

No. 25.

AN
From his friend
ORATION,
The Subject

DELIVERED AT GREENFIELD,

JULY 4, 1809,

THE THIRTY FOURTH ANNIVERSARY,

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY CHARLES SHEPHERD.

“ In every human society, there is an effort continually tending to confer on one part the height of power and happiness, and to reduce the other to the extreme of weakness and misery. The interest of good laws is to oppose this effort, and to diffuse their influence universally and equally.” *BECCARIA.*

“ A subordination of ranks is absolutely necessary to the support of monarchy.” *HUME.*

“ What in me is dark,
Illumine; what is low, raise and support.”

MILTON.


NORTHAMPTON,

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE ANTI-MONARCHIST.

.....
1809.

GREENFIELD, JULY 4, 1809.

SIR,

THE Committee of Arrangements return you their cordial thanks for your elegant and patriotic oration, this day delivered, and request a copy for the press.

MOSES ARMS,
Chairman.

CHARLES SHEPHERD, ESQ.

GREENFIELD, JULY 4, 1809.

SIR,

I AM sensible that my oration is an imperfect performance, having had but a short time for its composition. I will, notwithstanding, comply with your polite request.

I am, Sir, respectfully,

Your most obedient and humble servant,

CHARLES SHEPHERD.

MOSES ARMS, ESQ.

Chairman of the Committee of Arrangements.

AN
ORATION.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

THE American Revolution is one of those events which stamp upon a nation the character of greatness. It insures to our country a glorious immortality.

As the revolutionary contest was the grandest effort ever made in defence of the rights of man, the period in which it happened will probably be the most brilliant in our history. Let what will be the future conduct of the American people, whether they pursue the career so nobly begun, and maintain those principles for which so many heroes fought and bled, or whether, having lost their virtues, they shall sink into slavery, their great achievements during the revolution, will be remembered to the end of time. The patriots of that day have erected an imperishable monument to their fame. With such examples of virtue before us, although we cannot presume to excel, yet, if we cease to imitate, our disgrace will be as complete as the fame of our ancestors is glorious.

It is one of the most pleasing subjects which can occupy the attention of the human mind, to recall to our remembrance the patriotic deeds of our own countrymen; to review their dangers and their trials; to lament their sufferings, and rejoice in the recollection of their triumphs. This subject, so pleasing at all times, and to all people, is the more gratifying to us, the citizens of this free Republic, because our

history is chequered by no national crimes, by no wars of ambition ; it is stained by none of those atrocities which have blackened the annals of other nations. On this account, the commemoration of our revolution affords us pleasure unmixed with any alloy, except that of grief for the unmerited sufferings of a virtuous people, struggling for their rights, and for their national existence. Yes ! there is another emotion, that of indignation against the oppressors of our infant Republic, which ought to fire all breasts not insensible to the more generous feelings of the soul. The cruelties committed by the British upon the American people, their murdering of defenceless prisoners, of women and children, will be remembered forever. These enormities, like the crucifixion on Mount Calvary, will excite horror in the bosom of generations yet unborn. Centuries shall roll away, and the recital of the story of British barbarity and American suffering, will bedew the youthful cheek with tears, and cause the manly breast to heave with sighs and groans. Cold, indeed, must be the heart, that is not touched at the narration of this tale of wo. It may be said by some, that the crimes of Britain ought to be buried in oblivion. Our opinion is different. Not only national policy, but patriotism and justice to the memory of our slaughtered countrymen, demand that the crimes of that nation should be exposed in all their deformity. The Jersey prison-ship ought to be remembered at least as long as the Spanish inquisition. The government that could imprison thousands for the purpose of murder, as was done on board the Jersey, ought to be held up to the execration of mankind.

It would afford us much pleasure to detail the prosperous and adverse events of the war, to yield the meed of praise to those who sacrificed their lives in the contest ; and particularly to the illustrious CHIEF

who conducted us safely through it : but as the transactions of that period are familiar to most of us, and the merits of the revolutionary patriots are universally acknowledged, we have thought proper to leave that task to the historian.

It is our purpose to enquire into the principles and objects for which the war was begun, and by applying those principles to the parties that have sprung up, to draw instruction for the regulation of our political conduct. The revolutionary contest was a struggle on our part not for independence merely, but for the blessings of a republican government. This object, so clearly the aim of the American people, was pointed out in all the public declarations of Congress, from the year '76 to the conclusion of the war. It is one of the first principles contained in the declaration of independence, that all legitimate power is derived from the people ; that they have a right to alter, amend, or totally change their form of government, whenever they shall think proper. This principle is so true that it does not admit of dispute. It was universally acknowledged to be correct by the whigs, and is the ground work of their steady and successful opposition to British usurpation. The people of the United States had the wisdom to trace the corruptions of the British monarchy to the form of the government. They saw enough of the evils of the monarchical system to avoid it. When the arm of Britain was extended against them, they knew that it was in vain to repel the aggression under any other than "republican banners." It was the prospect of maintaining and improving the ancient republican institutions of this country, that animated our people in the day of battle, and supported them through all the trying scenes and accumulated evils of the war. The corruptions of the British system, indeed, the very form

of the monarchy, excited the abhorrence of the Americans. They were republicans from habit and education, and were confirmed in their sentiments from reflection. They admired the simplicity of the republican form ; they hated the kingly power, the privileged orders, the Lords spiritual and Lords temporal ; in short, the whole machinery and trumpery of monarchy. Inspired by such sentiments, without any other bond of union than what resulted from common dangers and similarity of opinions, the whigs of '76 successfully resisted the force of the British empire.

It has been the unhappy lot of mankind, in all ages of the world, to be led by ambitious men to butchery and murder, without even the prospect of bettering their condition. After the work of destruction has been completed, they have found their chains unbroken, and are left to weep over the universal calamity with which their own folly and crimes have filled the earth. Such, for the most part, have been the wars which have desolated the face of nature. The American war was of a different character. It was undertaken by the whole people in defence of their rights. Though their sufferings were great, the general happiness enjoyed under our excellent form of government, proves that the battles of liberty were not fought in vain. A steady attachment to a republican government has marked the character of the people of this country. In proof of this position, we can appeal with confidence to their early history ; to the revolution ; to the state and federal constitutions. Indeed, so great has been their love for this form of government, that every attempt to assimilate it to the corrupt forms of Europe has been met by the people with the spirit of freemen, and defeated, even before the plans of the friends of monarchy were well matured.

We have been thus particular to shew what were the principles of the founders of our republic, for the purpose of detecting and exposing the political heresies which have been scattered among the people. The principles of the revolution are generally respected, and afford us the best standard of political faith.

Two important errors were committed by the whigs, after their revolutionary labors were completed. They are errors which will be attended with unhappy consequences to this country, perhaps for centuries to come. The first was the general amnesty granted to the tories, in permitting them to return to the bosom of their country. The second was the too great encouragement given to foreign commerce, to the detriment of domestic manufactures, and the almost total neglect of improving the internal resources of the country. Under the operation of these two errors, republicanism has been wounded to the very vitals. Before the war, the tories were powerful from their wealth and family connections. During the heat of the contest, when the whole people were animated with enthusiasm in the cause of liberty, the influence of family and wealth was trifling. After the war was over, and the tories permitted to enjoy their possessions, these circumstances had great weight, and the enemies of the revolution, though not able to gain the ascendancy, had already, in the first years of repose, formed a powerful party. It is the nature of toryism, like a noxious weed, though seemingly eradicated, to sprout up again, and flourish. The adherents of this unhallowed principle, though once defeated, return to the charge. A defeat this year, or for ten years, does not disconcert them: even, if by the labors of a century, they can lay the foundation of hierarchies, dukedoms, and principalities, to be enjoyed by their posterity, they will cheerfully encour.

ter any toils to accomplish their object. The conciliatory disposition manifested by the whigs towards the men who had raised a parricidal arm against the liberties of their country, was no doubt a great error : but the sudden abandonment of the prudential maxims of the revolution ; the taste for foreign luxuries, the eagerness to adventure in foreign commerce, were errors of a greater magnitude. In consequence of the great influx of foreign merchandize, and foreign capital, American manufactures were depressed ; the ancient simplicity of manners in a great measure lost ; and a party, the friends of monarchy, and devoted to Britain, has been invigorated to that degree that they have more than once dictated measures to our government.

We have already traced the germ from which the monarchical party sprung. We shall now detail some of their operations. Before we proceed to this, however, it will be proper to state how monarchies are imposed upon the world. If it is proved that a system of measures have been adopted, and pertinaciously adhered to, the natural tendency of which is to introduce a monarchy, we have a right to infer that the projectors of such measures are monarchists. Monarchy is produced by the depression of the large body of the people. The means of this depression are armies and navies, wars, debts, and taxation. Under the operation of these causes, a country possessing a republican form of government may soon be changed into a monarchy. Privileged orders, church establishments, nobles, and mitred priests, will spring up ; and lastly, the kingly power.

It is impossible that monarchy should exist, unless the mass of the people are greatly oppressed. It is likewise equally true, that when a system of measures

is adopted in a republic, calculated for the benefit of the *few*, to the detriment of the *many*, that a monarchy will soon be established, or a revolution, violent and convulsive in its effects, will follow.

The views of the leaders of what has been styled the federal party, are monarchical. Of this fact we have the most abundant positive proofs. Even if these were wanting, their measures would clearly indicate that such were their intentions. Though this party have made use of many distinguished names to cover their designs, particularly the venerable names of WASHINGTON and ADAMS, it is a fact, that HAMILTON was their real founder and leader. The great show of grief made when he fell, designated at once their chief, and the corrupt views of his coadjutors. HAMILTON was a member of the convention for forming the constitution of the United States. He proposed to elect the President and Senators for life; and in fact, to expunge, or render of no avail every republican feature in that instrument. This monarchical project he never abandoned. He found that it was impossible to bring the people into his plan *directly*. The principles of the revolution were too popular for his views. He therefore projected and carried, during the two first administrations under the constitution, certain leading measures, which had well nigh produced the ruin of the republican cause, and of the country. The funding of the depreciated public paper; the assumption of the state debts, to the amount of twenty one-millions, without any previous settlement of accounts; the excise; the standing army; the alien and sedition laws, all originated from the prolific brain of HAMILTON. It was a favorite maxim with him, that the constitution was too democratic; that there was not strength enough in the government to last long. In order to remedy this sup-

posed defect, these measures were adopted. The effect of them was different from his expectation. So far were they from strengthening the federal administration, that they rather weakened it, and eventually produced its overthrow. It is true, that these measures drew around that administration the men of great wealth, of ease, those who live upon the earnings of the community, and produce nothing : the clergy,* the bar, and the bench. These men rallied around that administration, as did also the British merchants, the tories, and men trading upon British capital. But the people went another way. Their confidence was lost forever. When the people are awakened to view their dangers, as they were in '75 and 1800, of what avail are the money lenders, the stockjobbers, and the men of words ?

It is now more than eight years since the people withdrew their confidence from the federal party, and every day furnishes us with fresh proofs of the correctness of their decision.

The developement made by the late President ADAMS, of the designs of the chiefs of the federal party, is honorable to himself, and useful to his country. While he rescues his own fame from many unjust and dishonorable imputations, he proves that the apprehensions of the republicans were well founded ; that a conspiracy did actually exist on the part of the leading federalists, to overturn the government. He states, and the facts have never been contradicted, that a cabal, or, as he very properly styles it, a British faction, existed, who were resolved upon a war with France ; that HAMILTON, under the pretext of this war, proposed to raise a regular army of 50,000 men, 10,000 to be cavalry, and to tax every article to maintain it. This scheme was defeated by the firmness of

* See note at the close.

Mr. ADAMS, and finally put to rest by the election of Mr. JEFFERSON.

Were I to do justice to the merits of his administration, I should trespass on your time. The facts on which his well earned fame is built, are too various to be particularly noticed on this occasion. I shall therefore, content myself with noticing the leading principles, which, according to my apprehension, governed his conduct, and the most prominent measures which resulted therefrom.

He believed that the people were capable of self-government. Accordingly, all the measures of his administration were predicated upon this idea. He appealed to the good sense of the people for support, and refused to call in aid the clergy, the bar, the bench, or the army, those main props and pillars of corrupt governments. He did not believe that a national debt was a national blessing. It was, therefore, the first object of his attention to appropriate the revenue to the reduction of it. In pursuance of this maxim, he paid thirty-three millions of dollars of the principal of the public debt, besides six millions paid under the Louisiana convention, and the convention for carrying into effect the British treaty. All the money was paid that could be, under the existing contracts with the public creditors; and, on the first of April last, nearly ten millions of dollars were left in the treasury.

Mr. Jefferson was the advocate of PEACE: "Peace and honest friendship with all nations; entangling alliances with none," was his motto. It is no small merit to preserve peace to the United States, to steer clear of foreign broils, for eight years, the most turbulent the world ever knew. Philosophers and christians will duly appreciate this policy.

Causes of war have not been wanting; an ambitious

President would have seized upon them for the purpose of personal aggrandizement. The impressment of seamen; the attack on the Chesapeake; the orders in council, and the French decrees, were all justifiable causes for war. They were all outrages upon our national sovereignty, and under any other than a republican government, would have been repelled immediately by force.

In order to form a correct opinion of the late wise and prudent measures, adopted by Mr. Jefferson, it will be necessary to look back upon the circumstances in which the United States were placed by the hostile edicts of the belligerent powers. It is foreign to our purpose to enquire whether France or England was the aggressor. In the year 1806, a treaty was negotiated by Messrs. Pinkney and Munroe, in behalf of the United States, with the British government. The treaty itself was objectionable in many respects, and particularly, because it contained no clause to secure American seamen from impressment. There was a note attached to that treaty, which rendered the whole instrument a nullity. The treaty was very properly returned by the President, unratified. The note was in substance this: that unless neutral powers, (America was the only neutral power,) would resist the Berlin decree, declaring Britain in a state of blockade, that his Majesty would be compelled to retaliate. Here was a plain threat, that unless America would join Great-Britain in the war, that she would sweep our commerce from the ocean.

Before the intentions of our government could be known in England, the retaliatory orders in council, as Mr. Pickering calls them, were issued. In consequence of these orders and decrees, the embargo was laid. After the embargo had been continued some

months, the President, through Mr. Pinkney, our Minister in London, proposed to raise it in favor of Great-Britain,† provided the orders in council were rescinded as they regarded the United States. The insulting answer of Mr. Canning is familiar to us all. He stated that the orders should be continued as long as the French decrees. In the late propositions to our government, Great-Britain has abandoned this ground. The very proposal made by Mr. Jefferson last summer, has been sent to us by the British government. We hear no more of the demand from that quarter, to resist the French decrees. We ask to what can be attributed this change‡ in the tone of Britain? We answer—to the embargo, and the result of the election of President. Great-Britain felt the effects of this measure, and saw in that expression of the sentiments of the people, that it was impossible to subject America to taxation by act of Parliament. Of the efficacy of the embargo we have the testimony of Lord Grenville and Mr. Whitbread, and the solemn opinion of the American Consul and Minister in London.

If the embargo had no effect upon Great-Britain, as has been pretended by the federal party, why was Mr. Erskine in such haste ruin the Canada merchants and smugglers? He pledged the faith of his government for the restoration of intercourse upon the accustomed footing. The commercial restrictions were taken off. British markets were glutted with American produce, while the smuggled property of his Majesty's subjects, their pork and their pot-ash, were denied a passage to the ocean, by the ice of the St. Lawrence.

It has been said by the leaders of the federal party, that their proceedings have produced the present fa-

† † See note at the close.

avorable change in our public affairs. Did the threats of a neighboring town,[§] to rally under the banners of the state Legislature, to resist the embargo laws ; did the declaration of that body, that those laws were unconstitutional, and not binding upon the people, produce it ? Are such measures calculated to induce foreign cabinets to respect our rights ? If such is the fact, we must say, that human nature has greatly changed.

The embargo was a pacific measure. The resort to it was demanded by the circumstances in which the country was placed, in consequence of the edicts of the belligerent powers. England and France, in contempt and violation of national law, cut off our trade with almost the whole world. The idea of submitting to taxation, to tribute, and confiscation of our property, by foreign governments, was not indulged for a moment, except by internal foes, men sold to Britain, and their dupes. Our government had only a choice of evils. They were bound by the ties of honor and patriotism, to resist the encroachments upon the rights of the country ; and the question which remained to be settled, was, in what manner resistance should be made. An embargo was preferable to war on many accounts. It was more consonant with our republican institutions. It would give life and activity to manufactures. It would repress luxury and extravagance, those pernicious vices which are nourished by war. It would save the mercantile capital, our seamen and ships, which, in case of a war, would have been carried into foreign ports, and have increased the means of our enemies to annoy us. Experience has proved, that as a means of coercion against foreign nations, an embargo is powerful. The high prices of American produce in foreign markets, during the embargo, give evidence the most unequiv-

§ See note.

ocal, that a suspension of the commerce of the United States is severely felt abroad. There are, however, evils attending an embargo, which a prudent government ought not to disregard, or an honest politician wish to conceal. A degree of patience is required from all the citizens, to give such a measure an efficient support. The habits of commercial and sea-faring men, call them to action. These classes of people are not enured to a state of passive suffering. Accustomed to hazardous enterprizes, to dangers, and extreme toil, they would rather encounter any perils, than be debarred for a long time, from the pursuit of their accustomed occupations. The co-operation of these men, in a long suspension of commerce, cannot be calculated upon. In the adoption of an embargo, the government assumes upon itself the responsibility of shewing the necessity of the measure. This necessity will not be apparent to every one, and to those more particularly, who prefer the pursuit of gain to the independence of their country. The factious spirits will be busy in misrepresenting the views of government; mercenary, ignorant, and misinformed men, will swell the ranks of the opposition, and the country will be distracted by party cabals, at the very time when confidence in the public functionaries is most required. In a war, the energies of the nation are directed immediately against the foreign enemy; the attention of the people is withdrawn from their own government, and their indignation pointed against the common foe. The voice of faction is stifled by the universal cry for vengeance. For these reasons, war would be preferred to any other measure of defence or annoyance, by a government that consulted only its own safety.

The choice of measures which was made by Mr. Jefferson, in the unexampled crisis which he was

forced to meet; shows his undeviating attachment to our republican institutions, and his readiness to sacrifice personal popularity to promote the interests of his country.

The people of the United States have a deep interest in preserving peace, as long as it can be maintained without a sacrifice of their rights. While they love peace, they ought to remember, that an unreasonable dread of war may lead them to submit to one encroachment from foreign powers after another, until their independence is lost past redemption.

This is a rising empire. The wealth, population, and resources of the United States, have increased with a rapidity never before known in the world. We have a vast continent, abounding with every production which the necessities or luxury of man can require. Our government, founded upon the basis of popular suffrage, regulated by excellent constitutions, secures to every man the fruits of his own industry. With these advantages over the oppressed nations of Europe, it would be the extreme of madness and folly for the people of America not to maintain their independence at any hazard. The astonishing growth of this country has caused foreign nations to view us with a jealous eye. Great-Britain, in particular, is envious of our rising greatness. She is tormented with the reflection, that the Americans, her rivals in commerce, were once her subjects. She entertains a deadly hatred against us, on account of our independence. She owes us a grudge, which no time can remove, because she was compelled to retire from the revolutionary contest with disgrace. To this feeling may be traced the embarrassments which have been thrown in the way of our trade. She claimed the

right of regulating our commerce with the rest of the world; of forcing our ships into her ports, to pay **TRIBUTE**, and then *graciously* permitting them to pursue their destined voyages. The orders went to this length. They regulated the tribute, and his Majesty's commanders, and revenue officers, were to enforce the collection of it. If we contrast the present and probable situation of the United States, with the present state and future prospects of Great-Britain, we shall be sensible of the folly of having our commerce regulated by her, even if our pride did not revolt at it.

The United States in twenty years will have a population equal to Great-Britain, and in less than half a century, it will be more than double to hers. The United States are not embarrassed, like England, with a million of paupers, nor oppressed by privileged orders. Shall we, then, with such a bright prospect before us, commit the destiny of this young and flourishing republic to the safe keeping of a corrupted and pestilent monarchy?

The leaders of the federal party considered the state of embarrassment into which the country was thrown by the violence and injustice of foreign powers, as favorable to their party views. Instead, therefore, of supporting the government in resisting foreign aggression, a course of conduct they were bound to pursue by the ties of honor and patriotism, they increased the difficulties which the government had to encounter, by exciting opposition to the laws. They infused into the public mind, the most poisonous and unfounded calumnies. In a season of universal calamity, instead of alleviating the public distress, they increased it by exactions enforced by the rigor of law.

Instead of promoting union, they excited unfounded alarms, and groundless jealousies. Because the government would not submit to pay tribute to Britain, it was said to be under the influence of France. Because a temporary embargo was preferred to a trade, shackled by the orders and decrees of European cabinets, it was said that the government was hostile to commerce. Every measure of the General Government was misrepresented, and attributed to some evil design.

In vain should we search for the evidence of this pretended hostility to commerce in the administration of Mr. Jefferson. The embargo, so far from being intended to annihilate commerce, was designed, by operating upon the interests of foreign powers, to induce them to restore us an uninterrupted trade.

There is no party in this country who are hostile to commerce, unless it is that party who are willing to trade under *foreign licences*. The importance of commerce to the United States is generally acknowledged. While we accord in the correctness of this sentiment, we freely avow our belief, that that commerce which destroys our own manufactures is prejudicial.

It is not difficult to make a complete justification of the measures of the General Government. Where shall we find even an apology for the extraordinary proceedings of the opposition? Those proceedings which have been styled "patriotic," were repugnant to every fundamental principle of the constitution. They were calculated to encourage Great-Britain to persist in her hostility to this country, to excite insurrection, and produce a dissolution of the Union. In adopting the constitution, the people of the United States bound themselves by a solemn compact to

obey the will of the majority constitutionally expressed. If the principle that the will of the majority shall be binding, is violated, there is an end of the government. Yet the Legislature of Massachusetts, in contempt of this principle, not only declared that the people were not bound to obey national laws regularly enacted, but usurped judicial powers, in declaring them unconstitutional.

The principles advocated by the federal party cannot be defended. They are subversive of the rights of the people, and of the constitution. The evil tendency of these principles was seen in the excesses which were committed by the infuriated opposers of government. Let us thank God that "the wrath of man has been stayed;" that the plans of domestic conspirators have been defeated, and the designs of foreign enemies resisted.

NOTES.

* When the clergy are mentioned in this oration, reference is had to that class usually styled the standing order, who, (with some honorable exceptions,) have become *political preachers*. No disrespect is intended to be shewn by the author towards those who have not volunteered their services in this way. The simple facts are stated, that they supported the federal administration; and that the clergy have been used as instruments to support corrupt governments. These facts are incontrovertible.

† As the fact has been denied, that any formal and direct offer was made to the British government, to raise the embargo in favor of Great-Britain, in case she would consent to rescind the orders in council, as they regarded the United States, the following extract is made from the letter of Mr. Pinkney to Mr. Canning, dated August 23d, 1808.

"I had the honor to state to you, sir, that it was the intention of the President, in case Great-Britain repealed her orders as regarded the United States, to exercise the power vested in him by Congress, to suspend the embargo and its supplements, as regards Great-Britain. I am authorized to give you this assurance in the most formal manner."

PINKNEY TO CANNING.

‡ On the perusal of the correspondence between the Secretary of State, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Erskine, which resulted in a short lived restoration of commercial intercourse between this country and Great-Britain, the author presumed that a change favorable to the interests of this country, had taken place in the British cabinet. Subsequent events have proved that this opinion was founded in mistake. Britain is still determined to adhere to the orders in council, subject to such alterations as she may think proper to make. This instance of the want of good faith in the British government, to refuse to confirm the agreement of Mr. Erskine, goes not at all to prove that the embargo was not felt in England. On the contrary, it rather tends to prove the fact. There is American property enough afloat, and in British ports, to answer the purposes of Great-Britain. She has obtained *solid* advantages from raising the embargo, and the United States.....empty *promises*.

§ The proceedings of the town of Deerfield; on the subject of the embargo laws, were more violent than those of any other town. The following is an extract from the preamble to the resolutions adopted on the 31st of January last.

“ These are laws and measures,” [embargo laws, and measures of the General Government,] “ that freemen ought not and cannot submit to. In this state of our nation, we ask for the aid and direction of our own Legislature. UNDER THEIR BANNERS WE WILL ENLIST, and sacrifice our lives, IN OPPOSITION to such high-handed, unconstitutional encroachments!”