

AN

**ORATION,**

DELIVERED BEFORE THE MEMBERS OF THE

**LAW INSTITUTION,**

AT LITCHFIELD,

ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1848.

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BY J. P. C. SAMPSON.

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Litchfield, July 8, 1818.

J. P. C. Sampson, Esq.

SIR.—*WE*, the Committee appointed for the purpose, at a meeting of the members of the LAW INSTITUTION, beg leave to present to you the thanks of a majority of the same, to which it is believed, your able performance on the 4th inst. and the general satisfaction it gave, justly entitles you.

We are also authorized, and do accordingly, request a copy, with leave to publish it.

Receive, Sir, the assurances of our high individual regard.

BY ORDER,

WM. FITZ W. SARGENT,  
WILLIAM LUCAS,  
JOSIAH HOUGHTON.

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Gentlemen,

Though it could not certainly have been my wish, that a production, necessarily so imperfect, from the circumstances under which it was composed, as the enclosed, should appear in print; I feel, that after the kindness you have shown me, I should hardly be at liberty to refuse any thing you might think proper to demand. I therefore, submit it to your disposal; and the more willingly, because in doing so, I find an opportunity of expressing to yourselves, and through you, to the gentlemen of the Office whom you represent, my unabated sense of the friendship I have experienced on this occasion.

Your most obt. humble servt.

J. P. C. SAMPSON.

Litchfield, July 8, 1818.

WM. FITZ W. SARGENT, WILLIAM LUCAS, }  
and JOSIAH HOUGHTON, Esqrs. }

# ORATION.

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FELLOW CITIZENS,

THE lapse of another year again brings round the ANNIVERSARY OF OUR INDEPENDENCE.— Again the flag, waving from its staff, gives us the signal to rejoice. Again we meet in national festivity, to salute the liberties of our country. May all our sentiments be worthy of the occasion. May no unbrotherly feeling enter into our hearts—but may we unite our voices in tendering up to the throne of grace, our sacrifice of gratitude and praise.

How auspiciously does this day dawn upon our country! How different from that of other nations, is the condition in which it finds us. Here we do not behold humanity outraged. Here no trace of ruin arrests the eye, or deforms the landscape. The husbandman fills his arm with his own sheaf. But there are lands where abundance only provokes the plundering hand of oppression. Where the harvest is swept from the field, to feed the insolence and riot of a mercenary banditti. And where nations, despoiled, degraded and oppressed, leave to their children, only the bitter inheritance of the bonds, they have worn themselves. Such is not our condition. The day comes, and we are free. Liberty walks abroad into our fields. She extends her olive, and the fruitful blessing descends into the soil. She waves her laurel, and the breath it stirs rustles to the patriot's tomb, and wakes the flow-

ret, slumbering on his turf. Every where her step, her breath, are burning round us. We feel her approach in the fresh turf springing beneath our feet, and the air quickening the pulses of our hearts with every breath. The earth in her presence seems too beautiful to contain a tyrant's throne, and as we look up into the skies, we see only the God of freedom above our heads. Above, below, around, every thing respires glory, liberty and peace. The universal voice of nature repeats the story over from hill to hill, and the long echoes of the valley prolong it into the skies. Come, then, to the altars of your country. Come into her maternal presence, and swear over the glorious sentiment this day published to the world, that all men are by nature equal. Come and commemorate the sacred principles that led your fathers to these shores; that have added a world to the empire of freedom—and instead of leaving the finest portion of the globe without a hand to till its glebe, or a voice to worship beneath its skies, have made it the abode of civilization and the habitation of man. Elsewhere we behold nations gazing after pomps and idle shews, in which they take no part; but here amid all the simplicity of the occasion, how sublime a moral spectacle do we behold: A people met to offer up their gratitude to heaven, to honor the memory of their fathers, and to bear a national testimony to the principles of freedom. If, however, there be among us one to whose bosom this day brings no triumph, let him retire from these holy rites, nor bring on them the contamination of his presence. Removed from us be all whom the same wrongs would not have roused to the same glorious determination; and far aloof the wretch who cannot feel how proud a thing it is to fall with the sword of freedom in our hands, and pillow our last slumbers in her lap.

Forty years of freedom, happiness and prosperity ; these are the blessings which this day has given us to celebrate. Had it never shone, we should never have known freedom or tasted prosperity. Who then dare withhold his joy from this occasion, and afterwards call himself an American? A celebration, my fellow citizens! the day should have an eternal triumph through which all our days are glorious. Your first thought at your awaking, on this day, should be one that would rise to heaven to thank it for the virtues of your fathers, and at your lying down, you should still think with gratitude of those who had rendered all your days prosperous, and all your nights secure. If you doubt it, take your children with you to their graves, and ask your hearts the question there. If you remain still unconvinced, compare the condition of other nations with your own, and determine for yourselves, the difference between slavery and freedom. Place before your eyes the sad condition of a fellow creature denied that freedom you enjoy. Poor, miserable, degraded being! behold him humbling his nature at the feet of a creature like himself. The unhappy wretch may not dare to murmur a complaint, but the tear will start unbidden to the eye, and roll its burning channel down the cheek ; and the despair that knows no hope, will trace its ghastly doom upon the bondsman's brow. Behold him as he pauses a moment from his toil. He raises his heavy and unlighted eye to heaven, as if to upbraid the vengeance that can so long slumber on his oppressor's head, and ask it why, if all are equal in its sight, there should be on earth, some who are slaves, and others who are free. See, he is raising his hands to heaven, to appeal against the doom it has assigned him, but at the clanking of his chains, they fall down



powerless at his side, and with a heart charged almost to bursting with despair, he bows down again to his heavy task, and mixes his tears with his blood, and his sweat into the soil. Do you wish ever to see this become the condition of your children? You do not. Then acknowledge what you owe to the men of seventy-six, and the spirit that animated them. Declare with your tongues, the gratitude of your hearts. Venerate their memories, and invoke liberty with continual prayers, that she may never desert their ashes in their graves.

Let other occasions do honor to the living; this day is sacred to the dead. We have since fought other battles. We have since seen our navies bearing into our havens freighted with victory, and the stars and the stripes sweeping triumphantly over the plain. But we still turn with unabated affection to listen to that tale of glory which is told us by our revolution. War may heap and pile his trophies on any field, and conquest shed its guilty glories round any brow, but what cause shall compare its triumphs with those a nation wins in that holiest cause in which she ever toils or bleeds—the cause of her independence. That cause, too, finds its trophies, and it is round them in whatever clime they rise, that liberty loves to linger; and it is to crown its champions, whether conquerors, or conquered, that she weaves the wreath that never withers. It is in that cause alone, that humanity can behold the naked sword unstartled, for it is drawn in her defence. She blesses it in the hand that grasps it, and bids it fling its edge across the invader's path, to defend the altar from profanation, and extend to the helpless and the weak, the protection for which they lean upon the manly arm that wields it. Such are the victories which have ren-

dered the day memorable, and they contain within themselves, the principle of all that are to succeed them. If we had not had a Washington, a Warren or a Montgomery, our heroes might have sunk undistinguished and confounded with the vulgar dead, into the grave. The tyrant, indeed, might have won his battles with their blood, but America would have shared no glory from the achievements of her sons. Our Hulls, our Perrys, and Macdonoughs, would not have held our ocean standard in triumph to the breeze, nor our Scotts, Browns and Jacksons, have led up victory in the field. May the brave never be mentioned without honor; but if they fought nobly, for liberty and their country, to whom did they owe it, that they had liberty and a country to fight for? To those for whom this day claims the homage of your grateful remembrance, and never may the sense of what you owe them be erased from your memories. If such a day should ever come, we must have grown so worthless as no longer to feel the value of freedom, or be fit to enjoy it. But it is not so. After the lapse of forty years, the story of our revolution is still fresh to our feelings. The sword that fought for freedom has long been sheathed, and those who wielded it, dismissed from their toils. The watchfires have long been extinguished on the hill. The field of battle is silent as the dead that sleep in it. The harvest nods along its furrows, and nothing remains of the brave but their memory and their dust. But to the latest period in time, that memory shall never pass away. Their's is an imperishable fame. The conqueror may trust his glories to the pillar, or the arch, and the hands that raised them are scarcely turned to dust, when they have mouldered into nothing. It is only the glories of freedom that are eternal. The

blessings of their posterity; a name among the benefactors of mankind; a habitation in the temple of fame; and a monument in the fields and mountains of their country: These are the rewards which liberty assigns to those who perish in her cause, and this is the bright immortality which they are enjoying now, who fought and conquered for that independence we are this day celebrating.

Ye illustrious shades, look down upon the land you saved! You planted the tree of liberty on this soil. See how it has filled the heavens with its branches, and what a people are gathered beneath its shade. Behold how great, how powerful, how happy your America has become. Still continue to watch over the liberties you gave, and instruct our councils with your wisdom. Year shall follow year, and your memory shall not decay; but while your fame grows and spreads from age to age, our pious care shall arrest the mouldering hand of time upon your urns, and hold up your virtues to the imitation of our children, and instil your principles into their minds.

The event we are this day celebrating, is so closely connected with the great interests of freedom, that it is impossible to keep them separate. The occasion, indeed, presents but one thought, and but one feeling; and from the associations which it springs, whatever subject we take up, must perpetually lead us back to liberty, in the discussion. A review of European politics, it is true, would present a field too wide for our inquiries at present; but we may be permitted to remark, that there exists, as yet, no cause or reason for despair; the present arrangements afford no ground of presumption as to the future prospects of that continent. They have been formed on no princi-



ple, and have no promise of permanency. They have neither secured the rights of the people, nor made such a distribution of power among the sovereigns, as to balance the extraordinary and recent aggrandizement of some, and by checking the ambition of the more powerful, by the apprehensions of the weaker, afford to the general tranquillity, the guarantee of individual interest. The cause of freedom need not yet be given up. No—not though kings assure us, they have undertaken its defence. O imperial hypocrites! The cause of man become your cause! The cause of liberty become the cause of kings! Alas, this is not the liberty for which mankind have sighed, nor that with which they will remain satisfied. They are not yet subdued to this. It is true, we have seen despotism every where raising again her idol reign, and treading with satyr hoof over the prostrate liberties of mankind. But this cannot endure. In the mean time you do well kings, to make your oppressions bitter to mankind. Trample on the proud hearts that shall yet avenge their wrongs. Well, dearly shall you pay for every outrage you commit. You little know with what fierce hopes mankind have fed their hearts, nor what they are still prepared to dare in the cause of freedom. But you shall yet find them in all your paths, hanging as fierce avengers on your steps. The day shall come, as you shall find at last, when freedom's fallen banners shall be raised again; when a thousand sheathless swords shall glitter up to heaven in her cause, and a thousand voices invoke along the field those terrible divinities of the oppressed, vengeance and despair; when the shout of liberty shall be continued round the world, from hill to hill, shaking the thrones of all tyrants, and filling the echoes of the universe. The mind

of Europe is in throes to bring forth freedom, and in the hour of trial she will yet remember the example set her here. The torch which liberty lighted at your father's watch-fires, shall yet blaze in the van of every nation's battle. Yes, my fellow citizens, let us re-assure ourselves, the cause of despotism must not, shall not prevail. Though the Brutuses, the Tells, and the Sydneys are in their graves, there are still left to every nation, men whose ears must ever thrill at the sound of liberty; avenging spirits, who will be seen stalking amid the desolation of their country, to rally her last hopes from the altars on which their sires have worshipped, to the tombs in which they sleep; who ask no couch but the green turf—no pillow but the sword; and who would rather drink the dew from the rock in the desert; than fatten with the slave on the spoils of their country. While there are such apostles to preach the principles of liberty, they must find their way into the ears of men. But though every breath that dares to murmur freedom, should be hushed, there is a voice, the voice of nature, that must still be heard. Wherever she beholds a human being in bondage, she will whisper to him as he casts indignant glances at his chains: Timid slave, why do you bow to the uplifted blow! Wrest the sword from the hand that smites you. Behold that sun, whose beams shed life into your bosom: Does he fill the earth with light, only to shine on the oppressor's throne? Look again, and see how majestic those high mountains; how beautiful those fair fields! These are the mountains and the fields of your country, and demand their freedom at your hand. Rise, then, upon your tyrants; and as your God has created you in his own image, and given you his earth for a habitation, redeem from their stripes a form which they profane, and vindicate your inheritance with the sword.

Such, wherever man wears the form, must be the appeal of nature to his bosom. Such are the feelings that in our southern hemisphere, have roused an injured and insulted people, and wakened its primeval solitudes with the shouts of liberty. We might, indeed, have supposed that such a contest would have called forth our sympathies at least. But it is humiliating to perceive, how soon a people may become indifferent to a cause in which they have bled themselves. How soon have we learned to babble over that hacknied plea of all tyrannical governments, that the people they oppress are not fit for freedom. And what so well as freedom itself, will prepare men for the enjoyment of freedom? But who are we that are thus repeating over the arguments of despotism to justify its abuses? How long is it since we have acquired a right to hold such language? Not fit for freedom! Wretch, that darest say so of any people, art thou fit for it thyself? Thou universal father, that we should dare to stand up in thy presence, and tell thee that thou hast made creatures who are not fit for freedom! Preposterous ego-tist! darest thou think that freedom was made for thee alone, while thy brothers were created but for stripes, and chains, and slavery! Dost thou deem freedom the inheritance of any soil, or think that liberty has any country but the country of the brave? Wherever she has worshippers, does she not find a temple and a throne, every where in the free heart? Have not these woods afforded her an asylum, and will she not find the light and the air, as pure for her worship upon their mountains? Does not the earth fill her lap with as rich a plenty in their plains? Has not nature heaped up her eternal treasures in their mountains, and scattered through their soil, every gem that can sparkle on



the shrine of freedom? And why should not the possessors of such a land be free? If we hold such sentiments, let us take care how we express them, lest we raise the very dead from beneath our feet, to reproach us with our degeneracy. If their voices could become audible, they would exclaim, turn, suffering men, upon your persecutors; spurn the calumny that degrades you, and point all your wrongs into their bosoms with your swords. Expect not to find allies to fight your own battles. The Almighty is ever on the side of nations that fight for freedom. Lean then on the bosses of his buckler. If you dare not draw the sword, so wronged, so trodden under as you have been, never look again upon your children. You are not their fathers: a father should have a father's feelings. Never again expect honor or affection from your wives. Do you think they will let those heads rest in their bosoms, that dare not find a pillow on the green turf, when freedom calls them into the field? Look not with dismay to Europe, that land of blood and crime, where the tyrant and the slave are red with each other's blood. Look only to yourselves. In the midst of all your difficulties, remember our example, and let it cheer you. Such would be their language, and such should be our sympathy. That they must succeed if we have faith in the principles we profess, we cannot doubt. Sufferings they may still have to undergo; but they who cannot suffer, do not deserve freedom—but let them not despair. They shall yet drive their foes retreating to the shores of the ocean. They shall yet worship liberty in a temple, whose pillars shall be the mountains of their country, and whose dome its skies. The destinies of America must be fulfilled, and the day arrive, when not so much of her soil as the human foot can occupy,



shall remain undelivered, nor ocean roll a wave along her coast that shall not break on a shore free as his own billows.

But it is time to close this discourse. Let us, therefore, as we retire from this occasion, endeavor to carry off from it the moral it conveys. Let us, while we behold our country great and happy, remember, that if she is so, it is only because she is free. Let us recollect, that the moral habits of her sons, their enlightened zeal for freedom, and their noble but temperate use of a blessing which other nations have abused to their own destruction, have alone rendered America worthy to be the last asylum of liberty in an enslaved world. Let us emphatically too, on this occasion, recollect that if the fathers of our independence became free at first, it was not because they made a desperate effort in the field, but because they were a virtuous and a moral people, and had that intelligence of purpose and elevation of resolve, which belong to that character alone. Let us profit by their example, and while we leave our banners to sleep in the sunshine of their own victories, learn to cultivate the arts of peace, which constitute the true glory of nations. Above all things, let us ever have the example of those to whom we owe our freedom before us, and learn from it to maintain our liberties by the same virtues by which they grew at first. And surely, if that example is entitled to respect on any occasion, it is doubly so on this, when we recollect that we are celebrating American independence on the soil on which it first originated, and where first the measure found men honest and intrepid enough to propose it.

With this appeal, let me conclude. We stand here on no common earth. On this soil American liberty

first found its asserters in the persons of your fathers. This air that breathes into our bosoms, is the same that shook their banners from their staves. That sun above us, is the same that rolled over their heads in many a glorious field. Every sod in these vallies is holy, consecrated by their sacred blood, or hallowed dust. Hail, then, New England, hail! Hail natal soil of liberty, cradle of the world's freedom, hail! May the verdure of thy unwithering sod ever spring untrampled by a servile foot, nor the slave ever taint thy free air with ignoble breath. May every blessing that follows in the train of freedom, health, happiness and prosperity, be poured into thy lap. May plenty crown thy hills, and thy smiling fields restore an hundred-fold the trust committed to their bosoms. May thy sons ever be such, that their country can point to them with pride, as the descendants of the men that fought at Bunker's Hill and Lexington. And may thy daughters ever grow up with faithful and simple hearts, and while with affectionate timidity, they seek for happiness on the bosom of those affections they were formed to bless, may they late exchange their innocence for the heartless frivolities of artificial life. Abroad, may honor tread behind thee in thy public path, and at home may the domestic affections make thy dwellings their abode, and their pledges smile around thy hearths.

Once more hail, and farewell. Well have thy sons deserved the blessings they enjoy; and may peace, liberty and religion, ever continue to bless the descendants of the men, who left so glorious an example to mankind.