

J. White. 1816

AN

ADDRESS,

DELIVERED IN MEDFIELD,

4th JULY, 1816.

By DANIEL C. SANDERS, D. D.
Pastor of the Congregational Church in that town.

“ QUID LEGES SINE MORIBUS ? ” Hor.

DEDHAM :

ABEL D. ALLEYNE, PRENTER.

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1816.

ADDRESS.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

THE duties and the dangers of a people peculiarly favoured by the providence of the Almighty will present to the mind a subject of contemplation, not wholly unsuitable to the business of the day, nor unworthy of the occasion that has called us together.

This growing empire has always been distinguished by the peculiar care of heaven. The genius of Columbus was illumed, his soul fortified, and his little vessel guided by an agency evidently not his own. By a pious mind the footsteps of providence are to be traced, not only in the daring enterprise that led to the discovery of the new Continent, but more clearly in the preparations made in the new world for the reception of a race of men more enlightened and improved. When, with bold, adventurous spirits, the pilgrims of the East had arrived through perils of the watry wastes at the shores of the hemisphere in the West, the hand of the Protector through the sea had made ready for them a large place on the land. Of

the savage tribes, some had recently become wholly extinct, and all greatly diminished in numbers by the wastes of pestilence, by the prevalence of vices, by the wars they waged upon each other, and by the dreadful judgments of heaven. By other power than that of man, the heathen had been cast out, and large room made for the people of God. The discovery of the new world has changed the condition of the old, and has given a new turn to the affairs of both.

Not yet have two centuries passed away, since the feet of the pilgrims first stepped on 'Forefather's Rock' at Plymouth. The mind is surprised at the new creation of things that has since arisen, while it is confounded with the number and the magnitude of events that have crowded so short a period of time. In turn we are cheered and saddened with the affecting sight of hundreds of millions of men who have appeared and departed, generation after generation, in such a narrow span of being. This old and crazy globe has tottered beneath the weight that pressed it. On the ancient Continent, names in history are the chief remains of nations once renowned for their arts and arms. The proud monuments of their power have crumbled with the dust that covered their bodies. When we ask where imperial cities once stood, we are pointed to the place where wild beasts of the desert now lie down, those of the islands in desolate houses, dragons in pleasant palaces and foxes look out of the windows. Tyrants, who once acted as if

the world was made for them, have now hardly significance enough to move the contempt of posterity. The achievements of mortals are perishable as themselves, and great Cæsar's dust was destined to be scattered in the winds. On the new Continent, events wonderful as they were rare, interesting as they were unexpected, have passed in quick and awful succession. The very ground we tread on was once animated with the life of human beings. In places where the aboriginal inhabitants roamed with minds darker than their bodies, a new race has succeeded bringing with them the arts of civilization, founding new empires, improving upon old systems, and making a noble experiment of what can be effected by knowledge and experience, by principles and facts, by religion and morals.

We had come to the borders of an immense field, too large for a distinct and minute view ; but we turn to a smaller, perhaps a brighter spot, where our interests centre, where we drew our first breath, where we hope to draw our last, where lie the ashes of our fathers, where we would have our own find repose—our beloved country. By painful experience, our ancestors knew the errors and wretchedness of the old world. The ignorance and the horrors of the dark ages had not yet wholly gone. In government, feudal principles remained, the many were at the controul of the few, men were the slaves rather than the subjects of government, while correct sentiments

of the natural equality of the human species, of civil or of political liberty, had not yet entered their minds, nor hardly become subjects of speculation. Hopeless, while their bodies were in a state of vassalage and their minds were in a worse state of ignorance, the cultivators of the soil and the cattle they raised being alike considered as mere property and sold together with the land that nourished both, men had neither the ambition nor the courage to think for themselves. They felt a tremendous power, before which they bowed with passive obedience and non-resistance, while they were too ignorant to know either their rights or their duties. In feudal times, it was the last thing people would have believed that all lawful power was derived from their own will, or was to be directed to their benefit and enjoyment. The people felt an interest in throwing all power into the hands of the prince, because they had greater security in having one tyrant than many.—Nor was it better in regard to religion. The laws of the magistrate were put in the place of the authority of God. Only one mode of faith and practice was tolerated. The church was deemed infallible, and took upon herself to manufacture creeds, truth and conscience. She fancied that thinking was dangerous to common people; though they had not offended much this way for more than a thousand years of dark ages. In the midst of this gloom of night and chaos, the voice of the Almighty was heard at length to say, “let there

be light." The sun of righteousness, whose first rays had been so bright, once more broke from behind the clouds that had hidden it, and rendered the past darkness doubly horrible as it sunk below the horizon. As men began to think, they soon discovered different truths, and of course formed different opinions. Nor were they slow to discover that God was the Lord alone of the mind. A few bold spirits arose, who soared above the intolerance of the age, which, under pretence of supporting religion, actually subverted it, with a zeal worthy of a good cause. At length perceiving that their posterity would be corrupted, and believing that the new world would be an asylum for the oppressed and persecuted, they came to these shores. The divine auspices favored the pilgrims.

After this period, much of the best blood ran from the opened veins of Europe. The advocates of a free government, of religious liberty, of enlarged privileges for the people, now flocked to the new world. The masters of the old were not contented with that; they must have the new too. They would sit on their crumbling thrones, and, while they would "not touch the burthens of the people with one of their fingers," they would measure the whole earth by their avarice or ambition. At this time, though a whole Continent was before them, yet the emigrants had not formed one integral government upon it. Though the labours of their own hands were slowly converting "a wilderness of wants into a paradise of sweets,"

though the soil they tilled was their own by fair purchase from the natural proprietors, yet they seemed willing to bend their necks to the yoke, to acknowledge masters they never saw, to submit to laws in which they had no voice, to spread out suppliant hands to princes three thousand miles off, sovereigns, whose fatherly care was so great as to take their best earnings for the favour of protecting them. It was such care and such protection as wolves give to sheep. The fleece was not enough.

I would not abuse your ears nor pollute your minds by an exposition of mad schemes, which were devised to keep back our growth under the pretext of governing us, nor increase unhallowed passions which time should rock to sleep. The grievances had become old as well as intolerable. The complaints were heard by the ears of tyranny in order, not to redress, but to punish, the petitioners for relief. The sight of those who had been injured could not be endured, much less their requests be regarded. A summary of the burthens imposed and of the grievances long endured, longer perhaps than patience was a virtue, is drawn up in the Declaration of Congress, that constituted these United States a free and independent nation, in a style of elegance, in the force of truth, in a manner that justifies a national act which all posterity will admire.

The founders of the first independent nation in the western world gave proofs of minds at once magnan-

imous and correct. They acted more from reason than from passion. They had been taught by experience, and adopted principles that had been embodied in facts. The hardships of a new country made them practical men, fertile in expedients, patient of toil, and familiar with dangers. Providence had been prospective, had educated men fitted exactly to the enterprises, in which, in process of time and oppression, they were to be engaged. They soon decided one important point, that their burthens were not to be borne, and they had not minds for slaves. By resolving to be free or to perish, they honoured the English nation from which they sprang, though it had not discernment enough to see it, nor virtue enough to feel the homage. Young and feeble, this country was without means of defence. Yet it was powerful, because it had God and right upon its side. Counsel was to be taken from courage. The conflict was unequal; ten millions were armed against two millions, veterans against the undisciplined, and plenty against the want of all things. But justice held up her scales in the sight of all nations, and the result we witnessed in successes, when our oppressors were compelled to let the oppressed go free.

The same men, whom we admire as heroes, we admire still more in counsel. Independence and self-government were great, but there were still greater objects. They wished for an empire of laws, and not of men. They had felt something, and read

more, of the mischiefs and miseries of feudal systems. They had a full conviction, that the science of government was susceptible of improvements as well as any other science. Though, for a time, they were without government and without laws, yet anarchy did not prevail, because virtue needed only her own rules. They had admitted a principle, not easy to be adopted by ambitious men, that all rightful authority proceeds from the people themselves, and is instituted for their good, not for the aggrandizement of rulers. The ancient Greeks and Romans, in certain periods of their Republicks, entertained refined and exalted sentiments respecting free governments. But licentiousness, rather than liberty, was the practical effect. They vibrated from one extreme to another. Their assemblies were inclined to riots, rather than to just restraints. They began with an absurdity, that a whole empire could meet to legislate, to judge and to execute the laws. If they ever thought of a representative government, they never had virtue enough to adopt it. This principle is worthy of a patient experiment. It is possible it may be extended to a territory however large and to citizens however numerous. The framers of our constitution adopted other principles, valuable as they were new. The powers of sovereignty were divided into departments, these were to serve as checks upon abuses of power, rendered unanimity in villainy necessary to the assumption of unlawful authority, while it was

intended to make justice superiour to dependance on rulers themselves, and gave security against powerful oppressors in trials by jury. If the artful, the rich and the great could take care of themselves, yet no efforts were spared to secure the poor from the wealthy, the ignorant from the designing and the weak from the powerful.

It is true, the science of government will always partake of the imperfections of men who both form and administer it. The first form of government adopted by us was novel in its essential principles, without a model, and without an experiment. Smarting under the lash of oppression, little power was confided to rulers. Of course, the Confederation was feeble, a giant in size, but without strength to move his enormous limbs. But the same spirit of mutual concession and patriotism, that established the first, was able to impart new energy to the second frame of government. Instructed by experience, new powers were conveyed by the Constitution. Success, great as might have been expected, has tested its wisdom and worth. It has already resisted the temptations of peace, and borne the storm of war. The souls, which had been tried in the worst times, adopted it for the best. It contains the principles and powers of amendment within itself, while it seeks its own evergrowing perfection from lessons of experience and the general illumination of all mankind. May it stand to passing ages the monument of wis-

dom and admiration, like the great, wise and good men who formed it. The world talks of liberty; there is one free government in it; a Republick, which is the world's last and best hope.

If the long agony be over, if the dangers be passed by, yet our *duties* remain. We have to know our own felicity; and the usurpations of ambitious men, and the miseries of other countries will help us to know it. The admirable principles of our Constitution require the citizens to be possessed of the same excellent spirit. National character will be erected on the basis of the virtues of individuals. The reviler of publick authority ought to reflect, that he weakens, while he degrades it. He contributes to the evils, of which he complains. Genuine liberty is to be distinguished from spurious. That, which belongs to wolyes and tigers, to make others a prey, to value their own interests only, to use power instead of right, is a rapacity as dreadful as the crimes of the greatest despots. The only liberty that is either lovely or safe lies in the restraints of education, in the security of equal laws, in the exercise of rights, in the diffusion of property equalized by labours, in morals and religion, whose reign is in the heart, purifying publick opinions, before their united influence reaches rulers. It is the restraint of reason, not the violence of corruption. The sun of liberty cheers, not consumes.

Men talk as if rulers only had duties to perform. As men in power are few in number, much more must depend on the conduct of the people. Publick opinion is an immense power, before which rulers themselves are often obliged to yield. A nation is safe, when every man does his duty. A people well informed and virtuous hardly need a Constitution, while a nation ignorant and corrupt will not regard even a good one. In order to be sensible to what a height individuals even in the walks of private life are able to raise the glory of a nation, we have only to think of Newton, Locke, Addison, and other compeers in talents, merit and fame, who honoured their country not less than they did themselves. Enlightened minds shed a glory on all around them. Full of ignorance, a nation is prepared to be slaves. Not knowing their rights, they possess neither the means nor the courage to vindicate them. A Republick is an expedient towards self-government; and, more than any other form, it demands the wide diffusion of knowledge and virtue among all classes of people. Its life is to cherish institutions of science, of charity, of arts, of all which embellishes human nature or multiplies its comforts. Personal merits are so many services rendered to the publick. No one truly loves his country, who does not love his duty. He does much to save the Commonwealth, who educates his children to be the brightest ornaments of it. The parent acts the patriot, who ensures good order in

society by commencing with good regulations in the little but interesting circle of his own family.

A voice that could reach both Continents and all islands and ears should proclaim what follows. "Of all dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who would labour to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and publick felicity. Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect, that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

Whatever be our present enjoyments and hopes, it is absurd to imagine that no *dangers* can arise. We must be wise to prevent, or be prepared to meet them. The very calm of life presents temptations, and restless spirits find their sport or their profit in tempests that spread ruins around them. Idleness, luxury and

abundance are so many sources of evils. All the vices are at war with mankind, and destroy more than the sword and the pestilence. Pride and discontent carry misery to millions, while mad ambition appears in ten thousand ever varying forms. While ambition would wade to a throne through seas of blood, power would engross every thing to itself. Discord has been the bane of states, the instrument that has divided great cities, and the monster that has swallowed up mighty empires. When order and union throw away the reins of government, the boldest, not the best men, seize them. Ingratitude is said to be the vice of Republicks, and slander the reward of services rendered ; and, if ever wise, great and good men should become tired out with such recompense, some *military* despot, bred up to command, accustomed to perils and expedients, might find means to reward himself. Experience has found, that party is the worst kind of despotism, which would trample, with increase of means and safety, on laws themselves. There is such a thing as too much regulation. Amendments, carried to excess, may not meliorate, but destroy. Innovation will not think enough is done, until nothing of substance shall remain.

We will take to ourselves the satisfaction of believing, that our beloved country is about to enjoy better prospects. An experiment in republican government, with new improvements, provisions and powers, has, for a long series of years, been making.

and has not yet failed. If it has not produced a paradise, it has fulfilled a more rational expectation, that of procuring for the people a greater amount of safety, happiness and prosperity than has been possessed by any other nation on the face of the globe. To increase your confidence in proceeding with the experiment already making, your minds should be fortified with the consideration, that it has been made in the worst times, when our own nation was without the wisdom of experience and the strength of age, when all the rest of the world was in the midst of unparalleled revolutions, when all governments trembled and when none felt secure. Restless men from the frightful agitations of the old world have brought with them the waters of strife, and have had impudence enough to urge us to drink of the cup they had mingled for us. The time has come when men are beginning to see, that our own country contains in it all that is dear, that we can have no interests in foreign countries, except being warned by their errors, avoiding their vices, and thus escaping their miseries.

One of the evils of the times is *jealousy*, which is always blind as well as cruel. The owners of the soil can have but one common interest in the government that protects them. The smaller States can have their only safety in union, the larger cannot be secure alone, while, at times, of most danger too, each one needs the produce, the favour and the strength of

all the rest. In process of years, in proportion as all see in turn their particular interests consulted in national statutes, missions and treaties, suspicion, wearied out with fruitless efforts, may fall asleep.

Party spirit is an evil of immense magnitude. Ancient Republics, incapable of being destroyed by foreign emissaries, fell by this insatiate monster that would spare nothing. What do any gain by it but uneasiness and misery to themselves? What more can be desired than right of suffrage? Is not difference of opinion a part of that political liberty, which it was intended every man should enjoy as his right? Shall men contend about old differences, when many of them do not longer exist? A system is pursued in the creation of a navy, in preparations for defence, in the efforts to establish publick credit, and in other essential points, which all, at times, have joined to applaud. It is time that party spirit should be slain, as food is becoming scarce, that fattens it.

In the late treaty formed with this country, we discover a principle, valuable as it is new, of terminating international disputes by a method more accordant with reason and religion, with justice and humanity. This is, a peaceable discussion of claims, a spirit of mutual concession, or a reference to other nations for arbitration and decision. The christian world have long been hoping for some expedient which may put an end to the crimes and calamities of war. Civilized nations have too long employed the

weapons and the means used by savages. In the contests of nations, nothing has appeared common to christians but the blood they have shed. After lives of thousands of men and immense treasures have for years been thrown away, nations must still settle the terms of reconciliation at last by argument and negociation, with which they might much better have begun than ended, "leaving off contention before it is meddled with." It may be said, nations will never settle their disputes in this manner. A few centuries ago, individuals could not settle their private quarrels either by arbitration or in courts of justice, but by the sword and in duels. Are nations only incapable of being improved? May they only take away thousands of lives with impunity? Shall government set examples and do acts, which it is death in private persons to imitate? Can no court of equity and of right find a place among nations? "Shall the sword devour forever?" Shall animal force be called in as the arbiter of right rather than reason? It is time the christian world should purge itself from these abominations. They are unworthy of barbarians. It belongs to beasts only to decide by physical strength. It is time for every human being to use his best efforts to stop the current of blood and crimes. The guilt is already immensely great, and it is high time it had become unpopular. If the people will not support mad and ambitious sovereigns by brutal violence, they must soon be compelled to abide by the peaceable decisions of justice.

The present is an age of improvements. Men begin to view the whole human race as one family of brethren. The remotest parts of the earth are performing kind offices to each other. Christians should have large hearts. Such treasures of charity were never put into circulation till now. Society after society is formed to convey blessings to distant millions. Benevolence is no longer a matter of cool calculation, but flows spontaneously from the hearts of millions. Let us imbibe this generous spirit, and swell the rising tide of a divine beneficence.

Forty years are completed this day, since these United States began to be ranked among the nations of the earth. In the retrospect, there will be much for gratitude; and, in the future, there will be much to hope. Piety will be able to trace the hand of God in the great events which have followed in quick succession, to astonish or to distress the world. Revolution has succeeded revolution, while darkness and dread have brooded over the minds of millions. The frightful tempests have roared at a distance, where they have expended their greatest fury. With less harm than almost any other nation, we have escaped the ruins around us. With new zeal, let us cleave to institutions which have preserved to us so much security and repose. The God of the pilgrims will be with their sons, if they tread in their pious steps. The distinguishing blessings we enjoy as a nation, and still more the peculiar privileges conferred by re-

ligion, at once impose new obligations, and enable us the better to know and to do our duty. The best of men will be found to be the first of patriots. Let the joyous business of this auspicious day prove us the sons of the patriots and puritans of New-England by our love of moral propriety and by the observance of social order. At our homes and in our labours, let us prove that we are not wholly unworthy of our ancestors, nor unmindful of our high destinies. On this memorable day, when we trace the spirit and conduct of the great men, who founded this growing Republic, let us be ashamed of former coldness towards brethren of the same political family. In the sight of each other, let us slay those party feelings, which are the greatest enemies of our peace. When tempted to "speak evil of dignities and of the powers that be, which are ordained of God," pause long enough to reflect, that our government will be perfect, when our citizens shall be so.