America rejoice in the unity of her sons.

While we celebrate our independence, we cannot but rejoice at our militia. This is the grand fortress of our morality, our religion, our liberty, our prosperity, our life, and our sovereignty. When we behold this our national force, clothed with weapons of war, it brings to our remembrance the scenes of those times, which "tried men's souls"; times, when nought but the clangours of war, and the awful shrieks of battle, were heard in our land. May these times again never come. May war, with her all-devouring train, ever be far, far distant from America; may peace ever dwell within our borders. But in vain may we wish for these blessings independent of the sword. Such is human nature, that we cannot enjoy a favour without being prepared for its defence; to the militia of America is committed this important cause; the cause is just, the cause is glorious. The great Author of perfection has himself declared, that he who takes up the weapons of invasion shall by them fall; but let him, who has not an instrument of defence, sell his coat and buy one. If we disavow the principles of defence, we overthrow the whole system of virtue. If I must not defend myself, my friends, and my country, then patriotism and friendship

are nothing, independence is a phantom, liberty a dream, and every virtue a vice.

The cause of our militia is the cause of heaven—the energy of virtue against the energy of vice. They will therefore possess, not only the form, but the spirit and the power ; they will ever be faithful labourers in the vineyard of liberty ; they will ever be vigilant watchmen on the walls of their country ; and should an imperious power again invade their shores, should a haughty foe again threaten their liberties with destruction ; they will take their standing on the tombs of their slaughtered brethren, and, catching their song, through all the day “ will rally the sound, Liberty or death.” They will think on Lexington ; they will think on the flames of Charlestown ; they will think on the awful scenes of Bunker’s Mount. Around the shores of their country they will form armies irresistible ; they will frown all tyrants from their presence ; they will convoy the independence of their country, and for it conquer or die ; and the chaplets of heroism will render brilliant their characters—the glory of WASHINGTON will be their Alpha and Omega.

Americans, you have children, you have parents ; you enjoy all that is dear in relation, all that is social and worthy in liberty. Arise then, gird on the helmet of justice, and march on, unshaken, in the defence of your enjoyments. Furnish your minds with knowledge ; sanctify your hearts with religion. Never tarnish the glory of your country by abusing her liberties. Address your national administration, not with calumny and adversity, but with reverence and patronage, justly due to guardians of liberty, peace and order. Imbibe no principles, be guilty of no acts, which have not the authority of heaven for their basis. Thus do, and the God of armies will be your God ; the benedictions of heaven will crown your exertions ; unborn ages will call you blessed ; long, long time to come, this day will be ushered in with signals of joy ; the independence of America will be forever yours to celebrate ; party-hatred will cease, calumny expire, and heaven begin on earth.