

AN
ORATION

DELIVERED AT EAST GUILFORD,

IN CONNECTICUT

THE FOURTH DAY OF JULY, 1801.

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY TIMOTHY TODD.

Published at the request of a numerous and respectable
circle of acquaintance, in CONNECTICUT and VERMONT.

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-RESPECTED FRIENDS & FELLOW CITIZENS,

ON this memorable anniversary, which may be justly considered the birth day of our Nation; a day on which festivity and innocent amusement universally abound; and a day, the importance of which is so well understood—what can be expected from the speaker? Shall I lead your minds back to the events of our revolutionary war? The school books of children hold up the picture. History contains the whole, and Orators and Poets, have exhausted the resources of fancy to enliven the scene. How many of you can remember the days when our shores were invaded by an hostile foe; when all access to the ocean was denied; when fields were laid waste, and dwellings, and temples were wraped in flames, in a word when the trumpet of war was sounded from the cold regions of the north, to the scorching heat of the south, and not a town, village, or hamlet, on this extensive continent, but felt its direful effect!—Need we mention, that when the whole power of Britain and her allies, were commissioned for our destruction, and had already arrived on our coasts—flushed with pride, and confident in their numbers and superior discipline, that amidst this general danger, a band of Patriots in Congress assembled to the number of fifty-five, had the manly resolution to cut the gordian knot which bound the colonies to the parent state, & announce to the world “that we are, and of right ought to be, free and independant States.” From this era all overtures for accommodation from the British Court; all specious professions from her ministers; all servile adulation offered our Congress, and our General, had no other effect than to prompt them to this spirited declaration—“We will never submit to treat with our enemies, unless they first withdraw their fleets and armies from our country, or unequivocally acknowledge our Independence.” After a struggle of nearly eight years, Britain, haughty Britain, confirmed the sacred charter and acknowledged our claim to be just. It would be painful, indeed, to mention the mighty ill which pervaded our whole country during this arduous struggle: When brother was armed against brother, neighbor against neighbor, and one Ameri-

can citizen against another.—This town was perhaps better united than almost any one of equal population on the continent, and few settlements experienced less ravages; but here, even here, in these peaceful borders, the clangor of arms has been heard.—This beautiful plain on which this sanctuary stands, has more than once been covered with martial tents, and on our holy days devoted to the sacred worship of God. These pews, and these galleries have been filled with warlike instruments to repel an invading foe, to whom we were every hour exposed. How often have our slumbers been disturbed by the bellowing of our enemy's artillery, and even the blood of our neighbors has flowed among us. Children were made orphans! Widows mourned on every side, and all this horror and distress to procure that glorious, that precious boon, Independence.—Independence was finally obtained, and the enemy recalled from our shores. Heavenly peace descended from on high, again to dwell with men. But the fabric of our empire was like a dismantled fortress, left nearly in ruins; her finances were exhausted, and her resources could not immediately be brought into operation.—'Twas favorable indeed, and to their honor, be it mentioned, that the American army peaceably dispersed, poor and bourn down with hardships, and became private citizens. But many years were necessary to repair the universal ravages of war, and poverty, weakness, discontent and gloominess, was every where to be found. Amid this general distress, our efficient government was framed by the fathers of our country, as strong as virtue, as irresistible as truth, and as free as air.

THE people of the U. States, after a severe struggle on the subject of local interest, happily agreed, to sacrifice locality, & adopt one general interest. A new organization of government commenced, and the man, the most noted for prudence and valour of any known in the annals of time, presided at the head of administration. This government has been in operation thirteen years, and suffer me to enquire what have been its effects? To ascertain which let us take a partial review of this single parish, and then make more important observations on the Union at large.—

PREVIOUS to the American War, there had been built in this place from its first settlement, which was more than one hundred years to the year 83, eleven, or not to exceed twelve vessels, most of which were, indeed, small; the ag-

gregate tonnage amounted to less than six hundred tons, and the real value, as shipping now is, to less than twelve thousand dollars. Since the revolution there has been built here six ships, nine brigantines, fourteen schooners and twenty six sloops, (smaller are not mentioned) the tonnage amounts to five thousand five hundred tons, and the value at a moderate calculation, exclusive of spars and rigging, to one hundred and ten thousand dollars!—Will any one believe that commerce is injurious to community? Has agriculture suffered in consequence? Your fields are better cultivated & more fertile than formerly; your buildings and gardens in better repair; your houses of worship, and for schools greatly amended; industry is encouraged to the degree that idleness is unknown; the poor find employ and generous pay.—Want is a stranger among you. This is the situation of this place locally considered; and let us see what is the situation of the United States at large.—The population of which, at the close of the war, amounted to about three millions of souls. It now amounts to nearly six millions. At the peace of 1783, the merchant vessels in the whole of the United States were fewer in number and less valuable than the shipping which has been built in the single town of Guilford, since the war. At this time the United States is acknowledged by all to be the *first*, and believed by many to be the *first* Maritime Nation in the world. The exports from this country have been gradually increasing ever since our effective government, and of late have more than doubled once in two years. Notwithstanding the deprivations on our commerce by European powers, the balance of trade is highly in our favor. Wealth flows from every quarter of the globe. Both the Indies, the Mediterranean sea, and new discovered Isles in the pacific ocean, are sending their treasures here. America has become a carrier for a considerable part of the world. The landed interest is equally improved. Since the peace the state of New-Hampshire has doubled her numbers. Massachusetts greatly increased. Rhode-Island become more wealthy. Connecticut has increased in agriculture, population and riches. Vermont from twenty thousand have increased to one hundred and fifty four thousand souls. New-York has more than doubled her numbers. New-Jersey and Pennsylvania have vastly populated. The North-Western Territory, is rapidly settling. Kentucky and

Tennessee, from a few scattered huts have become strong and powerful States. And the Southern Atlantic States have equally flourished. This is a picture of prosperity, indeed; and what makes the lines more beautiful, we have elapsed a war.

We will then enquire—has the government of our country been unjust, cruel, or tyrannical? If so, whence this universal prosperity? Have any been oppressed by partial laws? Who can complain? Have the community been aggrieved by general laws? Sure y not. Oppression finds no place in our land. Let us cast our eyes over the whole world and say, is there a nation, or people on earth so free and so happy as America? Our only care ~~now~~ will be to retain these inestimable blessings. It will be in vain to boast of our numbers. It will be idle to depend on our riches, strength or resources. They alone are insufficient; something more must be depended on. Religion, morality, patriotism, public faith, union, and confidence in those men who control the affairs of our nation, and who were appointed by our own free suffrages, are all necessary. These things will give us strength and respectability, indeed. These things will be stronger than fleets & armies, & ensure our prosperity. But should discord, attended by a train of baleful passions pervade our happy land, evils greater than we have ever experienced, will attend us to our utter destruction. What discord so deadly as family discord? What anger so cruel as domestic anger! From foreign foes we have little to fear; from intestine broils we have every thing to dread.

To elucidate these sentiments, will you, with me take a glance at some ancient and modern nations, and view the transit of the former from liberty and prosperity, to slavery and barbarity. There once was a time when Greece was in the zenith of power. When the sun every day shone on a nation of freemen. When she had her *Agamemnon*, her *Laertes* & her *Trochilos*. When her enemies trembled at the name. When arts and science were highly promoted. When Athens was in her glory. When virtue was approved, and religion revered. But alas jealousy and distrust was infused into the midst of her citizens by rancorous men; and all the discordant passions of the soul were let loose. Her *Areopagus*, which was an assembly many times controlled by the populace, would banish a *Pericles*, who had

frequently saved his country, and was sheathed with honors. The manly virtues of Socrates could not protect this Philosopher; and many others who were true lovers of their country, who esteemed virtue, and revered the Gods, were frequently driven into exile, or more cruelly put to death.

Thus ingratitude and discord prepared the way for the destruction of the most enlightened nations in the world.

Rome, 'tis true made a province of Greece, but Greece conquered herself. Why did the people so often rage and imagine vain things? Rome was once free, powerful and virtuous; but how could she hold her citizens, or her dominion, when her citizens so often run into excess? when by their cruel jealousies, they would drive from their borders a Coriolanus and a Marcellus, the latter of whom, was so virtuous, that he fervently prayed as he left the walls of his beloved city, that Rome might be happy and never again need his services, but should she be invaded, that he might be permitted to fly to her assistance. How could this nation be free, when a restless Mob had power to sway the Empire, and proscribe the most virtuous citizen, and plunge them head-long from the *Tarpean* Rock. Faction, accursed faction, discord, fell discord, made mighty Rome, the then arbitress of the world, a field of blood. Cæsar grasped the empire, the diadem and robes of royalty; but faction subjugated Rome.

In tracing the history of Britain, we first find the people in a savage state, divided among numerous petty Chiefs and continually waging war against each other, untill they fell a prey to foreign conquest. The Romans, the Danes, and the Saxons, made their eruptions in turn. Untill the days of William, the Norman, stiled the Conqueror, who by force of arms invaded the Island & became King.—Imagination cannot paint the scenes of horror and distress, occasioned many years afterwards, by the civil wars which subsisted between the houses of York and Lancaster. After the Union of the *white* rose, and the *red*, England suffered amazing ills, under the Feudal System and Popish superstition.—Tyrannical Princes governed, and bloody persecutions were the consequences, untill Elizabeth ascended the throne. To the most consummate policy, she added the greatest mildness of character. Under her auspices the reformation was brought down to where it now stands, learning was encouraged to that degree, that many esteemed this to be the Au-

gustan age in England. Her successor was a pedant and a bigot, and prepared the way for those evils which plunged the nation in carnage, and brought the head of Charles his son and successor, to the scaffold. Britain then became a commonwealth, and the benevolent Philosopher indulged pleasing hopes, that the shackles of Kings were broken on that Isle forever. The passions of the people could not however be restrained. Faction banished the delusive charms of *Liberty* from her realms. Cromwell was declared lord protector, and though his enemies feared him abroad, his subjects trembled at home. In a few years his reign was over, and the nation, wearied out with his *Tyranny*, called from exile Charles the second, clothed him with the ensigns of royalty.—James succeeded his voluptuous brother Charles. He was a foolish tyrant, and bigoted papist.—The nation, again wearied out with their tyrants, exiled the house of the *Stuarts*, and called in William, prince of Orange, who was a protestant, and a whig, and settled the three Estates of King, Lords, and Commons, on the basis they now stand. Thus all prospect of republicanism was banished from that Isle, most probably forever.

France has long struggled in the noble cause of freedom. Her exertions were most certainly just. How did our hearts melt at her trials! How did our bosoms expand on news of her victories! How ardent were our wishes for her prosperity! We forgot all feelings but friendship.—How sadly have our hopes been blasted! One faction has arisen and destroyed another, and then fell a victim to third, until all confidence & all safety has been lost.—Three constitutions of government have been successively adopted, sealed with solemn oaths, and all again destroyed. It would harrow up the soul—It would curdle the blood in our veins, to recount one half of the horrid carnage, which has pervaded that beautiful country through the unrestrained passions and turpitude of the human heart. To stop those shocking scenes, to restore peace and confidence to the nation, the people at length submitted to be governed by a Buonaparte, a victorious general, and an extraordinary man. He now sways the sceptre of France with mildness and humanity, 'tis true, but his power is unlimited. He holds in his single hand the arm, navy, revenue, treasury, laws, freedom of debate, and printing presses, together with the sole pow-

er to declare war and make peace. What will be the end of his government, or what will succeed, is very doubtful.—

These things I have mentioned as a beacon, to warn the citizens of America, to avoid the fate of nations.

This country is far differently governed. Her own freemen control her. She is now trying an experiment, which has failed in every other part of the world, to support a free government; but which we pray to God may never fail here.—

The people of the United States were born free. Their fathers were freemen. Our New-England Colonial Governments before the war, were in fact republican. The habits of freedom have grown up and been incorporated with us, 'tis part of our very existence.

Light, knowledge and general information are universal disseminated. Children are every where educated. The laws are published, & every where to be found. Printing offices are unrestrained, and altho' our government is free and elective, it is a government of checks and ballances, and hedged round with a constitution. Shall we then fail to continue a republic—No—never, unless the evils which have attended other nations creep into ours.—The dangers we have to guard against, are irreligion, impiety, immorality, faction, jealousy, discord, envy, malice, hatred, revenge, detraction, defamation, and ingratitude, to which we ought in a special manner to add, FOREIGN INFLUENCE. These are the Rocks which have shipwrecked every Nation on Earth, and these are the rocks which the United States, ought to shun.

Finally, my friends, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise,

THINK ON THESE THINGS.

FINIS.