

AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED AT WARREN,

ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, A.D. 1809,

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE

Declaration of American Independence,

AT THE REQUEST OF THE

LIBRARY SOCIETY IN WARREN,

BY ISAAC G. REED, ESQ.

OF WALDOBOROUGH.

Portland :

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1809.

Warren, July 4th, 1809.

THE subscribers, having been appointed a Committee for the purpose, by the Library Society in Warren, and by the other gentlemen who joined them in celebrating the anniversary of our national Independence, return you the thanks of those gentlemen, and of the Society, for the elegant and patriotic oration which you delivered on the occasion, and request the favor of a copy for the press.

Signed, SAM'L. THATCHER,
JAMES W. HEAD, } Committee.
BENJ'N. BROWN,



Waldoborough, July 5, 1809.

GENTLEMEN,

AT your request, a copy of the hastily written, and unfinished oration, delivered at Warren on the 4th of July, is submitted to your disposal.

I am, Gentlemen,

With sentiments of respect,

Your humble servant,

ISAAC G. REED.

SAM'L THATCHER, } Esquires, Warren,
JAMES W. HEAD, }
DOCT. BENJ. BROWN, Waldoborough.

JULY 4, 1809.

Friends and Fellow-Citizens,

TO cultivate a veneration for our ancestors ; reverence for their virtues, and respect for their institutions, is the surest mean of transmitting the blessings, derived from them, to posterity. To instil into the minds of the rising generation an enthusiastic love of liberty ; to teach them the price it cost ; the labors, difficulties and dangers, which were encountered in its acquirement, is the best method to induce them to affix a proper value to the prize.

But so often have the blessings of Independence been described ; so frequently have the charms of liberty and the advantages of a free, elective government been depicted in styles of such superior excellence, that an idea of excelling, or even equaling them, would be deemed the height of vanity and conceit ; that I shall rest contented and satisfied, if by any means I can revive and enforce sentiments and motives already advanced. To raise new ideas upon a subject already exhausted ; to discover originality upon a theme, on which genius and invention have so frequently fatigued themselves, is more than I can accomplish, is more than candor will require.

Every nation has its peculiar festivals. Some rejoice at the birth of a tyrant ; some celebrate famous victories ; and others perpetuate the memory and achievements of some noted saint, or illustrious chief. And shall not Americans rejoice upon the day, which gave liberty to our country ; and confirmed equal rights to every individual, from the owner of the stately palace, to the inhabitant of the humble cottage ? Rather let us resolve, that yearly, on this day, we will recollect the sufferings of our fathers with gratitude ; that we will remember their virtues and emulate them ; that we will kneel at the altar of liberty, and swear never to part with our birthright, while one drop of American blood circulates in our veins. Let kingdoms rise and fall ; let empires be founded, flourish and decay ; and leave not a trace to inform the lonely pilgrim where once stood the lofty monuments of human art and grandeur ; but amid all the changes of an ever varying world, let this day be grateful to every son of Columbia. On this day may joy sparkle in every eye, and pleasure fill every heart ; may love, peace and harmony prevail ; and party spirit slumber through the day.

Tired with oppression ; their patience exhausted by intolerance, our fathers quitted a land, endeared to them by all the ties, which bind the patriot to his native soil. Encouraged by the hope of enjoying liberty of conscience, which had been denied them in their native country, they risked their lives, their property and all that was valuable to them, upon the dangerous sea, and upon the more dangerous shores of a country inhabited only by wild beasts, and more savage men. They endured every fatigue, and suffered every misery calcu-

lated to appal the heart, and overcome the firmness of man. Destitute of almost every comfort ; without even a cottage to shelter them from the inclemencies of a rigid climate ; and relying on no support but heaven ; they engaged in the hope-killing undertaking, and laid the foundation of a great, a flourishing and happy, republic. Could they now arise from their tombs, how would they be surprised to behold towns, hamlets and cities supplying the places of woods, bogs and morasses ; how would they be astonished to see savage wildness yielding to civilized cultivation ; and the wigwams of the natives giving place to seats of science and temples of worship.

Many were the blessings we owed, and should still have owed, our mother country, had not oppression cancelled the debt. But our prosperity was too great not to excite a wish to partake it ; our power increased too fast not to create jealousy ; and our wealth and possessions were too fair to permit rapacity to behold them with indifference. Britain, forgetting the duty of a parent, became a cruel stepmother, and protected us from others only that she might enjoy the plunder without a division. “As light cometh out of darkness,” so oppression is frequently the parent of liberty. Had not a tyrant commanded TELL to strike the apple from the head of his son, long might Helvetia have groaned in the chains of Austrian oppression. Had Britain been more moderate in her exactions, we might yet have been a colony, receiving our laws and our governors from a foreign hand ; but thanks to her rapacity, we are now a free, independent nation. Like the dog in the fable, by grasping at too much, she lost even that, which she had.

At the commencement of our great political struggle, America cast a filial eye upon England, whose glance expressed regret at being obliged to lift the hand against its parent. But oppressions multiplied too fast ; and America saw the necessity of contending for her rights, or becoming a nation of slaves. Yet she determined to employ every method to obtain a redress of grievances ; and that arms should be only “the last resort.” But her aggressions continued. Our resistance began with remonstrances to the king, and ended with an affecting appeal from the eloquent mouths of our cannon to the sensibility of the people. At the sound, they paused, they listened ; and struck by the peculiar cogency of the arguments, conviction filled every breast ; and they no longer hesitated to acknowledge our independence.

I shall not recite to you the events of the war ; they are too recent not to be remembered ; too important ever to be forgotten. Suffice it to say that, raw, undisciplined, soldiers, animated by the love of liberty, overcame veteran troops ; that they rushed, like the waters of our own Niagara, upon the astonished foe ; that Valor was their conductor, and Victory their companion.

Europe, and, in short, the whole world beheld the conflict with anxiety ; but Heaven smiled on our bold exertions, and they were crowned with success. Our country, no longer the scene of bloodshed, carnage, and all the horrors of war, now became the peaceful abodes of liberty and independence.

The just spirit of resentment, which had filled the breasts of our patriots, and impelled them to battle, was now soothed by the dulcimer of peace. The object of contest obtained, animosity, and the implements of war were laid aside together ; for bravery, and inveterate malice cannot inhabit the same bosom. The olive branch supplanted the sword ; and denunciations of war and vengeance gave place to reciprocations of peace and good will.

Yet, however, the greatest difficulty remained. To form, adopt and carry into execution a suitable system of policy and government ; to teach those to submit to the restraints of law, who had fancied they should be permitted to rove with the unbounded licentiousness of the savage ; to force subordination upon men, who had flattered themselves with the idea, that they were to enjoy that liberty, which would subject them to no controul, but of their own inclinations, was a task, which put in requisition the greatest talents and abilities of the country. But the patriots, who acquired our independence, secured it by the formation of our present constitution and form of government ; that proper mixture of powers, which patriots and philosophers have long desired, but never enjoyed ; that combination of liberty and restraint ; that medium, equally distant from licentiousness and slavery, which is most conducive to the happiness of man. It gives equal rights and privileges to all, who equally deserve them. Our laws are not, like those of LYCURGUS, “ written in blood.” Yet, though mild, they are coercive ; affording protection equally to those in the elevated walks of life, and to those, who move in more humble stations. It must be a proud thought to every American, that he is not obliged to sub-

mit to an unrevenged insult, because the hand, which offers it, bears the sceptre of power. The governor in his "high places" is not above the reach of the strong arm of the law; and for an injury to the lowest individual in the nation, the President of the Union may be dragged from the chair of state to the bar of justice. But perfect equality exists only in the addled brains of visionary speculators. Natural abilities, and scientific acquirements being unequally distributed, some must be more fit for elevation, than others. Nature never intended the majestic lion should be ruled by the simple sheep, or simpering monkey. Some may be diverted with the vain chimera, that all should be equal, without regard to qualification; it may gratify the vanity of those, who are, and forever ought to be, in the lowest stations of life, to be told they are fit for lords, emperors and kings; but this can never be realized, till the order of nature be reversed, and the sun become dark and opaque as the earth. Yet the cry of "liberty and equality" has produced wonderful effects. It has removed from office men of approved talents, and tested patriotism, and introduced an administration of salt-mountains, gunboats and embargoes. But our eyes are again gladdened by glimmerings of light, which seem a prelude to returning day. And the patriot has reason to hope, that the more than cimmerician darkness, in which French principles, and philosophical experiments have enveloped our country, are fast receding before the *rising sun*. The 10th of June last was a day of joy to every friend to his country. Again shall a smile illumine the face of industry, and accustomed exercise restore health to the body politic.

Our constitution, formed, and adopted, required a chief magistrate of unbounded genius, talents and popularity to put it in force. All eyes were in search of the man, who should unite in himself all these rare, but necessary, qualifications ; and all eyes were fixed on WASHINGTON. His prudence, judgment, self-denial and patriotism ; supported by his fame, by the love and attachment of his fellow-citizens, marked him as the fittest person to engage in so great, so arduous, and so glorious an undertaking. Like the new made sun, he rose with lustre, pursued his way through the hemisphere of political rectitude ; and after a course of unequalled splendor, extinguished his beams in the ocean of death, and left the world to mourn the extinction of the brightest luminary, that ever cheered the earth.

ADAMS, like the sun of the succeeding day, ascended the political horizon, diffusing his strong light to chase from the face of our country the clouds of faction, which threatened to obscure it. Like his predecessor, he progressed, scattering the blessings of peace, independence and national honor. But a sudden storm arose, obscured his radiance, and left our country buried in darkness.

While our breasts thus swell with the contemplation of the exploits of ancestors ; while we admire the mighty labors of the patriots, who achieved our independence ; exalted over every nation on earth, in richness of country and excellence of government ; let us pause for a moment, and drop a tributary tear to the memory of those heroes, who died under the banners of Liberty. The sun of joy will not shine less bright for being obscured

by a temporary cloud of sorrow. May their memories be sacred ; may their virtues be the constant subject of eulogy ; and their actions the object of ceaseless emulation, while Liberty shall have a friend, or Virtue a follower.

Sainted shades ; what though no weeping friends closed your eyes, or received your parting sigh ; what though no monumental inscription deliver your virtues to posterity ; yet all America wept at your fall ; and Fame shall transmit your glory to future ages.

Oft shall a tear bedew the furrowed cheek of age, when relating your sufferings and death ; and oft shall the bosom of beauty heave the long drawn sigh, and mourn the untimely fate of those, to whom we are indebted for every thing which renders life valuable.

Great was the price of our liberty, and dear is the possession. Our Independence was purchased by the blood of many heroes ; and thousands of brave souls have taken their flight to heaven to see it recorded on the book of fate. Then let us watch with vestal vigilance the spark of liberty, which warms the temple of Independence.

Speculative opinions, and party contentions, when confined within the bounds of temperance and moderation, are beneficial ; for without the breezes of controversy the sea of liberty would subside into the calm of despotism. Difference of opinion, when properly regulated, produces that watchfulness and circumspection, that attention to the welfare of the community, which prevents abuses of power from either party.

Political controversy exists only in free governments. Under the reign of tyrants all is quiet acquiescence. None wish or dare to interfere with the concerns of government ; for the slightest disapprobation would be the conductor of the lightning, which would consume every one, who had the temerity to express it. In such a state, the blessings resulting from freedom of speech, and liberty of the press, like the joys of angels, would be known only by the imagination. A natural expression of sorrow for the loss of property or friends, torn away by the tyrant, would be construed into disaffection to government. Should the misery, it inflicts, produce a groan, that groan would superinduce additional punishment. Its subjects would suffer, like the child, which is whipped till it cries ; then whipped till it ceases. Is this exaggeration ? Will no country afford an instance of such misery ? For an original of such a detestable picture, you have only to turn your eyes to France, that darling abode of Liberty ; or cast a single glance at the Turks, who with all the patience and magnanimity of an ass, suffer every indignity, which the cruelty or caprice of a tyrannic master can inflict.

It is true that the press should be free ; its freedom is essential to liberty ; and the law, which destroys the former, will be a death warrant to the latter. The opinion of a virtuous public should compose its only restraint. Though free to censure vice, and applaud virtue ; it should likewise be free from the imputation of calumny and slander. But every liberty is liable to misuse ; and future ages will scarcely credit the assertion, that even in this country, the spotless character of its saviour has been the subject of public abuse. But

the wretch, who reviled him, has followed the advice of the wife of Job, cursed his God, and died. But the glory of WASHINGTON, HAMILTON and AMES shall be lasting as our mountains, and elevated as their summits ; while the names of their slanderers shall be sunk in the ocean of oblivion, or gibbeted in history for the execration of posterity.

My countrymen, turn a deaf ear to every suggestion, that our condition may be improved by changing our form of government, or dissevering the Union. Innovation is not the friend of happiness. Under a constitution of our own adoption, under laws of our own making, administered by rulers of our own choosing ; we possess a country embracing a variety of climates, none either parched by a vertical sun, or buried in the perpetual snows of Kamtschatka ; but all temperate as our liberty, and mild as our government.

We have become a great, a flourishing, nation. Europe no longer looks upon us as pigmies ; “ children of yesterday, who know nothing.” Instead of despising us, as inferiors ; they fear us, as rivals. From the mists of ignorance and obscurity, we are rapidly advancing to the summit of refinement. Already has the sun of science risen upon our land, and is chasing the clouds of superstition, bigotry and ignorance before him, and ushering in the mid day of civilization. Our towns are adorned by public seminaries, and private institutions. And, as a sure prognostic of increasing refinement, we mention with pleasure the attention paid to female education. Such are the charms and accomplishments of our females, that should the most rigid mahometan visit our shores, he would be

compelled to confess, that woman had found a *soul*, and he had lost a *heart*.

Of all the forms of government, which human ingenuity has invented, the republican seems to have been subject to the speediest dissolution.

Monarchies have seemed to bid defiance to the powers of time ; they have opposed their fronts to the shafts of destruction, and seen them fall harmless to the ground. But republics, like man, seem only born to die. Like the human body, they are liable to many disorders, which either terminate existence immediately, or compel them to drag out a wretched life of weakness and imbecility. Many have been the unsuccessful attempts to give them durability ; perhaps the last is now making in America ; Heaven grant it may be prosperous !

Their destruction may generally be traced either to the aspiring genius of a few, or the levelling principle of the multitude. By whatever means they are destroyed, they are generally succeeded by despotism. When they are destroyed by the ambition of a few, monarchy enters through the door of aristocracy ; when they are reduced by the restlessness of the people, it comes through the gates of anarchy.

The republics of Greece were destroyed by internal divisions and the accumulation of too much power in one state ; for they had their Virginia, and they perished.

The ghost of Rome, that once flourishing and happy republic, warns us against too great an increase of territory ; it forbids our destroying the Constitution, under the pretext of amending it ; for Rome had her Louisiana, and her democrats.

The blood of all the modern republics “cries to you from the ground ;” beware of the strict embraces of France, which will leave you a lifeless corpse. These republics, once the pride and envy of the world ; now exist only in remembrance ; and will soon be known only by tradition and record ; and their situations be pointed out only by the finger of history. France, that lover of republicanism, that protector of republics, that destroyer of monarchies, has blotted them from the earth. What Pope can give absolution for her political sins ? Already has the catalogue reached from the blood-stained earth to the peaceful skies, and formed a ladder for the descent of the minister of vengeance. Unhappy France ; you have exchanged a mild monarchy, for a cruel despotism ; you have yielded a virtuous king, for a military despot ; a Louis, for a king, emperor BONAPARTE. Long may you continue a beacon on the shoals of innovation.

The opinions of mankind are various as the expressions of the human countenance ; and though unanimity of sentiment cannot be expected ; yet in one determination *nearly all* will agree ; to love our country, and protect her rights. But candor compels me, however unwillingly, to assert, that some few seek only personal honor, and individual aggrandizement. Our shores are crowded, and our government thronged by imported patriots,

who have fled from the pillory and gallows in their own country, to seek the "reward of their useful labors in this assylum of oppressed humanity." With sentiments and prejudices inimical to a republican government, they would force, or decoy, the ship of state upon the rocks of destruction, that they might share in the plunder ; and partial success has hitherto attended their endeavors. The long tried patriot, and the veteran soldier, have been driven from their stations to make room for foreign ruffians and renegadoes, and compelled to seek, in humble situations, that support, which an ungrateful country had denied them. This is *modern propriety*, to employ one man in labor, and give the rewards of it to another.

Let us rather cultivate homebred merit, than invite foreign rapacity. Let us not be indebted to any foreign nation for our rulers. Let us not import passions, prejudices, and vices, when our own country will afford sufficient for home consumption ; and would not, perhaps, suffer much, should we even export a few of these fashionable commodities.

Gentlemen of the Social Library Society,

Ignorance and rational liberty are incompatible ; for without information and correct morals, freedom will degenerate into licentiousness, and civilization into barbarity.

Rome, while science flourished, was mistress of the world, and Liberty had there her residence. But ignorance approached, and liberty retired. The "dark ages" succeeded, in which the torch

of freedom was extinguished. For several centuries, bigotry, superstition, and tyranny, held universal sway.

At length the beams of science reilluminated the world, and slavery, with her attendants, vanished.

The ordeal, the rack, and inquisition, were succeeded by mild laws, impartial judges, and trials by jury. The human mind, no longer enchained by the shackles of ignorance, ranged abroad through the fields of nature and art. Improvement was made upon improvement, till man, who *lived* subsequent to the "dark ages," seemed to compose a distinct race of beings, superior to that, which *breathed* in the preceding centuries.

Beside the diffusion of useful knowledge, the object of your institution is to disseminate, and cultivate, correct morals. This is an object worthy the greatest mind, and best heart.

In France, societies have been formed, for directly opposite purposes; and happy would it have been for this country, had their demoralizing effects been confined to her own shores. For modern philosophy is a greater curse, than all the plagues of Egypt. It teaches to love the whole human race, and abuse and betray our friends; it bids us cultivate universal philanthropy, and despise the ties of kindred and affection.

As well might the weary traveller seek repose under the shade, and refreshment from the fruit, of the upas, as society expect happiness under principles, like these. Volcanic irruptions lay in ruin,

only the neighboring country ; but modern philosophy, more deadly in its nature, destroys the whole moral world, and blasts the fair fruits of virtue and religion. Even in this happy country is this mania raging, and threatening destruction to every institution founded in morality and virtue ; and with these will fall the dignity and happiness of our nation ; for they are so interwoven, that the ruin of the one, will accompany that of the other. Tell me the state of a nation's morals, and I will tell you the state of her prosperity.

Societies established for purposes so beneficial, as are those of the " Warren Social Library Society," are entitled to the respect of individuals, and the protection of the public.

May your society long continue an honor to yourselves, and a blessing to your country.

Fellow Citizens,

Till the desire of power and domination are extinct in the human breast, the peace of the world will be subject to continual violations. Are there any in this assembly, who wish a renewal of " sufferings, which tried men's souls ?" Are there any, who wish to see our country again wasted by the horrors of war, and desolated by contending powers ? If none, then cultivate your militia.

The surest way to preserve peace, is to be prepared for war ; to show the world we are able, ready and willing, to revenge insults, repel our enemies, and protect our rights.

Let us cultivate the art of war, that we may enjoy the blessings of peace. Let us encourage the militia, that we may never need a standing army. In times of security, let us prepare for those of difficulty and danger. Let our citizens learn to manage, with equal dexterity, the implements of war, and the instruments of husbandry.

May we never be alarmed by the shrill clarion of war ; may our country never be disturbed by the discordant sounds of the trumpet. But should our peace ever be interrupted ; should any nation under heaven, attempt to wrest from us those privileges, which were purchased by the toil and labor of our progenitors, and secured by their bravery, their wounds, and their lives ; may we present to invasion a bulwark impregnable, as our liberties are dear.

Yet we have little to fear from abroad, if we remain united at home. It is only from our own vices, our own follies and indiscretions, we have any dangers to apprehend.

So long as virtue shall preside at our elections ; so long as our rulers shall be capable, upright, and good ; so long shall our nation be prosperous and happy. But when ambitious demagogues shall usurp the seats of honor ; whenever foreign ruffians shall become directors of our government ; whenever religion shall yield to the nefarious doctrines of Godwin and Paine ; then shall the destroying angel unsheath the sword, and America no longer be the pride, the envy, and the admiration of the world.

As religion is the broad basis of human happiness ; as order is necessary to our welfare ; as union is essential to our preservation, let us cultivate them with assiduity ; let their protection be the first objects of our minds, and the greatest pleasure of our hearts ; then shall our liberties be splendid as the firmament, and durable as the arc of heaven.

FINIS.

Standing Armies