

AN *John A. Sawyer*
ORATION, 1800

PRONOUNCED AT
HANOVER, NEW-HAMPSHIRE,
THE 4th DAY OF JULY,
1800 ;

BEING THE TWENTY-FOURTH
ANNIVERSARY
OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY DANIEL WEBSTER,
Member of the Junior Class, DARTMOUTH UNIVERSITY.

“ Do thou, great LIBERTY, inspire our souls,
“ And make our lives in thy possession happy,
“ Or our deaths glorious in thy just defence !”
ADDISON.

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1800.

A N O R A T I O N.

COUNTRYMEN, BRETHREN, AND FATHERS,

WE are now assembled to celebrate an anniversary, ever to be held in dear remembrance by the sons of freedom. Nothing less than the birth of a nation, nothing less than the emancipation of three millions of people, from the degrading chains of foreign dominion, is the event we commemorate.

TWENTY FOUR years have this day elapsed, since United Columbia first raised the standard of Liberty, and echoed the shouts of Independence!

THOSE of you, who were then reaping the iron harvest of the martial field, whose bosoms then palpitated for the honor of America, will, at this time, experience a renewal of all that fervent patriotism, of all those indescribable emotions, which then agitated your breasts. As for us, who were either then unborn, or not far enough advanced beyond the threshold of existence, to engage in the grand conflict for Liberty, we now most cordially unite with you, to greet the return of this joyous anniversary, to hail the day that gave us Freedom, and hail the rising glories of our country!

On occasions like this, you have heretofore been addressed, from this stage, on the nature, the origin, the expediency of civil government.—The field of political speculation has here been explored, by persons, possessing talents, to which the speaker of the day can have no pretensions.

Declining

Declining therefore a dissertation on the principles of civil polity, you will indulge me in slightly sketching on those events, which have originated, nurtured, and raised to its present grandeur the empire of Columbia.

As no nation on the globe can rival us in the rapidity of our growth, since the conclusion of the revolutionary war—to none, perhaps, ever endured greater hardships, and distresses, than the people of this country, previous to that period.

We behold a feeble band of colonists, engaged in the arduous undertaking of a new settlement, in the wilds of North America. Their civil liberty being mutilated, and the enjoyment of their religious sentiments denied them, in the land that gave them birth, they fled their country, they braved the dangers of the then almost un navigated ocean, and sought, on the other side the globe, an asylum from the iron grasp of tyranny, and the more intolerable scourge of ecclesiastical persecution. But gloomy, indeed, was their prospect, when arrived on this side the Atlantic. Scattered, in detachments, along a coast immensely extensive, at a remove of more than three thousand miles from their friends on the eastern continent, they were exposed to all those evils, and endured all those difficulties, to which human nature seems liable. Destitute of convenient habitations, the inclemencies of the seasons attacked them, the midnight beasts of prey prowled terribly around them, and the more portentous yell of savage fury incessantly assailed them! But the same undiminished confidence in Almighty God, which prompted the first settlers of this country to forsake the unfriendly climes of Europe, still supported them, under all
their

their calamities, and inspired them with fortitude almost divine. Having a glorious issue to their labors now in prospect, they cheerfully endured the rigors of the climate, pursued the savage beast to his remotest haunt, and stood, undismayed, in the dismal hour of Indian battle!

SCARCELY were the infant settlements freed from those dangers, which at first environed them, ere the clashing interests of France and Britain involved them anew in war. The colonists were now destined to combat with well appointed, well disciplined troops from Europe; and the horrors of the tomahawk and the scalping knife were again renewed. But these frowns of fortune, distressing as they were, had been met without a sigh, and endured without a groan, had not imperious Britain presumptuously arrogated to herself the glory of victories, achieved by the bravery of American militia. Louisburgh must be taken, Canada attacked, and a frontier of more than one thousand miles defended by untutored yeomanry; while the honor of every conquest must be ascribed to an English army.

BUT while Great-Britain was thus ignominiously stripping her colonies of their well earned laurel, and triumphantly weaving it into the stupendous wreath of her own martial glories, she was unwittingly teaching them to value themselves, and effectually to resist, in a future day, her unjust encroachments.

THE pitiful tale of taxation now commences—the unhappy quarrel, which issued in the dismemberment of the British empire, has here its origin.

ENGLAND, now triumphant over the united powers of France and Spain, is determined to reduce, to the condition of slaves, her American subjects.

WE

We might now display the Legislatures of the several States, together with the general Congress, petitioning, praying, remonstrating; and, like dutiful subjects, humbly laying their grievances before the throne. On the other hand, we could exhibit a British Parliament, assiduously devising means to subjugate America—disdaining our petitions, trampling on our rights, and menacingly telling us, in language not to be misunderstood, “Ye shall be slaves!”—We could mention, the haughty, tyrannical, perfidious GAGE, at the head of a standing army; we could show our brethren attacked and slaughtered at Lexington! our property plundered and destroyed at Concord! Recollection can still pain us, with the spiral flames of burning Charleston, the agonizing groans of aged parents, the shrieks of widows, orphans and infants!—Indelibly impressed on our memories, still live the dismal scenes of Bunker’s awful mount, the grand theatre of New-England bravery; where *slaughter* stalked, grimly triumphant! where relentless Britain saw her soldiers, the unhappy instruments of despotism, fallen, in heaps, beneath the nervous arm of injured freemen!—There the great WARREN fought, and there, alas, he fell! Valuing life only as it enabled him to serve his country, he freely resigned himself, a willing martyr in the cause of Liberty, and now lies encircled in the arms of glory!

Peace to the patriot’s shades—let no rude blast
Disturb the willow, that nods o’er his tomb.
Let orphan tears bedew his sacred urn,
And fame’s loud trump proclaim the hero’s name,
Far as the circuit of the spheres extends.

BUT, haughty Albion, thy reign shall soon be over,—thou shalt triumph no longer! thine empire already reels and totters! thy laurels even
now

now begin to wither, and thy fame decays ! Thou hast, at length, roused the indignation of an insulted people—thine oppressions they deem no longer tolerable !

THE 4th day of July, 1776, is now arrived : and America, manfully springing from the torturing fangs of the British Lion, now rises majestic in the pride of her sovereignty, and bids her Eagle elevate his wings !—The solemn declaration of Independence is now pronounced, amidst crowds of admiring citizens, by the supreme council of our nation ; and received with the unbounded plaudits of a grateful people ! !

THAT was the hour, when heroism was proved, when the souls of men were tried. It was then, ye venerable patriots, it was then you stretched the indignant arm, and unitedly swore to be free ! Despising such toys as subjugated empires, you then knew no middle fortune between liberty and death. Firmly relying on the patronage of heaven, unwarped in the resolution you had taken, you, then undaunted, met, engaged, defeated the gigantic power of Britain, and rose triumphant over the ruins of your enemies !—Trenton, Princeton, Bennington and Saratoga were the successive theatres of your victories, and the utmost bounds of creation are the limits to your fame !—The sacred fire of freedom, then unkindled in your breasts, shall be perpetuated through the long descent of future ages, and burn, with undiminished fervor, in the bosoms of millions yet unborn.

FINALLY, to close the sanguinary conflict, to grant America the blessings of an honorable peace, and clothe her heroes with laurels, CORNWALLIS, at whose feet the kings and princes of
Asia

Asia have since thrown their diadems, was compelled to submit to the sword of our father WASHINGTON.—The great drama is now completed—our Independence is now acknowledged ; and the hopes of our enemies are blasted forever !—Columbia is now seated in the forum of nations, and the empires of the world are lost in the bright effulgence of her glory !

Thus, friends and citizens, did the kind hand of over-ruling Providence conduct us, through toils, fatigues and dangers, to Independence and Peace. If piety be the rational exercise of the human soul, if religion be not a chimera, and if the vestiges of heavenly assistance are clearly traced in those events, which mark the annals of our nation, it becomes us, on this day, in consideration of the great things, which the LORD has done for us, to render the tribute of unfeigned thanks, to that God, who superintends the Universe, and holds aloft the scale, that weighs the destinies of nations.

THE conclusion of the revolutionary war did not conclude the great achievements of our countrymen. Their military character was then, indeed, sufficiently established ; but the time was coming, which should prove their political sagacity.

No sooner was peace restored with England, the first grand article of which was the acknowledgment of our Independence, than the old system of confederation, dictated, at first, by necessity, and adopted for the purposes of the moment, was found inadequate to the government of an extensive empire. Under a full conviction of this, we then saw the people of these States, engaged in a transaction, which is, undoubtedly, the greatest

greatest

greatest approximation towards human perfection the political world ever yet experienced ; and which, perhaps, will forever stand on the history of mankind, without a parallel. A great Republic, composed of different States, whose interest in all respects could not be perfectly compatible, when came deliberately forward, discarded one system of government and adopted another, without the loss of one man's blood.

There is not a single government now existing in Europe, which is not based in usurpation, and established, if established at all, by the sacrifice of thousands. But in the adoption of our present system of jurisprudence, we see the powers necessary for government, voluntarily springing from the people, their only proper origin, and directed to the public good, their only proper object.

With peculiar propriety, we may now felicitate ourselves, on that happy form of mixed government under which we live. The advantages, resulting to the citizens of the Union, from the operation of the Federal Constitution, are utterly incalculable ; and the day, when it was received by a majority of the States, shall stand on the catalogue of American anniversaries, second to none but the birth day of Independence.

In consequence of the adoption of our present system of government, and the virtuous manner in which it has been administered, by a WASHINGTON and an ADAMS, we are this day in the enjoyment of peace, while war devastates Europe ! We can now sit down beneath the shadow of the olive, while her cities blaze, her streams run purple with blood, and her fields glitter, a forest of bayonets !—The citizens of America can this day throng the temples of freedom, and renew their

oaths of fealty to Independence ; while Holland, our once sister republic, is erased from the catalogue of nations ; while Venice is destroyed, Italy ravaged, and Switzerland, the once happy, the once united, the once flourishing Switzerland lies bleeding at every pore !

No ambitious foe dares now invade our country. No standing army now endangers our liberty.—Our commerce, though subject in some degree to the depredations of the belligerent powers, is extended from pole to pole ; and our navy, though just emerging from nonexistence, shall soon vouch for the safety of our merchantmen, and bear the thunder of freedom around the ball !

FAIR Science too, holds her gentle empire amongst us, and almost innumerable altars are raised to her divinity, from Brunswick to Florida. Yale, Providence and Harvard now grace our land ; and DARTMOUTH, towering majestic above the groves, which encircle her, now inscribes her glory on the registers of fame !—Oxford and Cambridge, those oriental stars of literature, shall now be lost, while the bright sun of American science displays his broad circumference in un-
eclipsed radiance.

PLEASING, indeed, were it here to dilate on the future grandeur of America ; but we forbear ; and pause, for a moment, to drop the tear of affection over the graves of our departed warriors. Their names should be mentioned on every anniversary of Independence, that the youth, of each successive generation, may learn not to value life, when held in competition with their country's safety.

WOOSTER, MONTGOMERY and MERCER, fell bravely in battle, and their ashes are now entomb-
ed

ed on the fields that witnessed their valor. Let their exertions in our country's cause be remembered, while Liberty has an advocate, or gratitude has place in the human heart.

GREENE, the immortal hero of the Carolinas, *Rhode-Is.* has since gone down to the grave, loaded with honors, and high in the estimation of his countrymen. The courageous PUTNAM has long slept with his fathers; and SULLIVAN and CILLEY, *Poor* New-Hampshire's veteran sons, are no more numbered with the living!

WITH hearts penetrated by unutterable grief, we are at length constrained to ask, where is our WASHINGTON? where the hero, who led us to victory—where the man, who gave us freedom? Where is he, who headed our feeble army, when destruction threatened us, who came upon our enemies like the storms of winter; and scattered them like leaves before the Borean blast? Where, O my country! is thy political saviour? where, O humanity! thy favorite son?

THE solemnity of this assembly, the lamentations of the American people will answer, “alas, he is now no more—the Mighty is fallen!”

Yes, Americans, your WASHINGTON is gone! he is now consigned to dust, and “sleeps in dull, cold marble.” The man, who never felt a wound, but when it pierced his country, who never groaned, but when fair freedom bled, is now forever silent!—Wrapped in the shroud of death, the dark dominions of the grave long since received him, and he rests in undisturbed repose! Vain were the attempt to express our loss—vain the attempt to describe the feelings of our souls! Though months have rolled away, since he left this terrestrial orb, and sought the shining worlds

on high, yet the sad event is still remembered with increased sorrow. The hoary headed patriot of '76 still tells the mournful story to the listening infant, till the loss of his country touches his heart, and patriotism fires his breast. The aged matron still laments the loss of the man, beneath whose banners her husband has fought, or her son has fallen.—At the name of WASHINGTON, the sympathetic tear still glistens in the eye of every youthful hero, nor does the tender sigh yet cease to heave, in the fair bosom of Columbia's daughters.

Farewel, O WASHINGTON, a long farewell !
 Thy country's tears exalt in thy memory ;
 Thy virtues challenge immortality ;
 Impressed on grateful hearts, thy name shall live,
 Till dissolution's deluge drown the world !

ALTHOUGH we must feel the keenest sorrow, at the demise of our WASHINGTON, yet we console ourselves with the reflection, that his virtuous compatriot, his worthy successor, the firm, the wise, the inflexible ADAMS still survives.—Elevated, by the voice of his country, to the supreme executive magistracy, he constantly adheres to her essential interests ; and, with steady hand, draws the disguising veil from the intrigues of foreign enemies, and the plots of domestic foes. Having the honor of America always in view, never fearing, when wisdom dictates, to stem the impetuous torrent of popular resentment, he stands amidst the fluctuations of party, and the explosions of faction, unmoved as Atlas,

“ While storms and tempests thunder on its brow,

“ And oceans break their billows at its feet.”

Yet, all the vigilance of our Executive, and all the wisdom of our Congress have not been sufficient to prevent this country from being in some degree

degree

degree agitated by the convulsions of Europe. But why shall every quarrel on the other side the Atlantic interest us in its issue? Why shall the rise, or depression of every party there, produce here a corresponding vibration? Was this continent designed as a mere satellite to the other?—Has not nature here wrought all her operations on her broadest scale? Where are the Mississippis and the Amazons, the Alleghanies and the Andes of Europe, Asia or Africa? The natural superiority of America clearly indicates, that it was designed to be inhabited by a nobler race of men, possessing a superior form of government, superior patriotism, superior talents, and superior virtues. Let then the nations of the East vainly waste their strength in destroying each other. Let them aspire at conquest, and contend for dominion, till their continent is deluged in blood. But let none, however elated by victory, however proud of triumphs, ever presume to intrude on the neutral station assumed by our country.

BRITAIN, twice humbled for her aggressions, has at length been taught to respect us. But France, once our ally, has dared to insult us! she has violated her obligations; she has depredated our commerce—she has abused our government, and riveted the chains of bondage on our unhappy fellow citizens! Not content with ravaging and depopulating the fairest countries of Europe, not yet satiated with the contortions of expiring republics, the convulsive agonies of subjugated nations, and the groans of her own slaughtered citizens, she has spouted her fury across the Atlantic; and the stars and stripes of Independence have almost been attacked in our harbours! When we have demanded reparation, she has told us, “give us your money, and we will give you peace.”—
Mighty Nation! Magnanimous Republic!—
Let

Let her fill her coffers from those towns and cities, which she has plundered; and grant peace, if she can, to the shades of those millions, whose death she has caused.

But Columbia stoops not to tyrants; her sons will never cringe to France; neither a supercilious, five-headed Directory, nor the galleonading pilgrim of Egypt will ever dictate terms to sovereign America. The thunder of our cannon shall insure the performance of our treaties, and fulminate destruction on Frenchmen, till old ocean is crimsoned with blood, and gorged with pirates!

It becomes us, on whom the defence of our country will ere long devolve, this day, most seriously to reflect on the duties incumbent upon us. Our ancestors bravely snatched expiring liberty from the grasp of Britain, whose touch is *poison*; shall we now consign it to France, whose embrace is *death*? We have seen our fathers, in the days of Columbia's trouble, assume the rough habiliments of war, and seek the hostile field. Too full of sorrow to speak, we have seen them wave a last farewell to a disconsolate, a woe-strung family! We have seen them return, worn down with fatigue, and scarred with wounds; or we have seen them, perhaps, no more!—For us they fought! for us they bled! for us they conquered! Shall we, their descendants, now basely disgrace our lineage, and pusillanimously disclaim the legacy bequeathed us? Shall we pronounce the sad valediction to freedom, and immolate liberty on the altars our fathers have raised to her? NO!—*The response of a nation is—“NO!”* Let it be registered in the archives of Heaven!—Ere the religion we profess, and the privileges we enjoy, are sacrificed at the shrines of despots and demagogues, let the pillars of creation

creation tremble ! let world be wrecked on world, and systems rush to ruin !---Let the sons of Europe be vassals ; let her hosts of nations be a vast congregation of slaves ; but let us, who are this day FREE, whose hearts are yet unappalled, and whose right arms are yet nerved for war, assemble before the hallowed temple of Columbian Freedom, AND SWEAR, TO THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS, TO PRESERVE IT WHOLE, OR DIE AT ITS PORTALS !

