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Moore, Zephaniah Swift, 1770-1823.

An Oration on the Anniversary of . . . Independence.

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ORATION

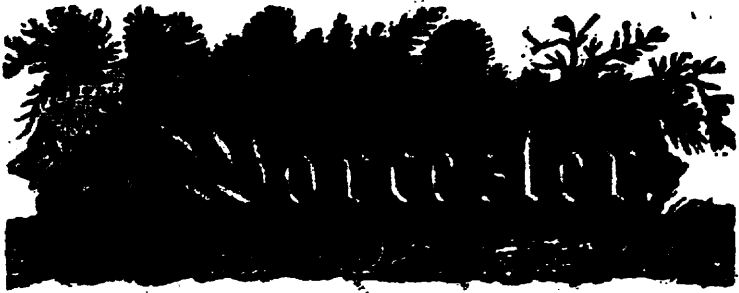
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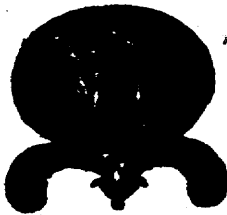
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

PRONOUNCED AT



MONDAY, JULY 5, 1802,

—•••••
BY ZEPHANIAH SWIFT MOORE, A. M.
—•••••



—•••••
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS,
FROM THE PRESS OF ISAIAH THOMAS, JUN.
JULY—1802.



AN

O R A T I O N .



AMONG the most interesting events, recorded in the history of the world, is that, which gave rise to this day's festival. The Declaration of the Independence of the United States of America, on the **FOURTH** of **JULY**, 1776, involved in its consequences the happiness of millions, will extend its influence to the latest ages, and ought to be had in everlasting remembrance. We then emerged from our colonial and dependent existence, and took a rank among the Independent nations of the world. To maintain the rank, we had taken, was deemed impossible by the nations of Europe; and they with confidence asserted, we were preparing for an exemplary punishment. That they should not realize what they so confidently expected, wisdom, fortitude, and union were necessary, and the protection of Him, who is the **GOD** of armies.

COMPARED with our enemies, we were few in number. We possessed little property, except the soil and its appendages, and were thinly scattered over an extensive country. We were destitute of an army, and a navy; were without any bond of general union; and without any coercive method to raise money, or levy troops.

THE nation, with whom we had to contend, was opulent, numerous, powerful, and warlike. They were furnished with all the apparatus of war, both by sea and land; and, if they found it necessary, could add to their strength by forming alliances. The disparity was, indeed, great. It was seen, it was known; it was felt by all.—We look back, feel a kind of astonishment, and are almost ready to say, that the courage and intrepidity of the United States were rashness and frenzy.

BUT the cause was important. It was the cause of justice and rational liberty against the unjust encroachments of arbitrary power. A consciousness of this animated every heart. We were encouraged by able patriots; we raised armies without compulsion, and supported them almost without means. From various sources we procured arms and all the furniture of war, and were soon able to meet the veteran troops of Great Britain on equal ground. In many instances we were successful; in disastrous seasons we retained our courage; and, putting ourselves under the protection of Him, who made the stripling David victorious over the brazen shielded

Goliath, we captured whole armies of invaders, reduced our enemies to the necessity of withdrawing their forces and acknowledging our Independence, and negotiated and established a peace on terms equal to our wishes, and superior to our hopes.

THE most critical period of our national existence had now arrived. Without law and without government, every man did that, which was right in his own eyes. Our firmest patriots trembled for our safety. But anarchy, that many headed monster, under whose ravages we must soon have been wasted and destroyed, for a moment, kept without his chains.

PUBLIC opinion was not contaminated by the poisonous draughts of foreign influence. Modern sentiments of liberty and equality, which are designed to inflame the corrupt and dissocial passions of the human heart, to exhibit the restraints of social order, law, and religion, as unjust and tyrannical, and to render men hostile to every thing which opposes their inclinations, were then unknown.

THE revolutionary war had not its origin in the blinding influence of corrupt, insidious, and designing men. It was not excited by the lawless and ambitious desire of rendering America mistress of the world. It does not name for its leaders a DANTON, a MARAT, or a ROBERSPIERE, — but a WASHINGTON, an ADAMS, and other worthies, whose patriotism was pure, and whose only object was their country's good. The American revolution owed its life and progress to a just sense

in the Americans of their civil rights, of what was due to themselves and posterity, and to a virtuous and patriotic determination to resist the first encroachments of lawless power."

So soon, therefore, as the war was closed, and an honorable peace obtained, the great object of the states, individually and collectively, was to form and adopt constitutions of government, which should preserve to the citizens the free enjoyment of their natural rights, under the protection of equal laws, and impartial justice. Simplicity of manners, habits of industry and economy, together with increasing means of information and moral instruction, afforded a flattering prospect, that government and the blessings of rational liberty would be permanent.

WHEN the government of the United States was organized, and commenced its operation, force and elasticity were given to all its motions by the great and dignified characters, who presided, and to whom its administration was entrusted. We saw with pleasing astonishment the revival of confidence, credit and commerce. The merchant, farmer and mechanic rejoiced under an impressive sense of the vivifying effects of the wise arrangements, which were made.

UNDER the Presidency of WASHINGTON and ADAMS, our rulers, without the useful aid and instruction of precedent and experience, exploring a new and untried path, in which it would require more wisdom and foresight, than fall to the lot of man, to commit no errors, established peace, and

formed advantageous treaties with the nations of Europe, and with the tribes, who inhabit the western wilderness. They preserved our neutrality in midst of the conflicts of the European powers, and their artful, and even violent attempts to involve us in their contentions. They reduced our deranged finances to a regular system, and raised a revenue, which, though little felt by the people, has been sufficient for the support of government, has answered many unforeseen demands, and effected a considerable reduction of the public debt. To the same wise and judicious system may we attribute the existence of our navy, which has repelled many wanton encroachments upon our neutral rights, and been the principal means of our present commercial prosperity.

WITH great propriety did President JEFFERSON observe, in his Inaugural Speech, that our national Government, at the close of the late administration, was "in the full tide of successful experiment."

SINCE that period, it is acknowledged by all, a new order of things has been introduced, and many deviations from the prosperous path of the former administration. To determine with accuracy the ultimate effect of these upon our national happiness, time and experience are necessary. While we wait the decision of these, we ought not to forget, that confidence is one of the principal nerves of republicanism, and that circumspection ought never to be changed into jealousy.

Our progress, since the revolution, in population, in wealth, and, in the useful arts, has never been equalled by any nation, of which we have an account in the records of time. In tracing this progress, and the causes, which have had influence in raising us to a high state of prosperity, and a dignified rank among the nations of the earth, there is a kind of pleasure, which is more easily felt than described. We cannot but devoutly wish the progress may continue, and that future generations may not point back to us, as another example of those, who have in vain attempted to perpetuate a popular government.

In tracing the rise, progress, and consequences of the American revolution, we cannot but admit, that our freedom from political corruption and the purity of public opinion, have had commanding influence. In the revolutions in Europe, and in the rise and decline of empires, the invariable influence of public opinion is clearly seen, and its intimate connexion with national happiness, or misery, is strikingly exhibited.

For a nation to secure and perpetuate their prosperity and happiness, they must be in favor of those means, which are connected with prosperity; and in order for this, the public mind must be uncontaminated.—For a moment, therefore, let us turn our attention to the influence of public opinion, and the importance of its being rightly formed.

In the formation of laws and constitutions of

civil government, public opinion is the capital director. To conform these to the humors, habits, and opinions of a people, is deemed an important part of legislative wisdom. Legislators ever have been and ever will be influenced by the public mind. For a legislative body to act in opposition to that, is an Herculean task, which has seldom been attempted, and, when attempted in elective governments, has never been followed with success. Men in their legislative capacity will strongly incline to omit those virtues, which are disagreeable, and to spare those vices, which are agreeable to those for whom they legislate. In proportion, therefore, as laws and systems of government affect the happiness of a people, so does public opinion. From this they receive their complexion.

So powerful is the influence of public opinion, that it will direct the conduct of a community against its own laws. Hence, in almost every country, we find statutes which are obsolete, and the breach of which cannot be punished. Hence, also it is, that statutes, which operate against public opinion, have very little effect. We may instance in the statute against duelling, which has no effect in places, where the public voice is against its execution upon offenders. As the administration, therefore, of the government of a people, has influence upon their prosperity, in the same proportion is their prosperity affected by public opinion.

THE opinions of a community must be revolu-

