

AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED

JULY 4, 1808,

BEFORE THE CITIZENS OF THE TOWN OF ROXBURY,

IN COMMEMORATION

OF THE

ANNIVERSARY OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY N. RUGGLES SMITH.

Si Deus est pro nobis, quis contra nos? *Cic.*

BOSTON:

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1808.

VOTED unanimously, That the Committee be directed to wait on Mr. N. RUGGLES SMITH, and return him the thanks of the citizens for his spirited Oration, and request a copy for the press.

*By order of the Committee,
JOSEPH RUGGLES, Chairman.*



And,

The Oration, at the request of the Committee, is, with all due respect, submitted to their disposal.

N. RUGGLES SMITH.

Joseph RUGGLES, Esq.

Chairman.

ORATION.

IN compliance with the desire of partial friendship, and the solicitation of a number of respected fellow-citizens ; I rise in presence of so esteemed an audience, and on so important an occasion, under impressions of conscious distrust. The time allotted me for the completion of their wishes, will not be judged to have been sufficient to effect with equal success, what a longer period might have enabled me to accomplish. And as diffidence and fear are restraints peculiar to the feelings of youth and inexperience ; they have an unquestionable claim on the candour and indulgence of the benevolent and enlightened.

Learned, polite and respected assembly,

A spirit of patriotism impels me to congratulate you on the propitious return of this memorable anniversary ; and with fervent zeal and rational enthusiasm, I greet that proportion of the assembly, in whom I recognise the venerable assertors of the rights of mankind. I invoke your sainted spirits, ye heroes of paradise ; immortal champions of your native liberties ! Inspire our breasts with the sacred ardour of your patriotism ; with the flame of your magnanimity. Mingle in the celebration of our natal rights ; and infuse into the cup of our festivity, your smiles of exultation. Approve our transport, and sanction our independence.

Come, ye votaries of freedom, encircle the devoted altar of Liberty, and consecrate your chaste desires to the dignity of her cause ! Come, patriotick youth, approach the shrine of sacred worth, and twine a garland

to the immortal fame of your country! Ye VIRGIN TRAIN, animate our devotion by the mild influence of your virtues; and in your vestal robes invoke the genius, of your innocence. DIANA will protect your hearts, and MINERVA inspire you with wisdom. Hail, the anniversary of our liberties! hail INDEPENDENCE! a day devoted to the cause of freedom, let freemen assert their claims to its propitious influence. Let the effusions of our joy be governed by the measure of our patriotism; and this jubilee of our rights be perpetuated in the annals of posterity. Let not the revels of BACCHUS profane its sacred temple; nor the anger of JUPITER mar its hilarity.

The theme of American independence has exhausted the praise of eulogy, and commanded the boldest flights of imagination, and the extravagance of rhetorical ornament. To expect, at this advanced period of its commemoration, any mode that has not been embraced, were presumptive anticipation; and the foretaste could be justified only by the aid of supernatural ingenuity. The province of candour is extensive; indulgence is the handmaid of youthful distrust—the favour of these I implore.

The world resounds with applause and admiration of American wisdom and valour. Since the important but hazardous period, when the ready hand of heaven directed our pious and venerable ancestors to the rude cradle of her infancy; our favoured country has progressed with unparalleled rapidity, in the arts of civilization, national honour and respectability. Thirty and two times have the plains of independent America been renovated by the prolific radiance of the meridian sun; and as often has the faithful pen of panegyrick recounted the virtues, celebrated the achievements, and paid due honours to the ancient fathers of our country. To recapitulate their deeds of heroick valour and magnanimity, would be to eulogize what posterity can never forget, or cease to venerate and admire.

The epic story of American independence is a tale of wonder and of woe. Interwoven with its relation are

fates allied to the destiny of those, whom the faithful pages of history have recorded as the victims of remediless despair in the conquests of the ancients ; and who are represented as sacrificing the claims of domestick felicity, to the stronger ones of their country. In its strains of melancholy horror and brutal carnage, the piercing ken of imagination traces the image of the magnanimous and intrepid **ABRADATES** weltering on the American field ; and the captive Princess of the Persian monarch invoking the shade, and expiring on the gory bosom of her breathless hero. It exhibits in the person of the immortal father of American liberty, greater prudence than Cesar could boast, without his perfidious designs of ambition ; and more consummate bravery than Alexander displayed, without his deeds of intemperance and cruelty. It combines the magnanimity of the valiant, with the pusillanimity of the cowardly and treacherous ; and displays the conquest of the former over the pride and injustice of the latter. It embraces the balmy sleep of the cradle rocked by the crimson hand of vile assassination ; the dissolution of the natural ties of parental fondness and filial attachment ; and the piteous fate of unprotected innocence is mingled in the gloomy catalogue of its woes. It is a series of events, the relation of which excites the ardour of veteran youth, and rouses the just resentment of experienced age. It captivates the mind that glows with the ardency of patriotism, by an exhibition of magnanimous and exemplary exploits of individual and national greatness ; or wounds the finer feelings with deeds of cruelty and injustice, of unrestrained violence, and wanton barbarity.

Such is the fair, and such the gloomy picture, which the history of American independence displays.

In the attainment of our liberties were employed all the wisdom and eminent talents the exigency of the crisis could summon ; all the magnanimity and patriotick zeal a love of country could inspire ; all the spirit of just resentment an insulting and cruel foe could provoke from the consecrated bosoms of a people, unitedly de-

terminated on freedom or death. The blood of the immortal patriots, who sacrificed their lives on the altar of independence, cries aloud for redress and vengeance on the heads of the violators of our rights ; and their sainted manes from the dark and awful recesses of monumental greatness, point us to the ravages of British cruelty and injustice ; and in the language of the admired Shakespeare exclaim,

*O, horrible ! O, horrible ! most horrible !
If you have nature in you, bear it not.*

But the preservation and maintenance of our individual and national privileges ; and the peculiar interest and conscious blessings we obviously derive from the independence of our native soil, in a degree check our resentment, and moderate our ardour.

By a successful opposition to British pride and domination, we have defended, and continue to maintain our rights and liberties ; but the mind is pained by reflecting on the treasure that was expended, the labour that was bestowed, the sacrifices that were made, the blood that was shed, the lives that were immolated on the altar of freedom, in their defence. The east and the west ; the north and the south ; the most formidable armada that could be collected ; nay, the united force of British power conspired against our liberties, and threatened to deluge the brave sons of Columbia in an ocean of blood. Our devoted fanes were exposed to the brutal and sacrilegious violence of an infuriated soldiery ; common desolation was the prime object of their animated exertions ; and the crimson current of American bosoms was anticipated as an exhilarating cordial to their exhausted spirits. The heights of Bunker, which invert the consecrated monument on the patriotick WARREN, can attest the violence of an enraged foe ; and the flames of *Fairfield*, the ruins of *Danbury*, the ashes of *New-London*, and the blood of *Groton*, can bear witness to their unhallowed strides. The gloomy presages, so often interwoven with the general order of nature, served to

strengthen the energy which animated the bosoms of Americans ; nor could the unjust menaces of the infuriated mother, constrain the child, more wise and prudent than herself, to relinquish unconditionally, what a sense of conscious honour taught it to retain. The melancholy omens which pierced the "pitchy mantle" of the night, and clouded the effulgence of the day, revolving time explained to the animation of the sons of liberty, and against the nefarious designs of the minions of British influence.

FRANCE, whose present summit of imperial power excites the wonder and anathemas of the world, contributed her generous aid to the conquest over a nation, in whom she beheld an inveterate foe to every principle of justice and humanity : and the motive by which she was impelled was sanctioned by the cause she espoused. From an hereditary enemy, whose hatred was not the consequence of violated rights, but engendered by a spirit of envy, she could not calculate on terms of accommodation and alliance ; nor would her views of political justice and national integrity permit her to become an unconcerned spectator of the designs of unauthorized domination over a people, whose claims were justified by the principles of civil right.

Had the ministers of Great-Britain, in connexion with the views of their sovereign, been prompted by a zeal for the protection of their subjects ; had they consulted the state of their sentiments with moderated fervency, from a prevailing desire of mutual accommodation ; the difficulties subsisting between the two countries, on either side of the Atlantick, might have been amicably and honourably removed. Prudence indeed suggested the expedience of less exercise, and consequently more effectual measures than those employed to perpetuate the union of the mother country, with the interests of her colonies. But the restraints of prudence were of no avail in checking the combined fury of monarchical sway. Oppression was made the instrument of succeeding the designs of

British violence and injustice ; guilty artifice and violated faith were made synonymous with national integrity ; and insulting cruelty was another name for vanquished honour. The feelings of Americans could not brook the insolence of a tyrannical foe ; nor suffer their dignity to be tarnished by a base and dastardly submission to monarchical authority. The genius of Liberty could have been appeased without the effusion of blood ; but the sacred and unsullied cause of her injured sons, could not be wantonly prostrated at the feet of domineering power.

The minions of Britain advanced with insulting strides, and commenced their bloody designs of conquest over a country, which had already given birth to heroes. The infant council of our nation, with intuitive discernment, consummated principles of policy, equally distinguished for a display of wisdom and effectual operation.

To guide the views and animate the zeal of enraged freemen, a commander in chief, at the head of our forces, was judged expedient, whose military exploits and noble achievements might humble the pride of British assailants. A provision had already been made in the council of freedom. The God of armies unfolded the portals of his majesty, and liberty ushered in—WASHINGTON!—WASHINGTON, another name for victory itself!

The fame of the warlike chief flashed across the crimson billows of the Atlantick ; arrested the pride and excited the fears of the cabinet of Great-Britain ! and humbled the proud spirit of the intoxicated monarch, to the hem of his purple vestment. The massy strides of despotism, encompassed by the surging waves of the ocean, who had bid defiance to colonial power, and gained a footing at the American straits, were pierced by the spear of heroick resentment, and issued a current, that weakened his gigantic frame. Even the *distrust* which our veteran manifested in yielding to the voice of his country, excited the alarms of the invading foe, who

were doomed to feel the force of his greatness. But when the crisis had arrived which demanded his active exertions, ambition fled before his success in arms, and the “unreal mockery” of liberty, lost all its borrowed lustre. Young imagination traces his valour; and the mind of mature experience surveys his noble achievements. Like the magnanimous **FINGAL** against the boasted, but imaginary prowess of **CARACUL**, behold him along the fields of his pride.

“Heaven’s fiery horse, beneath
his warrior form,
Paws the light clouds, and gallops
on the storm.”

Freedom would have shrieked at his fall; but the weapons of defeated ambition could not pierce her invulnerable armour. Connected with his fame in arms, were the applauses of his grateful country; but applause was not the object of his ambition. He sought no other reward, than what a consciousness of personal rectitude and fidelity in the cause of the violated rights of his native soil, would afford; and at the close of his military career, the blessings of private life. But freedom had consecrated to his untarnished honour, a conspicuous seat, in her pantheon of renown; and heaven had already subscribed his immortality. From the shades of *Vernon*, from the recesses of his favourite retreat, and the proud banks of his native river, the American **CINCINNATUS**, relinquished his claims on mortality, in the refulgent car of empyreal majesty, became an inheritor of bliss!

The fame of **WASHINGTON** is co-extensive with the earth; and the correctness of his principles and maxims of civil policy, has been acknowledged by succeeding statesmen and professors of scientific government. But, to the dishonour of my country; to the reproach of *many* whose boasted creed is *liberty* and the **RIGHTS OF MAN**; who value themselves on the declaration of eternal fealty to

the demands of justice, and the sacred cause so strenuously asserted and defended by the illustrious chief, whose name and whose achievements will never cease to adorn the annals of posterity ; to their reproach let it be said, his views have been maliciously interpreted to aid the success of erroneous sentiments ; and his sainted spirit invoked at the altar of sacrilegious frenzy ! If Liberty be something more than an unmeaning appellation or momentary phantom ; if it be the basis of national honour and national utility : its protection requires the aid of correct principles and unshaken firmness.

The revolutionary contest was an ordeal by which the zeal and attachment of Americans to the cause of liberty and their natal rights, were evinced. The struggle is distinguished for an eminent display of republican magnanimity and veteran bravery ; but were there not some whose feelings courted the empty applauses of monarchical pride, rather than merit the acclamations of their own country ?—Were there not some, who counted with pain and regret, the drops of blood from British wounds ; and who sighed to chant *TE-DEUM* to the victory of George's banners ?—Nay, pardon the enquiry, have not treachery and ingratitude crept through the space of thirty-two revolving years, and at length erected their thrones on the soil of Columbia ? The impending clouds that lower on our political horizon, thunder a reply of terror ; from their dark ethereal caverns forked lightnings flame, and angry meteors attend their fury ! The ocean, which bore on its faithful bosom, our venerable ancestors to the gloomy wilds of this western country, is mantled with a garment of blood. The fangs of the *Leopard* have been died in the vital fluid of innocence ; and rapine, insolence and slaughter have rested their hydra forms on the pedestal of the altar of liberty. We imprecate the destructive influence of British agency in the conventions of our nation ; and the propagation of principles, which time can never accommodate to the feelings of devoted Americans, and

which are diametrically opposed to republican habits. A country so peculiarly adapted to the cultivation of such habits and forms of government, as our own, calls for redress and vengeance on the heads of traitors to her cause; and invokes the aid and talents of patriots to defend her claims, and protect her liberties.

The science of government, as with every other that requires the exertion of human ingenuity and sagacity, is attended with intricacies, and oftentimes apparently with insurmountable obstacles. That its originally intended effects may be promoted, it must embrace the views and tempers of those, who are the immediate subjects of its power. But the general and individual interests of mankind require, that it be well understood, and cautiously investigated, before it is permitted to commence its operations on society. The mutual checks necessary to be observed in its institution, are demonstrative of the various extremes of tyranny and licentiousness, cruelty and injustice to which it is exposed; and the cause it is intended to protect, discovers the source whence it originates.

The balance of power, as it primarily embraces the *interests* so it must be resolved by the *will*, of the people. The *will* of the people, as it has a national and indisputable claim to the freedom of election; as it has an equal influence on the institution of *civil government*. *Civil government*, as it regards national utility; so it is concentrated in the choice of the people. Political distinctions to the exclusion of republican prerogatives, experience has verified to be gradual progressions to tyranny and usurpation; and experience is a stubborn witness. France is a deplorable instance of tyranny, usurpation and cruelty. The summit to which she has arrived threatens her own ruin, and the final destruction of her tributaries. The hereditary enmity of England towards her rival, and the convulsions which have subsisted within the bosoms of both nations, have extended their effects to an unlimited degree, and threaten the

pride of European greatness. The United States have been doomed to experience the disadvantages arising from their immoderate and cruel contests. *Both* have offered insults to our neutral flag; but *one* has aimed at the root of our liberty, by slaughter and hostile aggression.

To enumerate the deeds of British violence and usurpation committed on our rights within the space of two successive years; to relate the secret machinations of the cabinet of St. James against the dignity and interest of the union, which chance has exposed to the view of our countrymen, would encroach on the remaining duties of celebration; and serve only to wound your sensibility with a series of insult, barbarity and woe. Wisdom and just measures of resentment have marked the conduct of our administration, notwithstanding the strenuous opposition of British agency. The council of our nation, in their mode of obtaining redress, have displayed a degree of prudence and sagacity, magnanimity and patriotism, which can be equalled only by the unrivalled wisdom of the illustrious JEFFERSON! Hear his name, Americans, and exult; behold his magnanimity, traitors, and blush! During the administration of the chief magistrate of the union, "who loves the land and common profit of his country," scandal has been active in diminishing his fame; and envy has even wept at his excellence. But the unpolished shafts of detraction have never pierced the shield of his honour; nor the crocodile tears of envy allured his inviolate bosom to the point of her dagger.

A general view of the measures adopted since his inauguration, discovers a combination of qualities, less distinguished for a display of aristocratical pageantry and monarchical restraint; than for an unprecedented attachment to the principles of republican forms, and a vindication of republican immunities. The united force of his political assailants, their calumnious attacks, and their scurrilous imputations of deference to foreign in

fluence, have met with equal opposition, and failed of their intended effects ; as libels fall into oblivion, when they are disregarded. The name of an ADAMS will be honoured and distinguished on the list of conspicuous statesmen, as long as patriotism has its advocates ; while that of a PICKERING will be eulogized only by traitors and the enemies of liberty.

It is enough that the ardent expectations of republicans have been answered in the administration of the chief whom they support ; but let the pitiful evasion of his enemies be anathematised, who have strove by art and artifice, to rifle the republican interest of its title, to assist and give currency to the cause they espouse ; for which they can find no term in their political vocabulary, to express its significance. Let them continue to discharge their political shafts ; and make the fair fame of JEFFERSON the object of their detraction. Their malevolent and nefarious exertions are “vain and impotent ;” and the illustrious sage, at the close of his memorable career, will retire to the shades of his nativity ; but his retreat will not be like that of CHARLES the FIFTH, for penitence and regret.

To the patriots and statesmen among the ancients, who have acquired the name of *heathen*, Freedom was but a transient guest, and Liberty a stranger. Insensible to the blessings of independence, and but rarely the subjects of peace, their national oppressions and local disadvantages were oftentimes intolerable, and always burdensome. A spirit of generous emulation and patriotism inspired their breasts and pervaded their councils ; but this sacred infusion served only to discover their want of skill and discretion in the prosecution of their political measures. The bribery of orators, the presumptive violence of partizans, and the corruption of worthy motives and patriotick principles, checked the progress of that success, which otherwise had been promoted. The representation of their worthies with the names of HERCULES the VICTOR, and MARS the

AVENGER only flattered their caprice and inflated their pride ; and the imaginary influence of inferior deities through their brazen vestments, and the mystick responses of oracles, only served to exhibit the degree of superstition, to which human nature is capable of arriving.

Columbia is distinguished for a wise application of genuine principles ; and the acclamations of her sons, are an ample reward for the services of her heroes, patriots and statesmen. The feelings of republicans are not governed by a spirit of superstition ; and the cause they espouse is the cause of humanity.

Americans, continue firm and undaunted in your opposition to erroneous principles, and the success of unauthorized domination. And as long as the sun shall, in his daily circuit, beam his effulgence on our land ; as long as order shall distinguish the orbs of heaven, and vegetation continue the natural quality of the earth ; so long may national wisdom and magnanimity ; freedom and **INDEPENDENCE** be the pride of our country.

ORDER OF THE DAY,

FOR CELEBRATING

THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1808,

AT ROXBURY.



The procession was formed at the house of Mrs. BURRELL, at twelve o'clock, under the direction of Major BOSSON, Marshal of the Day, and moved from thence to the Rev. Dr. PORTER'S Meeting-House, under the escort of Capt. BICKNELL'S company of Artillery.

1st.

PRAYER, by the Rev. Dr. PORTER.

2d.

HYMN TO FREEDOM.—*Tune, Old Hundred.*

FREEDOM, around thy glorious shrine,
In sacred friendship let us join ;
Inhale thy incense pure, and own
The lasting blessings thou hast shown.

When Order first its reign began,
Ere tyrant Custom shackled man,
O'er Nature's boundless space thou stray'd,
And all creation homage paid.

But Luxury's eneving hand,
And wild Ambition's daring band,
Condemn'd thy spotless train to rove,
As exiles in the realms above.

Again descending to this earth,
What time thou gav'st COLUMBIA birth ;
With her in peace thou deign'st to dwell,
And slavery's hostile host repel.

Stay heav'nly Guest, nor leave our State,
 To Greece or Rome's relentless fate;
 But found an empire to remain
 Till Time itself dissolve the chain.

3d.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE,

Read by Mr. Abraham Fox.

4th.

AN ORATION, by Mr. N. RUGGLES SMITH.

5th,

ODE FOR THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1808.

Tune, Rise Columbia.

WHEN Britain proud and vengeful grown,
 To slavery doom'd Columbia's race,
 The bloody mandate, from the throne,
 Her myrmidons brought o'er apace.

*Then our Fathers swore to be
 Heirs to Death or Liberty!*

II.

But rous'd at FREEDOM's glorious call,
 And smarting by oppression's rod,
 A heav'nly zeal united all—
 Their Rights, their Country, and their God.

*Then our Fathers swore to be
 Heirs to Death or Liberty!*

III.

Unnumber'd Martyrs seal'd with blood,
 The sacred CHARTER of the land;
 Who, like th' immortal Spartans stood,
 When Death or Victory led the band:

*A band of Heroes sworn to be
 Heirs to Death or Liberty!*

IV.

And, shall they ever be forgot—
 Their toils, their dangers, and their death ?
 No ;—o'er each grave-immingled spot
 Shall Flora waft her sweetest breath.

*And dews ambrosial always be
 Where sleep the Heirs of Victory.*

V.

And while around the genial board,
 When Plenty decks the verdant fields,
 A happy nation thanks afford,
 The best oblation nature yields—

*To those who bravely swore to be
 Heirs to Death or Liberty !*

VI.

COLUMBIANS, let no faction vile,
 With wiles insidious, blast your fame ;
 Nor *British Minion's* art beguile
 Your hearts, to prove your country's shame.

*Think how your Fathers swore to be
 Heirs to Death or Liberty !*

VII.

Unite and guard your equal laws ;
 Your patriot Chieftain's Worth revere ;
 And all who fought in freedom's cause,
 Demand a thankful tribute here.

*Forget not those who swore to be
 Heirs to Death or Liberty.*