

The Rev. Mr. John
from his friend
The Author

Dr. Stillman's Oration.

AN
ORATION,
Delivered July 4th, 1789.
AT THE
REQUEST OF THE INHABITANTS
OF
The Town of BOSTON,
IN
CELEBRATION
OF
The ANNIVERSARY
OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY
SAMUEL STILLMAN, D. D.

B O S T O N :

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1789

At a Meeting of the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the Town of Boston, duly qualified and legally warned, in public Town-Meeting assembled, at Faneuil-Hall, on Saturday the 4th Day of July, A. D. 1789:

V O T E D,

THAT the SELECTMEN be, and hereby are appointed a Committee to wait upon the Reverend Dr. SAMUEL STILLMAN, and in the Name of the Town, to thank him for the spirited and elegant ORATION this Day delivered by him, at the Request of the Town, upon the Anniversary of the INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA; in which, according to the Institution of the Town, he considered the Feelings, Manners and Principles, which led to that great National Event—and to request of him a Copy thereof for the PRESS.

Attest.

WILLIAM COOPER, Town-Clerk.

GENTLEMEN,

A WISH to serve or gratify my Fellow-Citizens, led me to accept their Appointment in the first Instance; and now urges me to comply with their Desire, in giving a Copy of the ORATION for the PRESS, which their great Candour hath led them to approve.

I am, Gentlemen,

With every Sentiment of Esteem,

Your humble Servant,

SAMUEL STILLMAN.

BOSTON, 2^d July, 1789.

A N

O R A T I O N.

TH E American Revolution, my Fellow-Citizens, is a great event in the moral government of God : new and astonishing to us and to surrounding nations, but not so to that OMNISCIENT BEING, who is said in the language of inspiration, to *see the end from the beginning*. His unalterable purpose was its prime foundation ; which, however, could be no motive with those persons who were engaged to accomplish it, because they were entirely ignorant of the divine intention, until the event itself took place.

THAT it was the purpose of God it should be, is evident in his almost miraculous interpositions in favor of it.

THE feelings, manners, and principles which led to it, as well as the important and happy effects, whether general or domestic, which have already, and will forever continue to flow from it, we are now to consider, agreeable to the vote of the town. *

O U R

OUR Ancestors, driven by the violence of persecution from their native country, brought with them to these shores those principles of religion and of civil government, which have finally ripened by time and by manifold oppressions, into the joyous event which we now celebrate.

WITH them it was a self-evident principle; That all men are and ought to be at liberty to think and act for themselves in matters of religion; and that so long as they lead peaceable and quiet lives, no men, whether *court* or *clergy*, have any right to interfere with their creed or manner of worshipping God; except by addresses to their understandings.

IN matters of government they believed it essential to freedom, That the people should be governed by no laws, to which they have not given their consent in person, or by their representatives. They were zealously engaged to promote the cause of religion, and to provide for the education of the youth. With them originated the institution of public schools throughout the Commonwealth, into which the children of the rich and poor are admitted upon equal terms: the expence of their education being

being defrayed by a tax on the people at large. They too at an early period, founded the University at Cambridge, from which many great and useful men, in church and state have issued.

To these institutions my Fellow-Citizens owe their superior degrees of knowledge, which have greatly contributed to their Freedom and Independence. There are but few persons in town or country, who have not a just knowledge of the fundamental principles of a free government. A people thus enlightened cannot be enslaved.

THE distance of the colonies from the mother country, is a natural circumstance which rendered their Independence an unavoidable event, at a given period: for though we as a people, were prosperous, and in a degree happy under the supreme control of the British parliament, many things took place in consequence of that distance, that were oppressive, of which we complained, yet submitted.

THE war that accelerated this great national event, originated in part in ignorance of our real condition; which ignorance it was not easy, if possible, to prevent, because we were so far removed from the parent state. I ask therefore, Would it have been consistent with the wise œconomy of Providence,

Providence, that three millions of people, daily increasing, should have remained under the supreme control of a government at the distance of a thousand leagues ? Could a government thus situated know the condition of the governed ? Could they enter into their feelings ? Should the people feel themselves oppressed, could they, without great hazard, expence and delay, obtain relief ?

“ To be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or a petition, says a sensible writer, waiting four or five months for an answer, which when obtained, requires five or six more to explain it in, will in a few years be looked upon as folly and childishness.—There was a time when it was proper, and there is a proper time for it to cease.

“ SMALL islands not capable of protecting themselves, are the proper objects for government to take under their care ; but there is something very absurd, in supposing a *Continent* to be perpetually governed by an *island*. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet, and as England and America with respect to each other, reverses the common order of nature, it is evident they belong to different systems : England to Europe, America to itself.”

COMMON SENSE.

BUT

BUT we have been often told, That the Independence of America hath taken place fifty or an hundred years too soon. Rather it hath happened at the very time infinite wisdom saw best. He, without whose knowledge the sparrow doth not fall to the ground, hath directed the innumerable intermediate events, which connect the settlement of the country with the declaration of Independence in 1776. It is, because unerring wisdom chose it should be.

WHAT makes this event appear altogether providential is, that it was not the ground of the quarrel with Great-Britain ; nor the object for which the Americans at *first* contended. They fought for *Liberty*, not for *Independence*. There was a period after the contest began, when they would have rejoiced to be placed in the same condition in which they were in 1763. And when the proposition of Independence was first made, the people in general were much opposed to it, and consented to it at last as a matter of absolute necessity.

I FEEL a prevailing reluctance to repeat the history of the oppressive measures of Great-Britain, because it will revive resentments, and tend to destroy the pleasures of this anniversary. We are

now at peace with all mankind : God grant that it may last as long as the sun and the moon shall endure !

LET it suffice to say, That the repeated attempts of Great-Britain to raise a revenue out of our pockets without our consent ; followed by a declaratory act, so called, claiming a right to make laws binding us in all cases whatever, spread an alarm from New-Hampshire to Georgia, which issued in a surprizing union of the Colonies, and a successful opposition to British measures.

To support this unjust claim, fleets and armies were sent among us ; which brought on all that horrid scene of war and bloodshed, under which, for several years we groaned. During which period, thousands of our countrymen were slain in battle, or died in cruel confinement.

LET us pause a moment to give vent to generous sorrow—It becomes us this day to bedew with tears of gratitude and friendship the remains of fathers, brothers, sons and fellow-citizens, who have fallen in freedom's important cause !—Oh, had they lived to join the triumph of this day, and to receive the tribute of a grateful country !—

country !—But why this exclamation ! God can do no wrong.

*“ He sees with equal eye as God of all,
A Hero perish or a Sparrow fall.”* POPE.

THEY have retired from that neglect which surviving, wounded, mangled heroes have experienced.

AMERICA free and independent and her army not paid, is a consideration that damps the joy of this day.—While we rejoice, public creditors in general mourn ; and mourn they will, should public justice still be delayed, or public faith be ship-wrecked. But this cannot be. The time we hope is not far distant, when our country, having recovered from her uncommon embarrassments, will faithfully consider those citizens who were her friends in the time of trouble.

THE declaration of Independence at once annihilated the diminutive term *Colonies* as applied to us, raised us to our equal station among the nations of the world, and opened to us a source of great advantages.

IT is no just objection to this assertion, that our sufferings have been extremely great since 1776. In general they were the natural effects

of our noble struggle for freedom. We had an army to raise and maintain, and few resources to do it with. The men were obliged in considerable numbers, to leave their respective occupations and fly to arms; consequently the means of subsistence were in great measure neglected. We were reduced to the necessity of issuing a paper currency, which became on occasion of the most iniquitous practices, and the ruin of many worthy citizens.—And our navigation was almost destroyed by the British cruizers; while their army had possession of different parts of our country.

UPON the conclusion of the peace, instead of adopting the methods of œconomy, promoting agriculture and manufactures, and living as much as possible within ourselves; we rushed into the most extravagant importation of British goods. Many persons left their proper employments and set up for merchants, who were unacquainted with commerce. Thus large debts were contracted, which finally brought on frequent bankruptcies. The failure of some proved the ruin of others, and thus spread the calamity. The natural tendency of which was, to destroy mutual confidence, and to put a stop to business.

ANOTHER

ANOTHER grand source of our difficulties, was the want of power in Congress to govern the affairs of the Union. The articles of Confederation arose out of the circumstances of the times, and like our paper-money, answered good purposes for a season ; but they were destitute of energy. Congress could do no more than *recommend* : Each state in the Union had it in her power to negative the best-concerted plan. This was actually the case with the little state of Rhode-Island, in the affair of the five per cent. impost ; by which we were deprived of an important national revenue, which would have greatly lightened the burdens of the people. This circumstance, among others, clearly proved the absolute necessity of a change in our national system ; and I doubt not hastened the happy event.

CONGRESS were so much discouraged at a particular time, that they were on the point of separating, and of leaving their countrymen to feel those distresses, which would have been the result of their own folly. All those persons who knew the condition of America at that period, trembled for her safety.

AMIDST all these difficulties the great body of tradesmen were out of business ; who, in some instances,

instances, were obliged to live on the little property they had acquired by hard and constant labor ; while those persons who had no property, were reduced to the humiliating necessity of performing the lowest services, to provide bread for a suffering family. Yet all these difficulties they bore with uncommon magnanimity and patience. Wonder not that they complained : rather wonder that they complained so little.

AND that nothing might be wanting to fill up the measure of our afflictions, the exigencies of government obliged them to levy direct taxes on the people, already borne down with uncommon calamities. They would in general have paid, but could not : for from principle and habit, they were disposed to obedience. The language of complaint was heard throughout the Continent ; and in some places insurrections took place, which were happily suppressed by the spirited exertions of government.

THE more enlightened any people are, the more sensibly they feel an injury ; and by their excessive love of freedom are sometimes hurried on to actions, which they themselves condemn in a dispassionate hour.

LET

LET us cherish the principle, *love of freedom*, condemn only its *abuse*, and forgive the folly and rashness of some of our misguided countrymen. It is certainly more agreeable to the feelings of benevolent minds, to overcome the follies and wickedness of men by compassion and tenderness, than by severity ; when this may be done consistent with the public safety.

SUCH have been our sufferings, and such their causes : In the retrospect this must become a most evident truth, That none but Almighty God himself could have sustained us under them, and led us to victory and Independence. We have seen, that the battle is not to the strong.

If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may America say ; when men rose up against us : Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us.—Let his great name be magnified, who hath opened to us, by our Independence, a source of great advantages ; which we pass to consider.

WHILE we were Colonies our trade was subject to the regulations of the British Parliament. “ She made laws obliging us to carry to her all those products which she wanted for her own use ; and all those raw materials which she chose herself

herself to work up. Besides this restriction she forbade us to procure manufactures from any other part of the globe ; or even the products of European countries, which alone could rival her, without being first brought to her. In short, by a variety of laws, she regulated our trade in such a manner, as she thought most conducive to mutual advantage, and her own welfare." * She prohibited the Colonies from supplying one another with hats and woollen cloths. Even our pig and bar-iron were to be manufactured in Great-Britain. †

FROM these severe restrictions upon our trade and manufactures, we are happily delivered by our separation from her.

Now a new, extensive and animating scene opens to the view of the great body of American merchants ; who, as to a spirit of enterprize are exceeded

* Farmer's 5th Letter.

† " And that pig and bar-iron made in his Majesty's Colonies in America may be farther manufactured in this kingdom, be it farther enacted by the authority aforesaid, that from and after the fourth day of June, 1750, no mill or other engine for flitting, or rolling of iron, or any plaiting forge to work with a tilt-hammer, or any furnace for making of steel, shall be erected, or after such erection shall be continued in any of his Majesty's Colonies in America." 23. GEO. 2. ch. 29.

exceeded by no men on earth. They may extend their commerce to every part of the globe. By the revival and extension of commerce, ship-building will be encouraged, and the various classes of mechanics find employment. It is navigation that sets all the wheels in motion, and opens the way for the ingenious and industrious tradesmen to support themselves and families; and by encreasing the demand for the produce of our country, animates the farmer amidst the labors of the field.

WITHOUT going three thousand miles for permission, we may establish manufactories in every part of the United States; work up our own materials, employ our own people, promote industry, the friend of virtue; lessen our annual importations, increase our exports; and rise thro' the blessing of God on our endeavours, superior to all those difficulties, with which for several years we have struggled. *

C

So

* The manufacture of cotton, cards, paper for writing and for rooms, woolen cloths, loaf-sugar, duck, &c. &c. is daily rising into importance; of which the following is a proof:—

In the duck manufactory, lately established in this town, there are daily employed nearly *three hundred* people, who are able to turn out 1,200 yards per week, and very soon will extend it to 1,500. Sail-makers and seamen say, that it is superior to any duck imported from England or Russia. So

So long as we were dependent on Great-Britain, *her wars were ours*. Whenever she chose to engage in a war with any of the powers of

veral vessels have been already furnished with it, and considerable quantities have been exported to different parts of the United States ; the demand for it will encrease, with the revival of our navigation, and consequently become still more important.

Of the card manufactories in this town, that of Messieurs Giles Richards and Co. alone, daily employs *one thousand* persons, and during eleven months past they have manufactured *five thousand one hundred and fifty dozen pair* of cotton and wool cards, according to the best calculation the company are capable of making ; the demand for which annually increases.

At Taunton and the towns adjoining, there are employed in manufacturing of iron and nails *one thousand* persons daily. The quantity of nails made by them yearly is *two hundred and fifty tons*, contained in *two thousand five hundred casks*, which average *thirty thousand* each.

In American loaf-sugar and paper we abound ; and a gentleman who is engaged in the manufacture of paper-hangings, thinks he can easily supply the Continent with that article, as good as to its quality, and as low as to price as any that can be imported.

It would be easy to continue the remarks on American manufactures, but it would swell the note to a volume. From this specimen let us extend our views to the different manufactories throughout the United States, and we shall be animated with the certain prospect of their growing importance, — rejoice that the people are employed, and our money kept among ourselves.

of the world, we, without the least consultation, were obliged to take a part in the quarrel, and to imbrue our hands in human blood. Now, blessed be God, we have nothing to do with European quarrels : but are independent of those ambitious princes, who to adjust some little point of national honor, extend dominion, or satisfy a spirit of revenge, sacrifice thousands of their subjects.

WHILE we were a part of the British Empire, *the King had a negative on all our laws* ; who certainly could not know our real condition, but was always liable to be deceived by his ministers at home, or his servants here : of which there was the greater danger from his having the appointment of many of the principal officers of government among us ; who in general were foreigners, necessitous and therefore dependent on the King for their support. It was natural for them in such circumstances to be prejudiced in favour of their own country, and to seek to please their master, whatever might become of the interests of the Americans. Many of them were spies on the liberties of the people.

FROM this disagreeable situation we are happily delivered by our Independence. Our present go-

vernments are of our own creating, our Governors from among ourselves, and our Judges as at the first.

THIS great national event hath also called into public view, historians, poets, painters, heroes, and civilians ; and continues to afford subjects so sublime and interesting, as will give full scope for the exertion of all the powers of genius. We therefore reasonably anticipate America's golden age, when science, arts, industry, religion, freedom, and public happiness, shall exalt her to the most distinguished eminence among the nations of the world.

NOR are the advantages of this surprizing revolution confined to America : already have its principles extended their salutary influence to European nations ; flashed such conviction in the minds of Princes, or produced such struggles for freedom among a people long oppressed, as have terminated in their partial emancipation.

MAY this great work of political reformation go on, until all men shall sit under their vine and fig-tree, having none to make them afraid !

AND to compleat our wishes, Heaven hath blessed us with a general government, to which we look up with confidence and joy.

THIS

THIS is an event of uncommon magnitude in the history of our country ; and should fill the heart of every American with gratitude to that God, with whom are all the events of Empires.

“ WHEN I contemplate, says the great, the beloved WASHINGTON, the interposition of Providence, as it was visibly manifested in guiding us thro’ the revolution, and preparing us for the reception of the general government, and in conciliating the good-will of the people of America toward one another, after its adoption, I feel myself oppressed, and almost overwhelmed with a sense of the divine munificence : I feel that nothing is due to my personal agency in all these wonderful and complicated events, except what can be attributed to an honest zeal for the good of my country.”*

IN the number of these great, providential events, my countrymen will unite in placing this amiable man “ the wonder of a world.” God gave him birth at such a period and in such a place ; furnished him with great abilities, and with the most excellent disposition, that he might be a signal blessing to his country. He
watched

* Answer to the Address of the Mayor, &c. of the City of Philadelphia.

watched this his favorite son, supported him under the pressure of complicated ills, preserved him in thickest dangers, and led him, assisted by the forces of our great and generous Ally, the Monarch of France, to victory and peace.

As soon as his country had obtained an honorable peace, he resigned his military commission to Congress, and retired to the private walks of life ; determined never more to engage in public business—But his work was not finished. Deity never intended that his great talents should be confined to the banks of the Potowmack, however useful there. The millions of America follow him to his chosen retirement, and unite their voice in his appointment to the first seat in the Federal Government. This act not only confers the greatest honor on the man of their choice that a people can confer, but reflects distinguished honor on themselves, as an evidence that they are feelingly alive to excellency of character, and know how to confer the rewards of virtue.

THE call of his country he again obeys ; having nothing to hope for in point of reputation, but every thing to risque.

As he passed through different places on his way to New-York, the people of every rank crowded

crowded around him, to express their love and gratitude to the man to whom they owe so much. At Trenton's bridge the little maids, led on by grateful mothers, sung his welcome, and strewed his way with flowers. The Illustrious Chief in solemn silence stopped to listen to their song : His soul was in his eyes,—and the silent tear stole down his venerable cheek, in thankful recollection of the pleasing difference there was between his present circumstances, and that gloomy night when he crossed this very river with his little, ragged, forlorn army, and compleatly surprized the Hessian troops that were stationed at Trenton. From thence, by a forced march, he pushed on to Princeton, and obtained a similar victory. By which events he revived the spirits of his faithful troops, and gave a happy turn to the affairs of America.

He had too much piety to permit him to visit this place, without offering up the tribute of his praise to Him, who crowned him with success. And all his resolution was insufficient to suppress the keen sensibility of his heart, upon such reiterated expressions of warm attachment to his person.

AT New-York he was received with every mark of honor and affection ; and entered on the great duties of his office with such a sense of God and of religion, as still more, if possible, endears him to his countrymen.

MAY the virtues of his private life, and the piety that appears in his official conduct, be imitated by his fellow-citizens of every rank. May they learn from him to honor the Lord's Day, and not make it a day of business or of visiting, but of strict religion. Especially may our youth look up to a character thus accomplished, go and do likewise.

WITH a WASHINGTON at the head of our national government, and an ADAMS at his side, with all the great characters that compose our Senate and House of Representatives, what may we not expect to make the people happy, that is within the reach of human power ?

MUCH is due to that illustrious band of patriots, who by their wisdom in council, or valor in the field, have been the means of procuring for America, Liberty and Independence. May their names be handed down to latest generations as the FRIENDS OF MANKIND, and under God, THE DELIVERERS OF THEIR COUNTRY.

PERMIT

PERMIT me to congratulate you on the change that hath taken place in our national condition. Our prospects brighten—We have now a government, from the complete arrangement and operation of which, we have reason to expect great advantages. But we must exercise patience: “Rome was not built in a day.” The objects before Congress are national, complicated and very interesting; time is therefore requisite completely to arrange the system.—May God grant to them that wisdom that is from above; and that virtue that shall be proof against every temptation!

LET us remember at the same time, that much depends on the conduct of the great body of the people.

THE history of other nations should be a solemn lesson to us. By wisdom and by virtue they have risen; by ignorance and vice they have been ruined. The same causes will invariably produce the same effects.

KNOWLEDGE and virtue are the basis and life of a Republic: therefore the education of children and youth, should be the first object of the attention of government, and of every class of citizens.

YE virtuous fair, who are placed by Providence at the head of rising families, you have the most favorable opportunities of forming the minds and manners of your children, because they are constantly with you, watch your conduct, and listen to your instructions with an implicit confidence. In doing this you please yourselves, and render essential service to your country.

WE have much to expect from your good sense, your delicacy of manners, the purity of your conversation, and your unwearied endeavors to bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

*“ Delightful task ! to rear the tender thought,
To teach the young idea how to shoot,
To pour the fresh instruction o’er the mind,
To breathe the enlivening spirit, and to fix
The generous purpose in the glowing breast !”*

Thomson.

THE citizens repose great confidence in the wisdom, integrity and diligence of those gentlemen who are placed at the head of our schools and colleges. Their task is arduous yet pleasing, because they are engaged in fitting the rising generation for honor and usefulness in the nation. They will not therefore be weary in well-doing;

doing ; but remember when surrounded by a crowd of lovely youths, who wait for their instruction, that they are, if virtuous, the joy of their parents, and the boast of their country.

THE ministers of religion have a most important part to act in this respect. No men under heaven have greater opportunities of promoting knowledge and virtue than they ; to which they ought ever to be encouraged by the important consideration, That they are instruments in the hands of God, of promoting the best interest of mankind in this life, and of that which is to come. And the people have a right to expect that they will be faithful in their profession, and eminent in virtue.

THE liberty of the press is one of the great blessings of a free government, as it is a means of diffusing knowledge through every part of the country, the scourge of tyrants, and the security of freedom. But it has often degenerated into licentiousness. Better, however to suffer this evil than that the press should not be free. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible to restrain it without destroying its freedom.

CIVIL rulers ought to go before the people as examples of every thing amiable and praiseworthy ; be the constant patrons of religion and learning, and do every thing in their power to promote that righteousness which exalteth a nation.

THE people, if wise, will consider want of virtue as real a disqualification for office, as want of wisdom.

IN a word : As a nation we are in our infancy. But God hath put into our hands a prize of most inestimable value : it lies with us to improve it. Should this be the case, we shall be the happiest nation on the globe.

OUR rational prospects of the future glory of America are almost boundless, while we consider our extent of territory,—various resources,—rapid population,—encouragement held out to foreigners to come among us,—the means of education,—general knowledge of the people,—universal liberty as to religion ;—and the repeated instances of great characters that have appeared among us ; many of whom rise in prospect before me in this venerable and great assembly ; which are only specimens of what we have reason to expect in a future day.

THE

THE sun of the old world is setting ; of the new just beginning to rise. Hail ! my country, the glorious theatre, perhaps, of heaven's last wonderful acts ! That divine personage who made his entrance in the east, will ride in triumph through this western world, and upon all the glory shall be a defence. Nor are Americans alone in these their sanguine expectations : It is more than twenty years since a learned Prelate thus sung thy greatness O my Country, in prophetic verse :—

“ The muse disgusted at an age and clime,
 Barren of every glorious theme,
 In distant lands now waits a better time,
 Producing subjects worthy fame :
 In happy climes, where from the genial sun,
 And virgin earth such scenes ensue,
 The force of art by nature seems out-done,
 And fancied beauties by the true :
 In happy climes the seat of innocence,
 Where nature guides and virtue rules,
 Where men shall not impose for truth and sense
 The pedantry of courts and schools :
 There shall be sung another golden age,
 The rise of empire and of arts,
 The good and great inspiring epic rage,
 The wisest heads and noblest hearts.

Not

Not such as Europe breeds in her decay ;
 Such as she bred when fresh and young,
 When heavenly flame did animate her clay,
 By future poets shall be sung.
 Westward the course of empire takes its way,
 The four first acts already past,
 The fifth shall close the drama with the day ;
 Time's noblest offspring is the last." *

- * On the prospect of planting Arts and Learning in America by Dr. BERKLEY, Bishop of Cloyne.

F I N I S.
