

William Tudor

AN

ORATION

PRONOUNCED

JULY 4, 1809,

AT THE REQUEST OF THE SELECTMEN OF THE TOWN OF

BOSTON,

IN COMMEMORATION

OF THE

Anniversary of American Independence.

BY WILLIAM TUDOR, JUN. ESQ.



BOSTON,
PRINTED BY JOSHUA BELCHER.
1809.

VOTE OF THE TOWN.

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AT a meeting of the freeholders and other inhabitants of the town of *Boston*, duly qualified and legally warned, in publick town-meeting, assembled at Fanueil-Hall, the 4th day of July, A.D. 1809—
On motion, voted, That the Selectmen be, and hereby are appointed a committee to wait on WILLIAM TUDOR, Jun. Esq. in the name of the town, and thank him for the elegant and spirited Oration, this day delivered by him, at the request of the town, upon the Anniversary of American Independence, in which were considered the feelings, manners, and principles, which produced the great national event ; and to request a copy of him for the press.

Attest,

WILLIAM COOPER, *Town Clerk.*

ORATION.

WE are assembled, my fellow citizens, after the custom of former years, to celebrate the festival of American Independence. The feelings of joy and generous pride, which belong to the Day, are greatly increased by the present attitude of our country, so nobly contrasted with its recent situation, and which harmonizes with the event we celebrate. Unaccustomed to habits of public speaking, I must without affectation, solicit the indulgence I shall need, in delivering my sentiments on this glorious anniversary.

“ To commemorate the feelings, manners, and principles, which led to this great national event, and the happy effects it has produced,” is one of the noblest themes that can be offered to eloquence and philosophy. Its consideration exhilarates the friends of liberty, and elevates the dignity of human nature. These feelings were the sentiments of security of property, freedom of person, and liberty of conscience; these manners, the simple forms of unsullied practical morality; these principles, the incontrovertible

maxims of devotion to God and respect to man. All the facts and recollections they involve, should be cherished with care, and taught with energy ; for while their impression remains, the posterity of those who bequeathed them, will never be slaves !

This subject is no curious novelty, produced in some political hotbed, to perish on exposure ; but is the durable growth of many generations ; and to be traced to another country, whence it was safely transplanted, to flourish here, in a congenial climate. These feelings, these maxims, these principles, were not the momentary effects of any sudden change, or espoused by the persuasion of any favourite leader ; they were not promulgated by ambition, amid the clamours of a mob, or adopted at the instigation of enthusiastic zealots, by a frenzied people. They were not avowed with rashness and insolence, supported by passion and proscription, and finally abandoned for submission and endurance. No, my countrymen, they were the consequences of rights, which their possessors inherited ; of education, which taught their value ; of situation, - that shewed their superiority ; of examples, which enforced their observance, transmitted from ancestors that made them sacred, to be left to offspring, which made them *dear*.

Our ancestors left their homes and their country, not for any infraction of their political rights, but to avoid persecution for their religious opinions. They embarked for these then unexplored regions, not in search for gold, or in pursuit of traffick ; not in thirst for conquest, or through want of subsistence, but to

enjoy freedom of religion. They landed in one of the least fruitful parts of the country, at the most inclement season of the year, and were neither dismayed nor discouraged. Their hardships and sufferings were sustained with a fortitude, worthy of the sublime object for which they emigrated. They contended with the forests, and the savages who roamed in them; and gradually surmounted both. Regardless of wealth, while they were hardly secure in their dwellings, they were occupied with the interests of education, and the establishment of laws, whose consequences are shewn in every feature of our history.

Persevering in a steady course, they never lost sight of the object for which they had contended, liberty of self-government. To this point all their exertions were directed. To perpetuate this, was the main object of education. Proceeding on a system, not more noble than hazardous, the institutions which they formed, suppose a higher degree of virtue and instruction in the citizens, than had ever yet been imagined in the policy of any state, of either ancient or modern times.

Fond of peace and subordination, intimately acquainted with their rights and duties, watchful against the slightest encroachment on the one, and prompt in performing the other, they felt a reverential attachment to the parent country. The period at last arrived, when their principles, their courage, and their talents were to be tried. The confined views of the British administration, became alarmed at the

growing strength of their distant colonies. Fearful of their prosperity, and ignorant of the ~~time~~^{truth}, perhaps novel interests of the two countries; they resolved to delay no longer, promulgating the doctrine of *unconditional submission*, and *the right to bind us in all cases whatsoever*. This doctrine was new to those, to whom it was preached, and the period, if there ever was one, when it could have been enforced, was irrevocably past.

During several years, they prepared us for events that followed, by arrogant, absurd pretensions at one moment, and paltry, unavailing concessions at another. Sometimes by a tax, and sometimes by a proclamation, they excited opposition without necessity, and quickened feelings, which they wished to stifle. We contended for the rights we had inherited. They seemed to consider, that these rights were lost by emigration, or weakened by distance; and that being colonists, we must be dependents. Thus viewing a continent, in the light of a sugar island, and a people accustomed to sovereignty, like its nerveless proprietors, in habitual dependence. Remonstrances succeeded to petitions, and when both were unavailing, a resolute appeal was made to the sword; which once drawn, the scabbard was thrown away, till the contest was decided, on which was pledged, "*our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honour.*"

You all know, and some of you shared, by your counsels, or your arms, in the immortal struggle that ensued. To many, it seemed as desperate, as it was



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unequal. But when a free people contend for their rights against invasion, if they are not betrayed by their leaders, they will finally obtain a triumph. Ours was as complete as it was merited. It was not the numbers who were slaughtered, nor the towns that were taken, which gave so great an interest to this war; it was the object that was contended for, and the characters of those engaged, which excited the admiration of other countries, as it should command the eternal gratitude of our own.

The interference of other nations gave great assistance to our cause, and powerfully conduced to its successful termination. Alas! the flame which has burnt here with such a genial, regulated heat, has since passed over them a devouring conflagration. The government of France, with the policy of a jealous rival, thought the moment favourable to assail her enemy, in what both esteemed a mortal part; and to check, as she imagined, our growth, by depriving us of parental support, either reduce us to insignificance, or protect us herself, by uniting our territories to her ancient possessions. The individuals who came to join us in the war, were the most valuable of her nobility, and with all the ardour of their nation; entered heartily into our cause. Those were not moments to scrutinize motives, and the important assistance was not estimated by the intentions of the ministry who sent, but by the gallant services of those who brought it. And although the men to whom we were really obliged, have since languished in poverty and exile, or perished on the scaffold the

impetuous impulse of national gratitude, transported us afterwards to the very verge of ruin, in favour of men, who had as little merit towards us, as compassion for the unfortunate sovereign who furnished this succour.

The events of this war would be interesting as a romance, what are they not, as the origin of our nation ! The individuals who distinguished themselves in its progress, will live illustrious in our annals, and our remotest posterity will venerate the remembrance of these statesmen and heroes. Among them, there was *one*, so preeminent, that I know not if it would be possible to deliver a discourse on this day, without celebrating his praise. I am not rashly venturing to delineate a character, which no ordinary hand should attempt ; but merely imitating the reverential affection of primitive nations, to carry one stone, to the monument of our IMMORTAL CHIEF ! It should rise under our hands, as our dominions extend, so that every citizen having it always in sight, may be animated to virtue, and excited to love of country.

To detail all the circumstances, which WASHINGTON had to encounter, would be to enumerate all the difficulties incident to a state of war, of civil war, and on his side almost destitute of the means of waging it. To tell how he surmounted them, would be to describe all the qualities of a great commander, all the virtues of an inflexible patriot.

When he had led his brave and suffering companions to a glorious peace, his interference at a critical moment, prevented them from listening to in-



sidious counsels, which would have tarnished their laurels. He dismissed them, and withdrew himself, unpensioned and unpaid, from the influence of command, and the animating bustle of a camp, to the tranquillity of private life. Yet he was destined again to save his country. The cool wisdom of his mind, and the unblemished, unsuspected virtue of his character, conducted our new government into the broad highway of prosperity, though impeded by faction, and almost bent to the earth, by the tempest of the French revolution.

Again in retirement, we beheld him in the bosom of his family, as simple in his habits, and as unaffectedly relinquishing all influence, as though he had not been "*the first in war*" and "*the first in peace.*" But his services were coeval with his life, and when danger thickened, he was appealed to once more, and his name and generous support, were cordially given to the friends with whom he had acted; which last magnanimous service proved how well he merited "*to be first in the hearts of his countrymen.*" His fame, Americans, is our most glorious, as well as our most valuable possession; and as the increasing mists of time, obscure its minuter parts from our view, may it be exalted, like a mountain from which we recede, till it is blended with our contemplations in the heavens!

Time is wanting, to dwell on the memory of those departed statesmen and warriors, who have contributed to their country's happiness and glory. Yet one cannot be forgotten, since even the joy of

this day is interrupted by the recollection, that on its last anniversary, Providence took from among us, a man, whose ardour and anxiety for his country's welfare, proved at once his wisdom and attachment. A man, whose views and feelings were above not only the imitation, but even the conception, of vulgar, sordid ambition. A man, who united

The gentlest manners, with the noblest mind.

Every region produces plants and animals, but *men* like AMES, make a country beloved and respected.

The return of peace found the confederate States in poverty, anarchy, and insignificance; natural to a nation, exhausted by its first contest, before its resources were developed, or its government matured. This was a dangerous crisis, but as faction had not yet been organized, nor the people yet bewildered; they rightly selected those who had saved them in a contest with their enemies, now to save them from themselves. This service was performed as successfully as the other, and the consequent growth of our national prosperity, was more rapid and vigorous than the vegetation of a tropical summer.

Among the dangers which menaced our new government, was one peculiar to its situation, naturally to be expected, which could only be obviated by time and reflection, but which was greatly aggravated by subsequent events. This danger was the imperfect sentiment of independence. As we had known but one war, we thought we had but one enemy, and defiance of her, was apt to be mistaken for feeling in-

dependent of the world. All those, whose animosity could not be extinguished even by success ; and who not being accustomed to look round on the great panorama of the world, were only watchful of a single power, and jealous of independence as relating only to her, were supinely indifferent to all other encroachments. This was a disorder which skilful statesmen were not surprised at, but which had nearly baffled all their power to remedy. Aided by time and events they succeeded. They taught their countrymen, with few exceptions, that independence was no equivocal, inconsistent state, that a nation who possessed it must rely only on themselves ; and that the people of the United States must hold Great Britain, as they held other nations, “ *enemies in war, in peace friends.*”

When the powerful impressions produced by an exasperated quarrel, were worn down by time ; the mutual hatred of both parties relented, in contemplating the advantages resulting to both, from the new relations in which they were placed. Laws, language, corresponding habits and wants, were strong inducements to amity and good will. To these may be added in elevated minds, that we were peopling an extensive continent, and spreading the principles of liberty so widely, as to promise their eternal duration ; and that we had left in their keeping, the ashes of our ancestors ; and derived from them, almost all that is valuable in our knowledge, or venerable in our institutions. Doubtless, there are in Great Britain, some narrow spirits, with

whom mortification and anger are still alive, some greedy monopolizers, whose souls are in their ledgers, some short-sighted thinkers, who believe our gain is their loss ; and these we can oppose, with some ignoble beings, who if they once hate can never be appeased, some unfair protectors of enemies' property, some envious gazers at superior wealth, yet surely all these together, form a wretched, dwindling minority.

There are periods in the history of nations, when mankind are quietly occupied in tilling the earth, and transporting with peaceable sails, its produce from shore to shore ; when the arts which gladden and embellish life, are the only objects of attention ; when the temple of Janus is shut, and the calamities of war forgotten in the delights of peace. In these happy times, a people may be honorably employed, in celebrating the characters of their illustrious men, in chanting their own praises, and fearlessly reposing in their own security. But this is not one of those periods. We live in the stormy season of history, and the hurricane that has torn so many ancient, deep rooted trees from their foundation, threatens the young, and hardly confirmed growth of our happiness. Look around—the tempest still lowers, and distant as we are, we may yet be swept by its fury. From the grateful task, of dwelling on our national glory, it will be useful in times like the present, to look abroad, and examine the situation of the rest of the world.

At the close of the American war, the naval and military forces of Europe, were divided among several nations, and power was so nearly balanced, that if the weakest were not safe from insult, they at least could not be attacked with impunity. A campaign then was brilliant if a single battle was won, or a single town taken. War was a trial of skill and address, conducted with almost regular etiquette, and ended successfully, with the acquisition of a province, or the celebration of a marriage. These wars excited no very serious alarm, because their ravages were confined to the immediate seat of them, and the relative position of States, experienced none, or very slight alteration. The world might be divided in affections, between the contending parties, and espouse the cause of one or the other, with as little harm, as the spectators at a Tournament, would range themselves under the different banners of the gallant Knights. What is the character of war now ?

England holds the naval power, and scours every sea, almost without finding an enemy. France marshals the continent in arms, and from the extremity of Italy to the Gulph of Finland, moves the armies of Europe, at her discretion. Examine the parties engaged in this tremendous warfare ; on one side, a nation not numerous, but brave ; not warlike, but free ; supporting incredible burthens, yet maintaining her freedom ; contending not against ordinary defeat, but annihilation ; yet agitated by the perpetual strife of parties, and subject to divided counsels. On the other, a great nation, composed of

soldiers, passionately fond of military glory, and abounding in skilful generals; her whole force directed by one man, who suffers no murmur of disobedience unpunished, or any hint of opposition, without disgrace. With not only these armies, and these officers, but with twenty princes trembling at his power, and holding the lives and resources of their subjects at his command; still universal empire is not within his reach, till his enemy is destroyed. Defeat to one party, is destruction; to the other, only a diminution of ill-gotten power.

Who can hesitate on which side to wish success? Who, that has feeling, honour, or independence, that will not mingle his prayers with those, which from every corner of Europe, are hourly, though inaudibly, ascending to the Throne of Eternal Justice, to blast the common oppressor of mankind? If the British power were *now* destroyed, how long could Justice protect her remotest altar from profanation? How long would Liberty be allowed a resting or a hiding place? This is the last barrier, between whatever people are unsubdued, and universal despotism: May it last to withstand the assaults of the storm, till the Genius who directs it, is himself overwhelmed by its fury.

The British power, great as it fortunately is, does not form a *permanent* cause of alarm to other nations, because it contains within itself the seeds of its own decay. A reestablishment of the balance of power would restore peace, and after a few years of peace, half her ships would be rotten, half her ex-

perienced officers no more, while the same period would be creating and bringing forward the resources of her neighbours.

It cannot be the desire of any man to be at war with France. She has the strongest guarantees, that we wish to be at peace with her. The advantages we derive from a commercial intercourse, and the evils of war, are sufficient security, that we would preserve a state of amity, if no sacrifices of our independence are required. Yet she should not be allowed to proclaim us her allies; and to allege that she plunders our merchants to second the views of our government. Do not let us, however, mistake a miserable spirit of enmity to individuals, nor the fostering unworthy national prejudices, for the political vigilance that is necessary. Let us appreciate justly the splendid traits of the French character, while we watch every motion of that ambitious government.

The present sovereign of France, though he has lived only half the common age of man, is the most wonderful character that the world has produced. Inmeasurably ambitious, indefatigably active, a consummate politician, a daring soldier, a splendid protector of the fine arts, he is greedy of every species of renown, and anxious to eclipse the splendour of ancient and modern times. His flatterers seldom talk now of his military exploits, but dwell upon his policy, his institutions, and his publick works. To compare him with Alexander, Cesar, or Charles XII. is viewing only parts of his character. He directs

the movements of his veteran armies, and suggests the measures of his intriguing cabinet. The acts of every department of government emanate from him, and every proposition is submitted to his revision. His generals or his ministers perish at his nod, and his senate and noblesse hold their existence at his will. He has planted himself in the middle of Europe, while his numerous branches spreading over tributary kingdoms, like those of the sacred tree of India, take root, and are all connected with the parent stock. He knows that after the bloody proscriptions of Sylla, the monster died in his bed, and that the clemency of Cesar cost him his life; he therefore never does a deed of mercy, but through policy, nor is ever turned by compunction, from an act of useful cruelty.¹ He found the chariot of government drawn at random, with frantick, revolutionary vigour, while those who feebly held the reins, were hurled from their places, and trampled under foot: he vaulted into the seat, converted it into a car of Victory, which, with sounding lash, and steady impetuosity, he drives over prostrate Europe.

Some have supposed, judging him by other men, that conscience would haunt and distract him. Be not deceived...Ambition is not impeded a moment; the hour of conscience is not yet arrived. He has no leisure for conscience. The new map of Europe is not yet completed; some plans of conquest are yet unexecuted; some nations that have been overrun, are yet unsettled. If he be destined to sit in

triumph on the conquered world ; if the nations of Europe, accustomed to their chains, wear them without murmuring or reluctance ; then, alas ! too late for freedom, the mighty despot, with no other world to conquer, may find, instead of the charms of repose, the horrors of conscience.²

The nation that is lulled by his flattery, seduced by his splendour, or awed by his power, is already conquered. Every statesman, who does not survey his country, and calculate how she can be useful to France, and what forms it will be most convenient for the French Emperour to give her ; and then does not hold himself ready, at all points, and at all moments, for prevention and resistance, is hastening the ruin of his country. Without considering that he has demanded and received the useless sacrifice of the St. Domingo trade, that his fleets have burnt our ships at sea, that he has openly violated the most important provision of a solemn treaty ; and after seizing twenty millions of property, added intolerable insult to injury, by affecting to hold it as the price of our acquiescence in his measures, let us examine what we have to apprehend from the French Emperour, by a glance at his general policy, and his known treatment of other powers.

The fate of Holland, of Switzerland, the free cities of Germany, Venice, Genoa, Geneva, and the other republicks of Europe, is a twice-told tale, that has become wearisome to the ear and indifferent to the mind. Yet that the world may not want warnings, every year produces some more portentous, to

rouse infatuation from its lethargy. Let us estimate his policy, by a consideration of the state of Spain. The other conquests were perhaps necessary to his power. Those nations were unwilling to sacrifice their interests and submit to his ruinous despotism. But Spain, in what manner had she acted?

Spain, long oppressed by a variety of abuses, enfeebled by a train of corruptions, and in the very dotage of despotism, could still boast, "*that the sun never set on her dominions.*" An enervated court, though personally bound to avenge the destruction of the principal branch of their family, was one of the first to conclude a peace with the revolutionary government of France. From that period her blood and treasures have been sacrificed in the cause of that country. Without a single object of her own to gain, she sent her fleets to be sacrificed, exposed her colonies to capture, and poured the wealth of America into the insatiable jaws of France.

To Napoleon the subservience has been still greater. The sword of Francis I. was surrendered to him, and if there be any choice among humiliations, one of the last, which a nation should be willing to suffer, is the surrender of national trophies of victory. In aid of his personal ambition, she sent the flower of her army to the north of Europe, to obey his orders, while with more than Trojan infatuation, she admitted his troops into her citadels.

He was in the mean time carrying distrust and enmity into the deluded family of the sovereign. A scene of intrigues and changes followed, confused

and mysterious, the relation of which conjures up ideas of secret perfidy and murder, till we seem oppressed, as if breathing the pestiferous atmosphere of a dungeon. He approaches to the frontiers, and invites them to repose confidence in him, and suffer him to be the disinterested arbiter of their difficulties. Promises of friendship and good will are showered upon them, and grand officers of the Legion of Honour are employed in giving the most solemn pledges of good faith and security, to hasten the confirmation of the blackest treachery. With incredible infatuation, this bewildered family and their base favorites, vainly confiding in him, who owed them so much, enter the territories of France—no friend to warn them of the certain destiny that awaits them. The guards once passed—the last of the Bourbons are prisoners to this soldier of chance, and the empire of Spain and the Indies, their fortune, and their fame, were lost forever !

He cannot allege that he has done this to benefit Spain, and renovate her power, because it is notorious, he could have dictated what measures he pleased to the Spanish court. The same men who were held in disgrace, by the minister who had been so long the creature of France, were banished from all concern in affairs, because they wished to introduce reforms. They are now at the head of their countrymen who have resisted the invader, and who may yet drive him from their territory. The memorable defence of Sarragossa, is a noble contrast to the base treason and cowardice, with which so many cities in other

parts of Europe have been ceded. Let the patriotic Spaniards persevere. What cause is desperate, when the situation of America in the winter of 1776 is remembered ?

If then my countrymen, neither the rights of independent states, nor the strongest claims of strict alliance, and personal obligation ; neither the fear of exposure, nor any respect for the opinion of mankind, can deter this man from prosecuting his plan of aggrandizement, what reasons have we to think ourselves secure ?—Our distance, the bravery and patriotism of our citizens will be the answer. The distance, the rolling ocean, are the impediments, with which, drivelling, self-satisfied politicians have allayed our solicitude.—Have we not seen his armies besieging a town on the Baltick, dictating a peace to Russia at Tilsit, while another army was at the same moment menacing Sicily with invasion ? and do we talk of distance ? If England were conquered, would not her navy which is now the first obstacle, become the ready means to transport his legions to our shores ? unless we could be persuaded, that by sparing him that trouble, we should obtain better terms ? From the bravery and patriotism of our citizens, the noblest efforts would indeed be expected : but even bravery and patriotism may at last be crushed by numbers. Have we not reason to fear too, that his pioneers would be ready, to sow division and deprecate resistance ? Or, can we flatter ourselves that we are the only nation he has neglected to supply with spies and traitors ? That his mi-

nisters who seem instinctively to know, how and when to dupe imbecility; and if a single latent spark of treachery exists, are sure to strike it out, have left our country unassayed by their arts?—Let some of our newspapers be examined for the answer.

To return for a moment to ourselves. Let us be grateful my fellow citizens, that the nation is no longer on its knees, with its hands in fetters. If they, who now administer the affairs of the Government, will assume an erect posture, and shew to every country, that they will not submit to insult, or aggression; their generous countrymen, regardless of names, will support them at every hazard, while they defend our INDEPENDENCE.

NOTES.

Note 1.—It is of the highest importance, to estimate justly the character of our enemies. The idle tales which have been circulated about Bonaparte, give a false notion of his character, and by representing him as cruel from caprice and not policy, diminish the apprehensions which should be entertained respecting him. He does not like an Algerine Bey commit wanton acts of atrocity, and cut off heads for his amusement: but he is never deterred from committing any crime that can advance his power. When he murdered the Duke of d'Enghien, he knew that he annihilated the only branch of the Bourbons, which he had reason to fear, and in this instance, as in many others, it is said he disregarded the opinion and entreaties of every person about him.

Note 2.—If conscience is ever aroused, it will be by reflecting on the tears and blood he has caused by the *conscription*. The accumulated misery occasioned by this system cannot be conceived by any man, who has not witnessed the distress it causes in France. It oppresses every family in the empire. It is a system of tyranny that has never been equalled, whether we consider its extent, its severity, or the remorseless manner in which it is executed. Some persons are fond of dwelling on the hardships of the British system of impressment, a system which nothing but absolute necessity can justify, yet it is confined to a single profession, which is voluntarily assumed; and the individuals who are subject to it, are well paid and well fed, and if they are disabled have a comfortable provision for life. The conscription carries desolation into every dwelling in France. Those who have no idea of its extent, will find an able analysis of it in the sixth number of the Select Reviews published at Philadelphia, extracted from the Edinburgh, for January, 1809.

Note 3.—I hope I shall not be misconstrued by *uncandid dulness*! I do not believe that any Power, could enslave my country, but I do believe if the British navy were now annihilated, two hundred thousand veteran French, Germans, and Italians, would cover it with blood and ashes. That the French Emperor can send these troops, no man who remembers that he was able directly after the peace of Amiens with the diminished navy of France to pour 70,000 men, into St. Domingo, can have a doubt; whether he *will*, is left to the reflection of those, who have considered his general policy.