

AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED

THE 4th DAY OF JULY,

1799,

AT Salisbury,

IN THE

STATE OF NEW-HAMPSHIRE.

BY Thomas Thompson.

PRINTED AT CONCORD,

BY GEO. HOUGH.

1799.

TO

The Citizens of the Town of Salisbury,

SECOND TO NONE IN PATRIOTISM,

THE FOLLOWING *ORATION,*

made, pronounced, and published,

at their request,

upon short notice,

is respectfully

Dedicated,

by their fellow-townsmen,

and well-wisher,

THOMAS THOMPSON.

· ++++††††††††-†††††† ††††'

AN O R A T I O N.

WHEREFORE, Fellow Citizens, are we assembled? Let every heart echo the answer— We are assembled to commemorate the Birth Day of the Independence of the United States of America—to offer up, on the altar of Liberty, the incense of Freemen—and to renew our resolutions to deserve our privileges so long as they are chartered to us by Heaven. In this employment, and on this day, we unite with thousands and hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens from the river St. Croix to the Mississippi.

THE gratitude of a free people, is an oblation that the ministering Angels of Heaven will with pleasure bear to the throne of Him who sways the sceptre of the universe!

No people on earth have more reason to rejoice than the citizens of America. The Constitution of each State, and the Supreme Charter of the Nation, are the result of the collected wisdom of the Fathers of our Land. The free suffrages of millions elected them to the arduous work. Under the smiles of Providence, their deliberations produced Constitutions that have been sanctioned by your adoption, attended with the accomplishment of that political happiness they contemplated, and followed with the admiration of a world.

TURN, my fellow citizens, to the pages of our history, from the first efforts of the British government to lord it over us, to that eventful period when
when

when the Congress of United America assumed a station high to the view of gazing nations, appealed to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of their intentions, and solemnly published and declared, that these then united colonies were, and of right ought to be, **FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES.** The events of that period are still fresh in the memories of you, my Fathers; the recollection of which even at this moment, must excite emotions that language cannot express.—Liberty or Slavery were the alternatives of the day. You can look back and see this then infant country, comparatively speaking, without army, navy, discipline, or strength, struggling with unexampled heroism against the wealth, power, navy, and veteran armies of one of the most powerful nations in Europe. You can remember the hazardous situation of every thing dear to you—the loud, the continual call for men, money, provisions, and clothing, when your resources were scarcely adequate to your own subsistence. The din of arms, and the groans of slaughtered brethren and sons, still vibrate in your ears, and harrow up your souls. Amidst all these distresses, thanks to the God of Armies, the energy of your hearts remained unimpaired: And Congress, the organ of the country, undismayed with the surrounding scenes of carnage and destruction, caught the clarion of fame, and on the fourth day of July, seventeen hundred and seventy-six, proclaimed to the nations of the earth the **INDEPENDENCE OF AMERICA.** The sound reached Earth's remotest corners: Kingdoms and Empires looked on with astonishment. A people, scarcely recognized in history, resisting, in defence of their liberties, with more than Roman prowess, the united arms of England, Scotland, and Ireland—when the hand of oppression, armed with accumulated vengeance,

was

was just ready to crush them—rising with cool, determined resolution on to the theatre of nations, and declaring themselves free and independent—was a spectacle never before exhibited to the view of the world. The Supreme Arbiter of Nations ratified the deed, stamped it with his almighty fiat, and deposited the glorious declaration in the archives of Heaven.

THE limits of this address preclude a particular description of those interesting events that succeeded the declaration of independence, and ended in the consummation of our wishes. The history of those events can never be too often recollected. To every American they should be familiar. Parents should recite them to their children: And in every school they should constitute a part of the exercises. Then should we realize our obligations to Him who sitteth upon the Throne of the Universe: Then would our children grow up with a knowledge of the value of their rights and privileges, and in strains of piety exclaim, *We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what thou didst in their days, in the times of old.*

THE heart of every American must palpitate with trembling gratitude, when he recollects how often Providence appeared to afford us its special interposition from the commencement of our revolution to the present period. Can ye, who were actors in the all-important drama, recollect without emotion that GEORGE WASHINGTON had his enemies in Congress, and was preserved in command by little less than a miracle, at a moment when the fate of America appeared to be suspended upon his genius and resources?—Recollect that same GEORGE WASHINGTON flying through the Jer-
sey

sees before a triumphant enemy, with the remains of an army—reduced to a handful of men—worn out with fatigue—suffering for every necessary—and bleeding at every step—suddenly rallying his little band of fellow sufferers—inspiring them with new life and heroism—turning back, and rushing like lightning upon the numerous legions of Britain—conquering a very considerable number—and striking terror into the whole. Recollect these events, fellow citizens, and you must adopt the language of inspiration, *If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say: If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us.*

THESE instances of the interposition of Providence were but a preface to those that followed. Whence arose that spirit of enterprize, that contempt of danger, that martial ardor, which led the columns of New Hampshire to the heights of Bennington? The sixteenth day of August, seventeen hundred and seventy-seven, will be forever memorable in the records of Columbia. Undisciplined valor, armed with musquetry only, amidst clouds of dust and smoke, and under the oppression of a servid sun, opposed and *triumphed, twice in the same day*, over the veterans of Europe, supported with artillery. Corfes of slaughtered heroes covered the fields of battle, and bore testimony to the persevering courage of victors and vanquished. The laurels won in the battles of Bennington, will bloom as long as heroism commands applause.

THIS unexpected effort and success was all-important in its consequences. Army after army of the first troops that Europe could afford, soon became

came captives to our arms. Their discipline and strength yielded, under Providence, to the spirit and energy of men fighting for liberty. France and Spain found it for their interest to cross the Atlantic, and assist us with fleets and armies. Heaven, too, raised us friends in the very bosom of Great Britain, who exerted all their powers to put a period to our distresses. At length, after an eight years war, the Independence of these United States was acknowledged by our enemies, and the glad tidings of peace were proclaimed. The diplomatic abilities of an ADAMS and a JAY, obtained us such terms in the Definitive Treaty as were highly important and advantageous, notwithstanding the machinations of France to the contrary.

THE four or five succeeding years convinced us, that the forms of Government, devised in the hour of danger, and upon the spur of occasion, answered their end so long as common danger created common interest. When that cause ceased to operate, the interests of different States, situated in almost every degree of climate, began to clash. The arm of Government was nerveless. Congress could only recommend. And several of the most wealthy States in the Union availed themselves of the inefficiency of Government, and refused to make their contributions to its support. Commerce stagnated: Agriculture languished: The people felt the calamity without knowing its origin: They found themselves in debt to one another, and to their respective Governments, without ability to obtain relief: And to complete the distressing scene, some of the people, in some of the States, inconsiderately rose in rebellion to their respective Governments. These partial rebellions were then considered as the frowns of Heaven.

The

The philosophic Christian now views them as the events which enforced upon every reflecting mind the necessity of an energetic National Government—as the events which led to the formation of that Federal Constitution, under which we now enjoy the greatest national blessings.

THE novelty of parts of the Federal Constitution alarmed many of our best disposed citizens. It was the most important experiment that a nation could make ; and, as it was impossible for every man to foresee all its operation, it was but natural that its adoption should be opposed. But the efforts of our wisest citizens succeeded : The Constitution was adopted : And its operation has justified its warmest advocates, and converted the zeal of opposition to its support. Here again we were highly favored of Heaven ! The annals of mankind do not furnish an instance, before this, of a great people deliberately devising a form of Government—coolly discussing its several parts—and finally adopting and carrying it into execution without force or violence. The foundation of all other Governments in the world had been laid in the blood of thousands !

GEORGE WASHINGTON was still *preserved* to preside at the head of our new Government—organize its administration—and give it such a direction as should best promote the interest and happiness of the nation without disaffecting the people. His labors have been attended with astonishing success. Wonderful Hero ! Magnanimous President ! By your arms, under God, you have given liberty to a nation—by your wisdom, the enjoyment of that liberty is secured to millions !

So

So important, so interesting have been the events which have taken place in this country, that it is difficult to decide which is of the greatest moment. The magnitude of those that have been mentioned, excite wonder and astonishment. But those events, those interpositions of Providence, do not affect the mind of the speaker so forcibly as the recollection of that **REVOLUTION OF OPINION** which has taken place in these States within a short period. It is difficult, fellow citizens, to convey in that concise manner the occasion requires, an adequate idea of the importance of this event.

Not far from the time of the establishment of our Federal Constitution, France began to aspire after freedom. The recollection of the assistance we had derived from her fleets and armies, excited in our breasts a lively interest in all her concerns. We stopped not to recollect the motives that induced the Government of France to afford us that assistance, or to recollect her efforts to abridge our rights and privileges at the making of the treaty of peace. Frenchmen struggling for liberty, were dear to us: With them we rejoiced—with them we wept. Their triumphs over tyranny were celebrated throughout America. Their professions of respect to the true principles of liberty, and the rights of neutral nations, confirmed our enthusiastic attachment.—But—as soon as they had obtained that liberty for which they at first contended, their lust of domination

Grew with their growth and strength'ned with their strength,

and we soon found them giving the lie to their professions, and exercising the worst of tyrannies as far as their power extended. Every exertion was made --we shudder at the recital--to prepare the minds

B

of

of their own people to outrage humanity, despise every thing like morality, and pour contempt upon Almighty God. These objects effected, no act, *art*, no intrigue, no "diplomatic skill" was left unpractised, first, to amuse and flatter the mass of people in other nations with their friendship, fascinate them with the sounds of liberty, equality, and the rights of man, and render them dissatisfied with their constituted authorities: They then declared war, as they pretended, against the *Governments*—preceded their armies with fine-wrought, artful addresses to the common people against whom they were marching—corrupted the military that opposed them—sowed dissension in the Senates—created distrust, disunion, and dismay—over-run the countries—and oppressed the wretched inhabitants with the most cruel exactions. Too late the poor deluded victims of French duplicity found their Governments and ancient privileges destroyed, their property despoiled and gone, and themselves and little ones at the mercy of an armed banditti. Thus fell Holland, Geneva, Switzerland, and the Italian States. Thus these marauders intended to attack, over-run, and enslave America. They commenced their attack with the most insidious attempts to draw the public opinion to their views and interests. French philosophy was propagated every where; the basis of which is, that man by nature is good, and that all governmental restraints are so many impediments in the paths of virtue. Upon this theme their writers and missionaries dwelt with rapture, and many of our first characters were for a time led away with the delusion; the evident design of which was to create a reflection to the existing Government, in order that they might with the greater facility subjugate the country. The apostles of this new philosophy said and did every thing they

they could devise, to detach the affections of the people of these States from their Government, and their confidence from their men in office. For this purpose, societies in almost every State were created, organized, and rendered active: A regular correspondence was had: And their joint efforts were directed to the destruction of the beautiful fabric of our National Government, and the prostration of our country at the feet of France. To facilitate the execution of their designs, they had on their side the ingenuous gratitude of the American people: They had, too, the weaknesses, prejudices, and vices of human nature. All disorganizers, all needy adventurers, all demagogues, and all discontented persons, enlisted under their banners: And thousands and thousands of well disposed citizens were carried away with the torrent of opinion, and became inimical to the work of their own hands. In pursuance of the same system, France at the time most favorable to her views began her depredations upon our commerce, and had the effrontery to charge her aggressions to the misconduct and aristocracy of our own Government. Thus our fears and avarice were wrought upon to make us disciples of French politics. *At that period, these United States stood upon the brink of destruction.* "THUS FAR SHALT THOU GO, AND NO FARTHER," said that same Providence which had heretofore so often protected America. GEORGE WASHINGTON struck a deadly blow at those self-created societies—those hot-beds of political poisons. The measures of an ADAMS tore asunder the veil of French hypocrisy, and exposed to the detestation of the world their intrigue, corruption, unprincipled ambition, and infernal plans. The wise and good in every State rallied round the altars of their country: And all the powers of reason,

address,

addresses, and eloquence, were exerted to correct the public opinion, and convince the great body of the people of this momentous truth, *that there is no Government on earth so favorable to the enjoyment of rational liberty, and the acquisition and enjoyment of property, as our own.* Blessed be God, the noble object has been effected! Truth has triumphed! The citizens of these United States are now convinced, that French politics were specious delusions, and that the real designs of France were hostile to our liberties and happiness: And to prove their conversion to rational philosophy, and abhorrence of every thing like French philosophy or French politics, they have dismissed nearly all their public servants whose minds were infected with French principles, and elected men whose opinions, sentiments, and habits, are truly federal, truly American. Even the Virginia delegation to Congress, which was formerly, with one or two exceptions, altogether in the French interest, has become renovated; and ten out of seventeen are now zealous advocates of the cause of Federalism.

If, my fellow citizens, we have not been conducted by a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, yet the hand of the Lord has been most evidently with us: And we are now in the quiet possession of civil and religious liberty; our Government is supported with the pillars of wisdom, morality and religion; our national character commands the respect of foreign nations; our stars and stripes wave in every corner of the globe; our resources far exceed the requisitions of Government; and we live under our own vines and fig trees, and have none to molest or make us afraid.

To perpetuate this political happiness, and transmit

mit it unimpaired to posterity, is a duty incumbent upon us; the violation or neglect of which, must call down the vengeance of incensed Heaven. Let us look at our lisping babes, let us cast an eye into futurity, and reflect upon the millions yet unborn, and we must read our obligations to discharge this duty, in characters as strong, and as impressive, as were those on the two tables of testimony written with the finger of God upon Mount Sinai.

PROPERLY to appreciate the blessings we enjoy, is the first lesson we should inculcate upon one another. For this purpose, we are now assembled: For this purpose, we see a body of infantry, and a corps of cavalry, both, respectable and numerous, voluntarily appearing under arms: For the same purpose, this day is devoted by thousands to festivity and joy: And for this purpose, the *fourth day of July* should be forever consecrated by the Nation at large as a day of Jubilee. So long as we realize the value of our rights and privileges, so long we shall preserve a spirit to cherish and defend them.

THE habits of industry, and the desire of gain, although highly commendable, have a tendency to detach our feelings and regards from objects of a public nature, and confine all our views and wishes to the narrow circle of self. Hence we should at all times be upon our guard to check this tendency: Hence we should, at all times, cultivate general benevolence, public spirit, and noble sentiments.

GOVERNMENTS, like ours, which rest in a peculiar manner upon public opinion, must always expect the attacks of faction. In every nation, there are the disappointed, the ambitious, the discontented,

ed, who can have no hopes of succeeding in their wishes whilst order and equal laws govern the community. In the convulsions of Government, all their expectations centre. As therefore republics exist by public opinion; as it is much easier to prejudice the public mind, than to direct it properly; it becomes convenient to these factious spirits to clamour loudly about real or imaginary abuses of Government, to revile and calumniate men in office, rob them of the confidence of the people, complain much of mispence of public money, the extravagance of taxes; and, in short, to leave no measure untried to set the current of public opinion against the existing order of things, and "*stop the wheels of Government.*" Against these disturbers of society, we should frown with indignation, and bear testimony to the falsehood of their misrepresentations. Silence in this case would be a crime.

COMMON sense dictates, that our Government is a Government of our own choice; that the persons who administer it, are the men of our choice; and that they can have no interest separate from that of their constituents—of course, they are entitled to our confidence, and their measures to our support.

It is to be regretted, that some good men indulge themselves in complaints against the measures of Government, without having had the means fully to investigate the reason and necessity of those measures. Complaints from such men, make very unfavourable impressions upon the minds of the weak and ignorant, and unintentionally produce very mischievous effects. Candor and patriotism require those who live remote from the principal sources of information, to be very cautious in pass-
ing

ing censure upon measures adopted by our National Executive or Legislature.

UPON these United States, the eyes of the world are fixed. Not one Republic exists on earth, whose commencement was prior to ours. *Faction, distrust, disunion, and timid politics*, have opened the graves in which they all lie buried. If, with all our advantages, fellow citizens, we preserve not our present Government, **THE DISSOLUTION OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC WILL CONSTITUTE AN EPOCH IN THE ANNALS OF MANKIND, FROM WHICH WILL BE DATED THEIR CONVICTION, THAT HUMAN NATURE AND REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENTS ARE ABSOLUTELY INCOMPATIBLE, AND THAT ALL FURTHER ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH REPUBLICS WILL BE CHIMERICAL AND ABSURD.**

SHALL we, my fellow countrymen, furnish to the world the last proof of human depravity?— Shall we dishonor the memories of our slumbering Ancestors? Shall we rouse from their graves the indignant spirits of a Warren, a Montgomery, and the thousands who nobly fell in the cause of our freedom? Shall the glory and laurels of America be entombed by us? Shall the children of our loins, and the long succession of posterity, be by our hands loaded with the chains of slavery?— Forbid it, Honor! Forbid it, Virtue! Forbid it, O Almighty God!

AWAY then, Americans, with every sentiment that is not in unison with the public weal. Let our private concerns yield to the calls of our Country. Let us grudge not the earnings of a day, a month, or a year, in the support of the Government of our choice.

choice. Let us reconcile jarring opinions. Let us animate each other in the discharge of every duty. Let us throng the temples of Wisdom, Morality, and Religion. Let us inform our minds—purify our hearts—and with our expiring breath pray for the peace and prosperity of America.

