

DISCOURSE

O N

The Causes of National Prosperity,

ILLUSTRATED BY

Ancient and modern History,

EXEMPLIFIED IN

The late American Revolution.

ADDRESSED TO

THE SOCIETY OF THE

CINCINNATI,

IN THE STATE OF RHODE-ISLAND,

AT THEIR ANNUAL MEETING AT EAST-GREENWICH,

JULY 4, 1786.

By *ENOS HITCHCOCK, A. M.*

OF PROVIDENCE.

 HÆC OLIM MEMENISSE SEMPER JUVABIT.—VIRGIL.

PROVIDENCE:

PRINTED BY BENNETT WHEELER.

*At a Meeting of the Society of the
CINCINNATI, of the State of Rhode-
Island, July 4, 1786,*

R E S O L V E D,

THAT Col. Crary, Col. Peck,
and Col. Bowen, be a Com-
mittee, to present the Thanks of this
Society to the Rev. Enos Hitchcock,
for his Discourse delivered this Day,
and request of him a Copy for the
Press ;---and if they obtain it, take
Order for publishing the same.

A true Copy :

P E T E R T U R N E R,

Sec'ry, Pro Tem.

T O T H E
S O C I E T Y
O F T H E
C I N C I N N A T I,
I N T H E S T A T E O F
R H O D E - I S L A N D,

T H E F O L L O W I N G P R O M I S C U O U S
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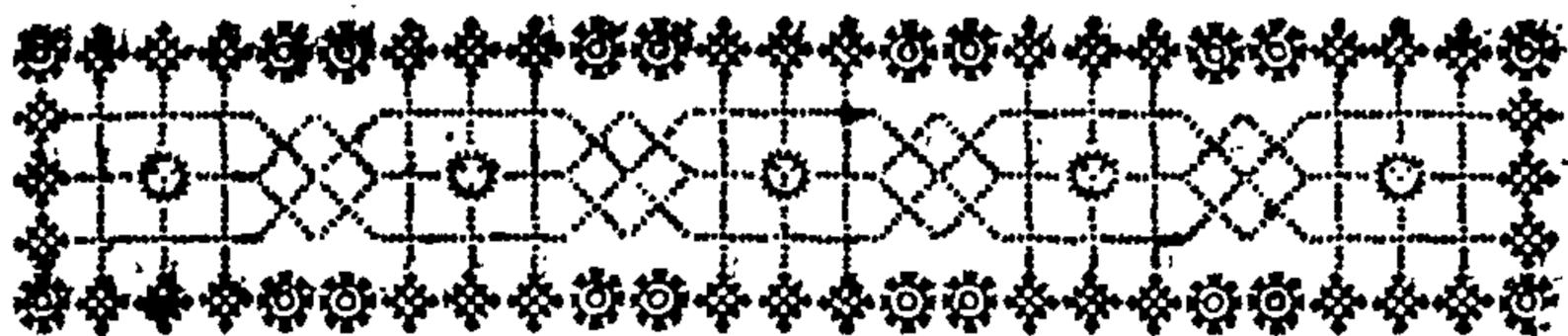
P U B L I S H E D A T T H E I R R E Q U E S T,

I S R E S P E C T F U L L Y I N S C R I B E D,

B Y T H E I R A F F E C T I O N A T E F R I E N D,

A N D S E R V A N T,

The A U T H O R.



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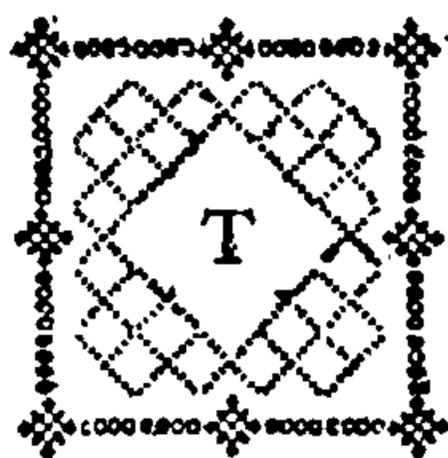
DISCOURSE

ON THE

CAUSES OF NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

—————

—This Day shall be unto you for a Memorial.



THUS saith the Almighty to his people Israel, by the mouth of his servant Moses, whose faithful records, in Exodus xii. 14. have preserved it

as a heavenly statute to them, and a useful motto to after generations.—To him, Israel's God had committed the care of their deliverance from the hands of the oppressive and haughty Egyptians.

SUCH had been the severity of their bondage that God interposed in a special and extraordinary manner

manner for them.—Their cries had risen up unto heaven.—Moses and Aaron poured out their unavailing prayers and tears before the haughty Monarch for the relief of their injured and distressed brethren.—From an earthly Potentate they appeal to “the King of Kings.”—He appears for them, and, in a remarkable manner wrought their entire deliverance from that tyrannical power.

THE day of their marvellous deliverance is to be held in grateful remembrance, with decent expressions of joy, “by an ordinance forever.”—“A feast unto the Lord”—“A day for a memorial unto them” during their political existence.—A day never to be forgotten—never to be overlooked by that nation.—And when their children should inquire, “what mean you by this service?” they were to be made acquainted with the great event, and its attendant circumstances.—They were to tell it to their children’s children “throughout all their generations.”

WAS there a fitness in transmitting the knowledge of their deliverance from bondage, to succeeding generations, by observing a day in commemoration of it? And does not the same hold
good

good with other nations?—Whoever attends to the similarity, in several respects, between their history and ours, will not think the application of this passage to this christian nation, and the glorious revolution we this day recognize, at all strained or unnatural.—“This shall be a day unto you for a memorial.”

To congratulate each other on this joyful occasion, is the office of philanthropy.—To echo the grateful acclamations of Independence and Peace around the festive board, in limited and decent strains, may not be unsuitable expressions of pleasure on this important era.

BUT to unite in the warmest expressions of adoration, and praise to God.—To mingle hearts and voices in ascribing “Alleluias to the Lord God omnipotent” who ruleth among the nations, is the office of religion.—It is a reasonable service;—most suitable and honourable for dependent creatures;—and most acceptable to God.

AND as there are a few minutes assigned for a religious offering unto God, let us, with sentiments of piety, blend some reflections suitable to the present occasion.

As the belief of one perfect, independent being lays at the foundation of all religious worship, so all religious gratitude proceeds upon a belief of a superintending providence which concerns itself in all the affairs of men ; and is continually affording them fresh motives of gratitude and praise.

THEREFORE it would be equally ungrateful and impious not to acknowledge the hand which has often appeared ; and renewed in our favour, the wonders which were wrought for Israel of old.—The duty of acknowledging, with gratitude, the interpositions of divine Providence, is pointed out by our dependent state.—The book of God is crowded with examples of it.—It is a noble and worthy employment.—It has been the practise of good men in all ages.—Is in a peculiar manner the duty of Christians, and will be their delightful, as it is their reasonable service.

SHALL we forget to celebrate the praises of him “ who rideth in the heavens, in his excellency for our help ? ”——Shall we be silent in his praises who hath appeared for us in our troubles ; who hath turned our mourning into joy, and put songs of praise into our mouth ?

THE truth of a governing providence, to which we are to ascribe our salvation, stands written, in the fairest characters, in the memorable events which have filled up the history of the revolving ages of the world;—In the rise and fall of States and Kingdoms;—In crowning their virtues with prosperity, and following their vices with just corrections.

THE whole history of the Jewish nation is pregnant with instances of the supreme influence of an invisible power; and of the different effects of virtue and vice upon the national welfare.—If they murmur against Moses in the wilderness, and worship idols of their own making, their carcases fall there, and none of them are allowed to enter the promised land.—If they avariciously and contrary to the command of God, keep the spoil of their heathenish enemies, they are conquered in the next engagement.

BUT when they attack their enemies in full confidence of divine strength, they conquer.—If one King sets up the worship of idols, the divine vengeance punishes him and his people.—If another destroys the high places, where these infamous rites were celebrated, all goes well in his time.—

From

From their history, in connection with several great and powerful kingdoms around them, which were overturned for national wickedness, one of the noblest and most important morals may be drawn, viz.—That nations may expect to prosper or sink, according as they are favoured by divine Providence or the contrary ; and therefore, that virtue is the only foundation of national happiness.

THE ancient Persian empire rose, under the good government of Cyrus, to great glory and respectability—and notwithstanding they became the object of the envy and jealousy of great and ambitious nations around them, they grew to be the glory and terror of all the east.

THE Roman empire felt the happy effect of a system of laws, founded in equity ;—observed generally ;—and executed strictly—under this auspicious influence, she rose from the most contemptible beginnings, till her glory filled that part of the world—The fate of kingdoms depended on the voice of her Senate, and her Legions triumphed in the extremities of the earth—she was the acknowledged mistress of the world.

THE same may be observed of all the kingdoms and nations which have appeared, flourished and declined on the theatre of this earth—their public character ever determined their political state and condition—their virtues and their vices ever formed their prosperity and adversity.

THAT “righteousness exalteth a nation, and that sin is a reproach to any people,” and tends to their ruin, are maxims in which all Lawgivers—Philosophers—and Moralists have agreed—and which the experience of all ages hath confirmed—we find that as long as Temperance, Righteousness, and a serious regard to Religion, have been cultivated, things went well with them—but when they grew dissolute, luxurious, despisers of Religion, and did not regard public justice, they have fallen into confusion and ruin.

BUT we need not break up the records of old time, nor pry into the secret history of modern States for instances of the different effects of virtue and vice—we need not go abroad for specimens of a divine influence extending to second causes, producing effects agreeable to the designs of a wise system of government ;—laying
the

the people under the strongest motives to gratitude and praise.

THE nearer home we bring our observations—the more attentively we consider the series of events which fill the history of our own land and times, the more forcibly is the mind struck with the evidences of a divine government ;—and the more abundant reason have we to adopt the language of the Psalmist—“ Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the glory.”

THE same hand which guided our ancestors through the trackless ocean, to the pathless wilds of America, was their guardian and protector against the savage bands who combined against them—nurtured by their divine protector, through a series of extraordinary events, which indicated the future patronage of heaven, they increased with great rapidity, in numbers—wealth—and glory ; until by their increasing wealth and power, they became the object of avarice, envy and jealousy—measures were formed to drain them of all the fruit of their labour and industry, upon principles totally subversive of the rights of men—the poison, though slow in its operation, was subtle

tile and certain in its effect—it must have infected the whole frame, and left us in a weak, consumptive state.

BUT the evil was too alarming and detestable to pass unnoticed.—The genius of America, roused by reiterated and atrocious acts of tyranny and oppression, called forth the generous efforts of her sons, to oppose the destructive system ; yea, to resist unto blood, rather than part with their freedom—Liberty, fair daughter of heaven ! inspired every soul with a pure flame, and glowed in every face.

ASSAILED at a variety of points, and prepared for defence in none—almost destitute of arms, ammunition, and every military requisite, they determined, by the last resort of States, to be free. They implored the interposing aid of heaven, and submitted the event to the decision of arms.

THIS northern continent, though different in its government, manners, and interests, as though inspired by one soul, greatly rose in arms—and under all disadvantages, against every military probability, began a contest which she has nobly supported—It was not for fame nor glory, nor for extending her empire, but for freedom she fought ;
and

and divine Providence hath smiled upon efforts resulting from motives so laudable.

THE revolution by which these States have been raised to be numbered among the nations of the earth, is one of those great events, which, while it displays the hand of God, claims the attention of all the powers on earth.—“ You present to the world, the noble fight of a community which, founded in equality and justice, secures to the individuals who compose it, the utmost happiness that can be derived from human institutions.— This advantage, which so many other nations have been unable to procure, even, after ages of efforts and misery, is granted by divine Providence to these United States” after a struggle only of eight years.

THE steps which led to, and the circumstances attending of it, have been so combined as to manifest that no human skill or power could have directed them.—The variety of scenes which have checkered the rise and progress of the late contest : —The many and surprizing interpositions of divine Providence, with their various windings and happy consequences, will swell the historic page— and, rolling down the tide of time, will fill the
reader

reader with astonishment! He will be ready to cry out as the Heathen did of the Jews—"The Lord hath done great things for them."—Let us, with grateful Israel, echo the sound in thankful strains——"The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

SURELY the eye must be blind that cannot see the hand of God in these operations—the heart must be hard that does not feel some emotions at a recognition of what God hath done for us!

To attempt a recital of them at this time, would far exceed the limits assigned to this exercise.—To pass them wholly unnoticed on this occasion, would be scarcely pardonable.

THE glorious event we this day commemorate, took place in the depths of war—invaded by a large veteran army—defended by a promiscuous multitude of temporary, undisciplined troops—without ally—alone and unfriended, America determined to be free—to be independent!

LET the fourth day of July seventeen hundred and seventy-six, be a day for a "memorial unto you forever!" Let it be distinguished among the days of the year as the commencement of the important era

of our glorious Independence! This is the day, the ever-memorable day; in which the full blaze of Liberty shone refulgent on Columbia's sons!

THAT well-timed, manly resolve of our august Congress, which astonished the world, secured its friendship and attention.—The brave will always have friends!—The memory of those noble assertors of our freedom and Independence, be perpetuated forever! their names be revered to the latest generation by all who love or deserve to be free!

THIS year was signalized more by the firm and independent spirit of its councils, and the bravery of its troops, than by their discipline or the success of their unequal encounters—though they were successful in many less noticeable instances.

OVERPOWERED by superior numbers, our army was dispersed and much reduced on Long-Island;—dislodged from New-York;—pursued through the Jerseys;—Fort Washington with twenty-three hundred men taken;—the northern army retired from Canada, worn out with fatigue, and wasted with mortal sickness and unavailing actions—The gloom gathers thick and heavy!—Rhode-Island invaded;—the period of enlistment almost expired;—the

—the field soon to be deserted, afford but a melancholy prospect for the approaching winter!

BUT these dark shades are only to give the brighter lustre to the future fame of America.—Nor is the first year of her Independence to be enveloped wholly in a dark cloud—It is not to close without a brilliant victory at Trenton and Princeton, which equally displayed the address and magnanimity of our General, and the hardiness of his troops!—The drooping spirits of the people revived—the army is recruited—and on the following spring take the field with renewed spirit and vigour.

THIS year is still more remarkable for the variety of its military occurrences, and astonishing deliverances from the most threatening and truly alarming appearances—Fire and sword, devastation and death present their haggard forms with the dawn of spring, and open the way to a train of very extraordinary events!

THE evacuation of Ticonderoga, and rout of our light troops at Hubbleton—The loss of all our posts on the North River, and the destruction of several towns, wantonly burnt—The defeat of our
army

army at Brandywine—The enemy's gaining Philadelphia—The failure in the action at Germantown, and many other unsuccessful events, were amply balanced by the bravery of our troops, even when smiling success did not crown their efforts ;—the obstinate defence of Mud-Island and Red-Bank ;---the successful actions of Bennington and Behmus's heights ; all crowned by the conventional surrender of the whole British army, which poured down from the north “ in the full powers of health, discipline, and valour.”—Their victories proved our gain.—Their prosperity, like that of fools, proved their destruction.

So capital a loss as that of the northern army, and the timely alliance with France on the generous principles of amity and mutual defence, overruled the succeeding operations, and induced the evacuation of Philadelphia in the Month of June, 1778, which was performed with the utmost secrecy, but not sufficient to elude the vigilance of our ever-watchful General ; who by a circuitous march of three times their distance, came up with them on the burning plains of Monmouth, where, to the excessive heat of the day was added a warm engagement

engagement, the issue of which brought new accessions of glory to our arms, and decided the fate of that campaign.

THE enemies councils were carried headlong, and they were taken in the snares they laid for us—plots—treason—and cruelties, were answered by the utmost fairness, humanity and generosity : The pusillanimous attack upon, and wanton destruction of, defenceless towns and unarmed people, by the magnanimous escalade and reduction of Stony-Point *. Nor is less merit due to those who nobly dared to check the enemy's progress at Springfield, in Jersey, and warmly engaged a number far superior to themselves, to whom no ground was yielded but at the highest price.

THESE promiscuous sketches have been confined to the departments where this corps has been most conversant, except the glorious capture at York-Town, in which they bore an active part.

It would lead us into undue length even to name the various accounts of loss and gain at the southward

* THE reduction of this strong fortress near King's-Ferry, North-River, happened when Gen. Clinton was on his ignipotent expedition at Fairfield, Norwalk, New-Haven, &c.

ward which led to the last mentioned glorious event, which disposed our enemies to be at peace with us—sufficient be it to say, that, after a long and gloomy night of trouble and sorrow, peace dawned upon our land, and opened to our view, bright and glorious prospects.

How must our hearts exult with joy when we take a review of the dangers and distresses from which we have escaped? Who can reflect on the difficulties and hazards we were in, from the open violence and secret machinations of our enemies; and consider the ways by which they have been baffled and defeated; without adopting the sentiment and language of the Psalmist——“If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us. Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul. Then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” Pf. 124.

AND

AND now, if the people of these States make a wise improvement of this glorious event, they may secure to themselves and posterity, every blessing which can arise from human institutions.

THESE blessings are now proffered to America—it is with her to realize or reject the heaven-born gift—much, very much, is depending on the present generation! the fate of ages depends on the wisdom of its councils and the virtue of the people! The consequences of their present conduct will be carried down into future generations, and materially affect the well-being of those who shall come after—Yes! The present critical moment is teeming with the happiness or wretchedness of millions yet unborn!

SHOULD the present inhabitants of these confederated States be so wise as to cultivate the arts of peace;—encourage industry, frugality and œconomy;—promote agriculture, mechanic arts and commerce;—cultivate learning, morality and religion—and pay the strictest attention to public and private justice—they might anticipate with utmost certainty, the future grandeur and magnificence of America.

How

How would she rise superior to all her enemies, and extend her hospitable arms for the reception of the oppressed every where? How would the inexhaustible sources of agriculture be continually pouring into her lap, wealth and opulence; opening every avenue to commerce, and extending it from pole to pole? How would the rapidity of her population cover the vast tracts of uncultivated lands, now the rendezvous of wild beasts, with virtuous and useful inhabitants? Behold, “the wilderness,” by the hand of industry, “blossoming as the rose,” yielding in plentiful exuberance every rural enjoyment; and “the desert becoming vocal with the praises of God!”

“BEHOLD her exalted to noble heights of improvement in every useful art and science;—mounting on the strong pinions of virtue, learning, eloquence, religion, philosophy and other sublime intellectual accomplishments, above Greece and Rome in their zenith of glory!”—These are not creatures of imagination, but blessings which America may realize, if the present generation make a wise improvement of this interesting moment!

PERMIT me, my Brother Soldiers, with all the sensibility of lively joy, to felicitate you on the return of this anniversary.

“ THIS day shall be unto you for a memorial.”
 —To look back on the varying scenes through which you have passed in freedom’s glorious cause —to recognize the dangers and escapes, the sufferings and successes which have attended your exertions for the establishment of the Liberty and Independence of your country, must afford a luxury of pleasure—and while you look, with conscious delight, upon the successful issue of your gallant deeds, you cannot refuse a generous tear to the memory of your worthy brethren, who fought—who, courageous, stood by your side amidst surrounding dangers—who rushed fearless on, and were just seizing the palm, when, Oh!----let the falling tear blot the page that speaks the rest!

“ How sleep the brave, who sink to rest,

“ By all their country’s wishes blest’d !

“ When spring, with dewy fingers cold,

“ Returns to deck their hallow’d mould,

“ She there shall dress a sweeter sod

“ Than fancy’s feet have ever trod.

“ By

“ By fairy hands their knell is rung,
 “ By forms unseen their dirge is fung :
 “ There honour comes, a pilgrim grey,
 “ To bless the turf that wraps their clay ;
 “ And freedom shall a-while repair
 “ To dwell a weeping hermit there.”

THE distresses of many of their widows and orphans are so many tongues in every deadly wound to bespeak your compassion—I might here enlarge upon the excellence and utility of that institution, which was designed to perpetuate the friendship of those who had lived together in the strictest habits of amity, through the various stages of a war unparalleled in many of its circumstances, and to assist the unfortunate : On these two original pillars, Friendship and Charity, stands that institution, which, founded in benevolence, holds together a band of patriots through the continent, and greatly contributes to render the confederation a sure and permanent band of union in the States—whatever prejudices may have arisen against it, sure I am, that it is enviable only for the generosity of its principles.

MAY your bravery in war be exceeded only by your virtue and extensive usefulness in peace !—

May

May you never tarnish the bright lustre of military fame, by any conduct unworthy the character of citizens ! and especially, let no shade be cast upon the glory of this day, by any conduct inconsistent with the sobriety, œconomy and simplicity of Republicans.

LET not the hilarity of festive mirth betray an indiscretion which might reproach the institution of your Order—but may you ever prove yourselves the worthy sons and true disciples of Cincinnatus, by that prudence, industry, frugality and virtue, which marked his character !

You have an excellent model in our great American Cincinnatus, who, at his country's call, exchanged the domestic scenes and rural walks of life for the jargon of war—and, having delivered it from oppression, he nobly retired to usefulness in private life.

MAY we all live and act in character, as men, formed in the image of God, and capable of being happy only in his favour ;—as republicans, whose political existence depends on knowledge and virtue ;—as the disciples of Jesus Christ, whose name we bear ! let us study and practise all those vir-

tues which nature inspires, religion enjoins, or society makes necessary.

REGARDING our superior obligations to the Deity, let us cultivate Justice, Benevolence and Charity, and all the beautiful, harmonious train of social virtues—These are essential to our happiness as individuals, or as citizens—Hence arises the pleasure of conscious approbation—Hence also springs the peace and prosperity of society, as from her native soil !

AND as the practice of these virtues upon religious principles, forms the mind for happier life here, so they prepare it for superior pleasures of that grand community where every discordant note shall cease, “and universal love smile on all around.”—Their congenial souls, fired with the celestial flame of love, cease not to unite in the swelling note of praise to God their eternal King.

