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ORATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

GENERAL SOCIETY OF MECHANICS AND TRADESMEN
THE TAMMANY SOCIETY, OR COLUMBIAN ORDER,
THE DEMOCRATIC AND NEW-YORK
COOPER SOCIETIES
AND
OTHER CITIZENS.
JULY 4th, 1797.

MEANS

FOR THE
PRESERVATION
OF
PUBLIC LIBERTY.

AN
ORATION

DELIVERED IN THE NEW DUTCH CHURCH,
ON THE
FOURTH OF JULY, 1797.

BEING THE TWENTY-FIRST
ANNIVERSARY OF OUR INDEPENDENCE.

By G. J. WARNER.

"COLUMBIA, Hail! immortal be thy Reign,
Without a King, we till the smiling Plain;
Without a King, the Laws maintain their Sway,
While Honor bids each generous Heart obey,
Be OURS the Task, the Ambitious to restrain,
And this great Lesson teach--that Kings are vain;
That warring Realms to certain Ruin haste,
That Kings subsist by War; and Wars are Waste:
So shall OUR NATION, form'd on VIRTUE's Plan,
Remain the GUARDIAN of the RIGHTS OF MAN."
Trencau.

NEW-YORK:
PRINTED AT THE ARGUS OFFICE,
FOR
THOMAS GREENLEAF AND NAPHTALI JUDAH;

1797

ADVERTISEMENT

THE far greater part of that numerous and respectable Assembly, who honored with their Presence and Approbation the Exercises which took place at the Church, on the 4th Instant, will readily perceive some of the Reasons which have led to the Publication of this Address. The many Applications which have been made to the Author for its Appearance, in this Form, have been esteemed additional Inducements to lay it before THE PUBLIC, notwithstanding its many Imperfections.

New-York, 12th July, 1797.

CITIZEN,

WE are deputed in behalf of the GENERAL SOCIETY OF MECHANICKS and TRADESMEN, the TAMMANY SOCIETY, OF COLUMBIAN ORDER, the DEMOCRATIC, and NEW-YORK COOPER SOCIETIES, to present you their thanks, for your Pertinent and Patriotic ORATION delivered before them on the 4th inst. and to request of you a copy for publication.

We are,

With all due respect,

Your Fellow Citizens,

NAPHTALI JUDAH, *Mech. Sec'y.*

THOMAS GREENLEAF, *Tam. Sec'y.*

JOHN MERSEREAU, *Democrat. Sec'y.*

JOHN UTT, *Cooper's Sec'y.*

GEORGE JAMES WARNER.

T O

MY FELLOW CITIZENS,

(For whose advantage they were principally intended)

THESE FEW OBSERVATIONS ON THE

PRESERVATION

OF

Public Liberty,

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,^o

BY

THE AUTHOR.

ORATION,

ON PUBLIC LIBERTY, &c.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

AGAIN we are met to celebrate the Birthday of OUR NATION. One, untaught in the Schools of Science, is deputed to address you on the great, the interesting event. In undertaking the task, he trusts that your candor will accompany him, and that you will not be disappointed by the absence of talents which his situation in life has prevented him from acquiring. He does not aspire to lead the judgment, or to rouse the passions by any elocutive strains—the display of Ciceronian oratory or of Demosthenian eloquence; he will be amply gratified, if he can only command your attention while he delivers a few plain sentiments, expressed in the sincerity of patriotism.

The Historians of our country have acquainted us with the rise, progress, and establishment of her freedom and independence. They have told us, and many here *this day* well remember, how the earnest petitions of the people for a redress of grievances were disregarded; every new supplication producing some new outrage, or some severer act of oppression. A mere posture of defence was at length deemed a signal for the spilling of blood, and at Lexington it first streamed, in the glorious cause of Freedom and our Country. Thus rendered hopeless of gaining by submission, and left without prospect of any reasonable accommodation; finding our Country invaded, our Towns fired, and our Citizens inhumanly butchered, the delegates from the then provinces, solemnly appealing to Heaven for the rectitude of their intentions, declared America emancipated from the yoke of Monarchic Sovereignty, and freed from any dependance on BRITAIN.

The language of that celebrated declaration we have just heard*. It was the voice of an

* It had just before been read by a citizen.

oppressed people exclaiming against the assumptions of a Government, which while it was arrogating every thing to itself, contemplated to leave us nothing. The sentiments contained in it, ought to be deeply engraven on every heart—they point out the true condition of man—they speak the language of a bold resistance to tyranny, and we may indeed expect that Liberty herself will expire, when they shall cease to be longer respected among us.

This, however, we have reason to hope *will not* be the case. We trust that the same American spirit and virtue which animated to the contest the Heroes of the Revolution, and induced them to prefer toil, and poverty, and suffering, and death to the slavery of their Country, will still predominate in every breast. It was gloriously triumphant over the proud legions of DESPOTIC BRITAIN; and it has subsequently prevailed in directing the National Convention of '87, to the Constitutional establishment of the liberty we at this day enjoy. May it ever continue the safeguard of Republican virtue, the scourge of anarchy, and our guide to the summit of political happiness!

To those who faithfully accomplished these events, we shall *ever* feel ourselves *greatly* indebted, while a sense of LIBERTY and of JUSTICE prevails among us. The glory which as a people we have acquired by the Revolution, and the prosperity and happiness we have experienced since that period, have amply repaid us for all the hardships endured, and all the dangers encountered in its accomplishment. TO PERPETUATE the advantages we possess unimpaired to the latest posterity, is now a duty incumbent on us, as the original actors are daily passing away from this stage of human things, and as they vanish are seeming to say to their posterity, 'improve on what we have done, and let not our labours be lost to the future benefit of Mankind.'

Perhaps the present opportunity cannot be better employed, than by calling your attention for a few moments, to some of the means necessary to effect this desirable end.

And *first*, in addition to the sound system of Legislative policy which has been GENERALLY adopted in our country, and has grown

out of the principles of our Revolution, we must individually encourage by example and by precept, the practice of all the *moral virtues*. Without *these* no free government can long exist. That they are the only true sources of individual happiness is generally conceded, though unfortunately they are but little practised.

The Bible, a venerable old book, now too often laid by on the shelf, dusty and neglected, contains an ample enumeration of them, and a glorious promise of the advantages resulting from their general application and use. This leading principle in the composition of a free government, "Do unto others as you would others should do unto you," is derived from that invaluable source; and were all our actions performed under the influence of this principle, union, equal liberty, and the steady administration of justice might certainly be expected as the happy result. We should then become better men, more disinterested patriots and honest politicians. For what man is there who possesses virtuous sentiments himself, and would not *cherish* and approve of

them in others? Who that sincerely loves liberty, would not conscientiously wish its enjoyment to all the members of the community, and join in every proper measure necessary to its preservation?

The principle contended for, is so plain in itself, that it would scarcely have been deemed necessary to call it into view, on this occasion, were it not, that many at the present time shew themselves willing to evade every injunction to the strict observance of the duties of morality, as bordering too much on the principles of the Christian Religion, a remnant of superstition, which the *superior light* of the present day has rendered *quite* unfashionable.

Secondly. We must guard as a most invaluable privilege, the freedom and rights of election. WHEREVER the wealthy by the influence of riches, are enabled to direct the choice of public officers, *there* the downfall of liberty cannot be very remote. It is our own fault if an influence so dangerous, has become in any measure prevalent among us. It would not be the case if the people did not consent

to become the dupes of design. It is because tradesmen, mechanics, and the industrious classes of society consider themselves of too LITTLE CONSEQUENCE to the body politic that *any thing* belonging to the system of oppression at all obtains. We ought to spurn from us with disdain, the individual who would solicit our vote, from motives of personal consideration. He ought not to be listened to, who would *demand* it as the price of friendship, or who would *expect* it from regard to his superior riches. It too often happens that men only capable of attracting public notice by an ostentatious display of their wealth, are deemed best qualified to protect the rights of the people, and consequently receive their suffrages; while our choice ought only to be directed to men of TALENTS and VIRTUE whatever their situation in life may be. The *possession* of riches is not necessarily accompanied by superior understanding or goodness of heart. On the contrary, the experience of ages confirms this opinion, that a state of mediocrity is more favorable to them both.

If, instead of improving on its original plan, our government, at any future period, should

be irresistably impelled in an unalterable course toward despotism, the dividing line between the *rich* and the *poor* will be distinctly marked, and the *latter* will be found in a state of vassallage and dependance on the former.

Be it your care then, my fellow-citizens, to guard with unceasing vigilance against the growth of this evil ; assume the native dignity of your character and maintain with a modest but determined spirit, the liberty of opinion. Suffer no one to DICTATE imperiously what line of conduct you are to pursue ; but at the same time let no one be sacrificed at the altar of public vengeance, for a candid and liberal expression of his sentiments.

Thirdly. We must endeavor to acquaint ourselves with the political situation and relative interests of our country. Without this information, we shall either be unable to form an accurate opinion of our own, or often become the dupes of the designing. The PUBLIC PRINTS naturally present themselves as the vehicles of this necessary knowledge. Those conducted in a spirit of liberality, yet altoge-

ther consonant to the principles on which our revolution was atchieved, should employ the public attention and meet its decided support. It will be found, that a JUST and EQUAL GOVERNMENT will ever derive additional stability, as the PEOPLE obtain a more general knowledge of its principles and operations. The result is, that every sincere friend to our NATIONAL CONSTITUTION, ought sedulously to promote the dissemination of this knowledge, as a barrier to the risings of sedition, as well as to the encroachments of arbitrary power.

Fourthly. Be solicitous that your children are properly educated. "Education," says the celebrated Godwin, "has the advantage of taking MIND in its original state, a soil prepared for culture, and as yet uninfested with weeds: certainly the task is much easier, to plant right and virtuous dispositions in unprejudiced understandings, than to root up errors that have already, as it were, become a part of ourselves." Give your children, then, as your ability may permit, the opportunity of re-

ceiving instruction in the commonest branches; and if possible, instruct them yourselves, as to the RIGHTS which they possess, and the DUTIES which they owe to society. Teach them to love their country; to contend for liberty; to despise monarchy:—That while constitutions and written forms are susceptible of improvement, the principles of TRUTH and of JUSTICE are eternal and imprescriptible. Learn them, as their political creed, that immortal declaration of our rights and emancipation, the promulgation of which, we have *this day* met to celebrate. Encourage them to the reverence of the aged; to the exercise of candor, sincerity, and universal benevolence; and in general to the practice of every social and moral virtue.

Thus will the increase of knowledge and patriotism be promoted, and we shall have far less reason to fear the PREDICTED reign of VICE and TYRANNY. How often have we been told, that our government, fast following in the footsteps of the ancient establishments of Europe, will *soon* overtake them in a career of despotism? Have we not heard the

language of complaint resounding through the nation—the sword of the REVOLUTION, long since returned to its scabbard, is buried in rust; the rights which it maintained, and the principles which it defended, are nearly forgotten. A FATAL SECURITY, while it obliterates and cancels what is past, opens an ample field for the sports of TYRANNY and the arts of CORRUPTION! Reflection, the nurse of manly and heroic sentiments, the guardian, life, and protector of public freedom, is extinguished! The hoary WARRIOR feels our ingratitude and laments our weakness. The tear of regret steals down his channeled cheek. On the precipice of the grave, he sighs for the misfortunes and the servitude of future generations. SEVEN LONG YEARS have I toiled in vain—the principles for which I struggled, are withering away—the rising generation are forgetting their rights, and neglecting the duties of freemen. I rejoice that I cannot live, to be a witness of the shame and enthrallment of my country. It wounds me to the heart, to see some of those who gallantly fought by my side—who swore never to survive the disgrace

of their country; the determined advocates of measures that are pregnant with public ruin. With indignation I see them pursuing maxims of government, that lead to the misery and degradation of mankind. But, I see them through the veil of years, and feel myself incapable of arresting their progress. Yet a *little* time and I am no more—a perversion of principle and a corruption of heart, will insult my memory, and triumph o'er my grave! Who can view *without emotion*, this interesting picture of our situation, which the imagination has drawn? Who is there, that would *designedly* render it just? If none of us would, then ought we to endeavor to preserve the purity of public morals, and to keep a watchful eye over the *conduct* of our public officers: for whatever their political sentiment may be, we ought never to forget that they are **MEN.**

Well aware of the rocks, on which so many have been dashed to pieces, let us by a sacred regard to social duty, endeavor to preserve our POLITICAL BARQUE safe, in her progress on the OCEAN OF TIME.

MY COUNTRYMEN! You have been famed for the accomplishment of a glorious revolution, and for the establishment of an excellent form of government; preserve with the most scrupulous attention the great advantages you possess. By your all-important exertions the progress of mind has been greatly accelerated; and the HUMAN RACE must ultimately be benefited by them. The long enslaved nations of EUROPE, have caught the blaze of freedom, and are following your example, in adopting the principles of self-government: The hydra of despotism will THERE soon be subdued, and order and fair liberty, will arise out of the confusion, dismay, and carnage in which the nations are involved. Already the mild lights of reason and philosophy become *superior* to the scepticism and delusion, of the ignorant and designing. Behold! the era of GENERAL VIRTUE, LIBERTY, and HAPPINESS is at hand, may our endeavors be united to hasten its approach!

O D E

(COMPOSED FOR THE OCCASION, BY P. FRENEAU.)

THE MUSICK PERFORMED

BY THE

URANIAN MUSICAL SOCIETY.

ONCE more our annual debt to pay
We meet on this auspicious day,
That shall through every coming age
The feelings of mankind engage ;
Red war will soon be chang'd for peace,
All human woe for human blifs,
And nations that embrace again
Enjoy a long pacific reign.

CHORUS.

Thou source of every pure delight,
Fair Peace ! extend thy sway,
While to thy standard we invite
All nations on this day.

O dire effects of tyrant power,
How have ye darkened every hour,
And bade those years embitter'd flow
That nature meant for blifs below !
With sceptred pride and looks of awe
OPPRESSION gave the world her law ;
And Man, that should such laws disdain,
Has bow'd to her malignant reign.

CHORUS.

Thou source, &c.

Here, on our quiet native coast
 No more we dread the warlike host
 That once alarm'd, when Britons rose,
 And made COLUMBIA'S sons their foes—
 Parent of every cruel art
 That stains the soul, that steels the heart,
 Dire War! with all thy bleeding band
 Molest no more this happy land!

CHORUS.

But source, &c.

May now all despots disappear
 And man to man be less severe—
 The ties of love more firmly bind
 Than fetters that enchain mankind.—
 But VIRTUE must her rights maintain,
 Or short, too short, is FREEDOM'S reign;
 And when her precepts we despise
 Tyrants and Kings again will rise.

CHORUS.

O VIRTUE! source of pure delight,
 Extend thy happy sway, &c.

No more a plundering, pageant race,
 Man shall in every clime embrace:
 And we, on this secluded shore,
 Involv'd in horrid wars no more,
 On this returning annual day,
 To Heaven our grateful tribute pay,
 That here the happy times began
 That made mankind the friends of Man.

CHORUS.

Thou source, &c.

my.