

ORATION,

PRONOUNCED AT WORCESTER, (MASS.)

JULY 4th, 1803.

By JOHN WILLIAM CALDWELL.

JAM FIDES, ET PAX, ET HONOR, PUDORQUE
PRISCUS, ET NEGLECTA REDIRE VIRTUS
AUDET, APPARETQUE BEATA PLENO
COPIA CORNU.

HOR.

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1803.

A N
O R A T I O N.

HALLOWED be the sacred name of Liberty ! On this day her perfect will was proclaimed upon earth. On this ever memorable day, America was saluted by an applauding world, *free, sovereign and independent.* The solemn declaration “ *to live free or die,*” was on this day registered in Heaven ! If, then, there be any in this assembly, any cordial apostate from the principles of this political covenant, let him not impiously profane the devotions of this anniversary. We have not assembled to commemorate the birth of a tyrant, or to discuss the policy of foreign Courts. We have convened, my Countrymen, for the nobler purpose of celebrating the era of our national independence. An era replete with events, at once the most joyous and awful, recorded in the annals of history. An elaborate narrative of the causes which produced

ed our glorious revolution will not be attempted by one unskilled in political science.

It has been usual, upon occasions like the present, to detail the monstrous aggressions, the repeated murders, and cold assassinations, perpetrated by the merciless hand of a base and a deadly enemy.

THE dismal catalogue of crime and abuse, of insult and cruelty, we have this day rehearsed,* and which roused to resistance the spirit of our Countrymen, exhibits but an imperfect sketch of the barbarity of our enemies. You, My Fathers, who lived and fought in those days of adversity, well remember a thousand instances of unutterable calamities, both national and domestic, and you will transmit them in tradition to posterity, as a memento of the bloody price of their freedom! To pursue the detail of their tyranny, and describe the ravages of their barbarity, would require a language of reproach, inconsistent with the joys of this occasion. From the shores of our ocean to the confines of our wilderness, can be traced the crimsoned foot

* Previous to the ORATION, the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WAS READ.

steps of desolation. These inhuman outrages have caused our "youthful blood to boil within us," and we have sworn, by the memory of our fathers, eternal enmity to Tyranny. We will not, therefore, prostitute this anniversary, to the purpose of uncharitable censure, but endeavor to suppress every murmur of indignation. We will not attempt to analyze the character of a people, whom, in *peace*, we acknowledge *friends*. We will not violate the gospel precept of forgiveness, to gratify a passion of malevolence.

A BRIEF review of the most prominent events, which have occurred since our existence as a nation, while it reminds us of the "*dangers we have passed*," may incite us to vigilance for the future. At the close of a war, as distressing in its progress, as it was unjust in its origin, the resources of our nation were too far exhausted, and its energies too far enfeebled, to support the pressure of its burthens. The soldier, who, for eight years, had gallantly fought in defence of his Country, now required that recompence for his services, she was unable to bestow. Such, indeed, was the confused and distracted state of

the nation, that we are more surpris'd at the temperate spirit of uneasiness, which for a while prevailed, than that the dark seeds of insurrection, which, like a smothered flame, lie brooding in the heart, did not burst forth and involve our Country "in one common ruin." To allay this spirit of discord, and to answer the accumulated claims of our Citizens, the old confederation was found totally inadequate. Devised at a period, amid the "*din of arms,*" its arrangements were too irregular and too confused for the exigencies of our nation. The multiplied difficulties of Government shew the necessity of destroying the materials of this defective fabric, and erecting on its ruins, a constitution, *mild, efficient, and vigorous.* An attempt to eulogize our present admirable system of State, would be but "to pronounce the common praise" of every individual, who has experienced the advantages and happiness it confers. Emanating from the will of the people, sanctioned by the wisdom of sages, and adapted to our genius and condition, it is a monument of perfection, unequalled since the first human confederacy.

THE ardor of our revolution having abated, reflection brought to mind the advantages that would result from a *Government*, founded in reason and justice. We possessed a Country extensive and fertile, which the bravery of our Citizens had consecrated a sanctuary of liberty. The oppressed of human kind might here find refuge, and recline on the bosom of peace, secure from the demands, and encroachments of a foreign despot. We were separated from those nations of Europe, where humanity and the rights of man are outraged by every minion of a tyrant. We were redeemed from the arbitrary control of a despot, whose will was *right*, and whose caprice was *law*. At this period the heart of every American beat with a noble, and a generous exultation. His joy increased, as the blessings of the liberty his own valorous exertions had procured, extended to his fellow creatures.

BUT the variety of interests, and the adverse passions, of which every society is composed, impeded its progress to perfection. However hopeful and felicitating our then prospect, dark and

portentous clouds hovered over our political horizon. Though the *military butchers* of Britain had withdrawn from our shores, and the *seal of forgetfulness* was placed on past aggressions, still the corrupted seeds of aristocracy had taken root, sprung up, and their baneful luxuriance had well nigh blighted the growth of our hard-earned liberty !

PARTIALITY for a government of our own workmanship, and an implicit confidence in the sincerity of *all*, who struggled in the same *great cause of right*, lulled to repose that laudable spirit of jealousy, so necessary for the preservation of our liberties. The splendor of a throne had charms to allure the corrupted hearts of our *mock Patriots*, and the incense of adulation was eagerly imbibed by these demagogues of faction. Stimulated by the hope of personal aggrandizement, this conspiracy threatened the subversion of every chartered right. The human character displayed itself in all the variety of depraved ambition. Hypocrisy assumed the faintest garb, and patriotism was defined *treason*, against the "WELL-BORN" enemies of man ! Our con-

stitution was violated, the liberty of free discussion restrained, and to complete this *royal* scene, an HOL-Y receptacle was prepared for the rights of the People ! Till fatal experience had opened our eyes, who would have conjectured, that an inhabitant of this fair land of liberty could have descended to such a degree of infatuation, as to combine with the avowed enemies of man, to effect such diabolical designs. It appears so flagrant an outrage on reason and common sense, that it must actually happen, before its possibility can be credited.

SUCH, my Countrymen, were the designs, and such the infernal projects of your enemies, which "were in the full tide of successful experiment !" But heaven soon roused the "Guardian Genius of Columbia." The spirit of '75 again descended on earth, and enkindled, in the hearts of our Citizens, the holy flame of liberty !

As the rustling of a leaf is like an earthquake to the guilty, so the revival of this spirit of virtue caused the hearts of these conspirators to fear and tremble. They beheld with conscious guilt the disclosure of their per-

fidy, and recoiled from the indignation of their Countrymen. But let us forbear. Let silence be the comment on this dark epoch in our political callendar, with a fervent prayer to heaven, that if in its arsenal, there still remain some well-wrought vengeance, it may with energy be hurled on the cursed traitor to his Country !

HAVING given an imperfect outline of past occurrences, it would be a criminal neglect of duty to pass in silent indifference over the present prosperity of our Country. It would evidence a dereliction from those feelings and principles, by which we claim the character of Americans. It would discover ingratitude to that Being, who has given us life, who has given us liberty.

In this discussion, we mean not to provoke the resentment of party by indiscriminate censure, or gratify the feelings of the most enthusiastic admirers of the present administration by unqualified panegyric of its officers.

THOUGH, for years past, the celebration of this day has been profaned by idolatrous homage to certain characters, and indiscriminate detrac-

tion of others, yet, uninfluenced by political or party prejudice, and without the aid of figurative embellishment, "*we will speak of them as they are, nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice.*"

OUR constitution has wisely provided that four years shall be the probationary period, for the service of the Executive officers of our Government. It is then we exercise the highest prerogative of freemen. It is then we withhold our confidence from those characters, who, "in the abandonment of constitutional truth and principle," have established precedents, and enacted laws, which tend to subvert the foundation of our liberties. Under the auspices of a benign Providence, our constitution has been freed of the *cumberous materials*, with which it was oppressed, and renewed its native energies in regenerated life. A virtuous exertion of the rights of our Citizens, has invested with authority, a character, no less eminent for the enlightened powers of the mind, than the virtuous qualities of the heart. Possessing the sincere and genuine principles of the Patriot and all those amiable endowments which constitute the dignity

of our nature, and which merit the approbation of earth and of heaven, he is the patron of science, and the friend of man.

To delineate the virtues of our present Government, and to do justice to the different characters who administer it, would require language of encomium, far beyond my abilities to bestow. —A view of the encreasing prosperity of our Country, while it demonstrates the wisdom of our political institutions, cannot fail to diffuse universal satisfaction. It affords an happy illustration of the enlightened policy of our government, which has preserved to us the blessings of peace, amid the commotions which have agitated every quarter of the globe. Among the salutary measures adopted by the present administration, and which have been denounced by its enemies, as the most pernicious and impolitic, *a diminution of national expenditure and of public burthen, an economical disbursement of public money, and a correction of public abuses,* ought to silence the voice of discontent, to abash the emboldened face of guilt, and to paralyze the tongue of slander.

THE annals of the two last years evince that purity of character, official correctness, long and meritorious services to the union, are alike unimportant. If the individual be guilty of the abominable sin of exercising the rights of conscience; or if he be not "*arrayed in royal apparel,*" he becomes a sacrifice to the unrelenting vengeance of *party*. This bitter and furious spirit, which now rages in our Country, is disgraceful to freemen. It contaminates the public mind, creates hostility and increases the malignant passions of the heart. There is no virtue too fair for its attack, no state too civilized for its abode.

IN a *Republican* Government, which we all esteem the most valuable gift of indulgent Heaven, the will of the majority constitutionally announced, becomes a first principle of legal obligation. It was this, for which our ancestors fled from the oppression of arbitrary power. It was this, for which WARREN, MERCER, MONTGOMERY and a host of intrepid warriors sacrificed their lives. Let us not then disturb the slumber of these illustrious heroes, by fostering this implacable spirit of party.

LET the factions it created in ancient Greece and Rome, rouse all the energies of our nature to quell the fury of this audacious harpy. Let us beware how we indulge this DAMNABLE SPIRIT, lest it, ere long, acquire a power that will rend asunder the bands of our Union. Let us listen to the voice of reason. Let us call to mind the sacred duty of a peaceful acquiescence in the measures of our Government. Let our affections be attached to the principles of integrity and of public faith, that the spirit of our constitution may be diffused through our land, the people be as *one hand and one heart*, and unite their efforts for the promotion of the public good.

On this occasion it will not be expected that the temporary embarrassments to our commerce, occasioned by the unauthorised conduct of a Spanish Intendant should be a subject of serious investigation. Inexperience would appear awkward in the attempt. Though the advocates for war were "*tremblingly alive*," for the *dignity of the nation*, and discovered the most *tender concern* for their brethren in the west, the result of a negotiation has proved the wisdom of the

measure, and confirmed the truth, that "error of opinion may be safely tolerated, where reason is left free to combat it."

FELLOW CITIZENS ! while we rejoice in the prosperity of our Country, and enjoy in anticipation, ages of uninterrupted tranquility, let the intrigue of your opponents remind you, that the same vigilance, and the same virtuous exertions which led you to disavow the principles, and detect the insidious attempts against your rights, ought ever to be prompt and ready to repel the first efforts of your enemies. It requires exertions for the preservation of our liberty, no less heroic than the struggles by which it was obtained. Never should we forget, that though wisdom and virtue now adorn our Cabinet, pride and corruption may ere long mount the chair of State, — though we now enjoy the blessings of freedom, the complicated horrors of servitude may be the penalty of a misplaced confidence.

AMONG the variety of duties incumbent upon us as Citizens, there is none more essential to the preservation, none more necessary to the existence of our nation, than unanimity. —

Union is the golden chain which connects our hearts—it is the fountain, from which issue those streams of life which animate every member, and give vigor and energy to every society. We, Fellow Citizens, have every incentive to union. Nature has given us bounds whose strength no human force can destroy. It was the dying injunction of our WASHINGTON—who then will not obey? who will not discard all local prejudices? who does not feel himself a Citizen of the same common Country; a child of the same common parent? Let us then, Citizens, cultivate this spirit of union with a sincere and a single heart. Let the petty differences of the moment perish and die away. Let party and passion cease to exist, and union be engraved on every heart. Then may we challenge the proudest foe to subdue us,—then may we bid defiance to the powers of earth and hell to prevail against us. We shall then exhibit to the world a magnificent spectacle, which will both terrify and delight—our example will animate posterity—and the world's last limits bound our matchless fame!