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ORATION,

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JULY 4,

1814

BY REV. SEBASTIAN STREETER.

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HAMPSTEAD, JULY 6, 1814.

SIR,

THE Republican Committee of arrangements for the celebration of that important ERA when the United States of America dissolved all allegiance to the British Crown, and assumed to themselves the character of an independent nation, being highly pleased with your truly ingenious, impartial and patriotic Oration pronounced on the occasion, and the general satisfaction it seems to have given to men of all parties, and more especially the confidence we have in your liberality; we cordially request the favor of a copy for publication.

With sentiments of the highest respect and esteem,

We remain, sir,

Your humble servants,

JAMES KNIGHT,
WILLIAM PLUMMER,
NATHANIEL LITTLE,
ISAAC NOYES,

} Committee.

Rev. SEBASTIAN STREETER.

H A V E R H I L L , J U L Y 1 4 , 1 8 1 4 .

GENTLEMEN,

IN accepting your polite invitation to deliver, on the memorable and important birth-day of our National Independence, an address, which you are pleased to honor with the name of Oration, personal inclination was sacrificed to your laudable wishes; and upon the same principle I consent to its publication.

With feelings of sincere affection, I have the honor to be, Gentlemen,

Your very humble servant,

SEBASTIAN STREETER.

*Doct. James Knight,
Capt. William Plummer,
Mr. Nathaniel Little,
Isaac Noyes, Esq.*

ORATION.

Friends and Fellow-Citizens,

MAN is the offspring of God. As such, he claims independence and freedom as his birth-right. From the finishing hand of Deity, he came forth, not a solitary, but a social being. He was originally and constitutionally fitted for civil, for social and religious intercourse. By intercourse with others of his species, his powers are refined and exalted, and the sphere of his usefulness and enjoyment enlarged. But in this, as in all sublunary institutions, partial inconvenience is intermixed with general utility. While the powerful protect the weak, and the wise regard the interests of the simple, mutual intercourse is attended with no inconvenience. But too often do the potent oppress the impotent, and the knowing defraud the ignorant. This doctrine will apply with equal propriety to communities. In associating together, individuals relinquish no right; no privilege essential to their happiness. It follows of consequence, that every nation ought to be free and independent. But to the dishonor of nations be it spoken, the powerful frequently tear from the weak their independence and rights, and chain them in vassalage. It is an epoch worthy of perpetual remembrance, when a nation throws off the yoke of humiliating servitude, obtains its proper rank among the nations of the earth, and rises to the possession of rational liberty. To the commemoration of such important eras the wise and the good have attended with a noble enthusiasm, from time immemorial. Such is the propitious day upon which we have assembled—a day sacred to independence and liberty and the rights of man. Banished from our hearts be every base and rankling passion. Union, social friendship and patriotism, expand and warm every bosom, and sanctify every action to the welfare of our dearest country.

To the real American, who righteously reprobates the unholy ravages of tyranny and oppression, and duly appreciates the blessings of freedom and plenty, the Fourth of July is transcended by that day only, on which it was announced to a guilty and perishing world—"unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." The light which manifested life and immortality, is the only one which can eclipse the brilliancy and glory of American Independence. To commemorate it with propriety needs only the spontaneous motions of the noblest

feelings of our nature—gratitude to God, an elevated generosity, and an unalterable determination to transmit its blessings unsullied to posterity. But the peculiar situation of the speaker may justly awe solicitude and impose diffidence. Genius and talents, literature and science, matured by experience, warmed with a holy enthusiasm in the cause of liberty, and embellished with all the charms and the powers of rhetoric, have repeatedly exhausted their utmost efforts on the subject of this glorious anniversary. They have traversed the spacious field in almost every direction; culled the choicest fruits and the most fragrant flowers, and presented them, seemingly, in every possible form which can refresh and please. But the enrapturing tongue of the most eloquent orator is confounded with the immensity of the theme. The ready pen of the readiest writer delineates but poorly the transcendent, the innumerable blessings of the day we celebrate. A sacred day this, replete with the most important transactions of the most interesting nature to the United States. How shall I speak without offending, on the fruitful, the elevating subject? Party spirit has commenced its attacks upon the interest, the peace and even the charity of society. Like the wicked, its tenderest mercies are cruelty inexorable. It has blown to a flame the coals of contention, and darkened the glory of the American character by diffusing disunion among those who ought to be indissolubly united in mutual efforts for the public safety. Indulged, this infernal myrmidon would embitter your hearts and render useless and mischievous my present labors. But charity, that heavenly companion of the American heart, will dispose you to veil the imperfection of kindred humanity, and spare the malediction of censure.

To investigate the policy or impolicy, the comparative advantages or disadvantages of different administrations, is not my object. Had I the requisite information and talents, an inclination to exhibit a political dissertation would be wanting. It is not a subject that comes within the circle of my particular study. To the legislator be the work of legislation; to the executive the prompt execution of the laws. It is not illegal, and it may be useful, for those who are qualified, to criticise upon national measures; but more than ordinary wisdom should direct such productions, and peculiar candor characterize every argument and every conclusion.

But this is rarely the case with the political harangues of modern orators. Though naturally possessed of brilliant talents, refined by education and elevated by experience, how does “the gold change, and the fine gold become dim?” The depth of judgment, the coolness of deliberation, the soundness of argument, and the candor in drawing conclusions, which characterize their productions, generally lose their existence in the fiery ebullitions of party politics. The climax of impolicy is completed by essays which are termed the result of accurate information, profound political research and unqualified devotion to the safety, the interest and the happiness of the public.

Teeming with personal invective, with boisterous declamation and ungenerous anathema, they rouse to desperate action the worst passions of the human heart ; and consequently are the pest of society, the enemies of public liberty, the destroyers of mutual confidence, of social intercourse, the dishonor of their authors, and a monumental warning to others to cease the criminal indulgence. Every speech delivered on the day that first witnessed America free and independent, should breathe the conciliation of parties in the United States ; but especially in a time like the present, when our country is engaged in war with a powerful, plundering and faithless nation. Conciliation is the object of this address. The determined enemy of my country's rights is the only one against whom a word will be directed. With reference to those rights, cold indifference would be actual criminality. The father and son, from the elegant mansion where affluence smiles down to the humbler cottage where penury resides, are under the most sacred obligations to stand forth, the open asserters and the cheerful supporters of their country's liberty and rights. Revered be the names, blest the exertions of those who unite in this celebration. —On this auspicious day, fellow-citizens, our hearts, impregnated with the exalting powers of independence, expanded with genuine patriotism, and fattened by the luxurianey of freedom and plenty, hail, with united applause, with holy triumph, the propitious birthday of our national existence. Thirty-eight times has the sun, in his annual rotation, reflected his morning radiance and vertical resplendence on the face of independent America, and blessed with his prolific influence her patriotic inhabitants. The addition of years heightens a sense of its importance, and increases the pure enjoyment of liberty and its concomitant blessings. The subject of this anniversary, like the religion of the holy Jesus, sanctifies the affections, rouses the latent energies of the soul, and disposes the will to indefatigable exertions for the safety, the honor and happiness of the Republic—produces triumph and rapture, but never elays. In the serene moments of smiling peace, it softens the tenderest sensibilities, which expand and ennoble the patriot's heart. In the dubious days of wasting war, when the enemy breaks in like a flood—amid the shrieks and the horrors of the slaughtering battle—it inspires a dauntless magnanimity, which would eclipse the valor of ancient Romans.

The apparent unanimity, and the marks of mutual felicitation visible in this assembly, evince, that you are not so degenerate as to be unmindful of the blessings of Independence, neither sunk so deep in the labyrinth of turpitude as to become political Esaus. Your appearance proclaims, that your birthright will never be voluntarily exchanged for the poisonous pottage of tyrants. With energies unimpaired by the whirl of time, the spirit of seventy-six glows in your bosoms. Hail ye sainted heroes, who nobly asserted, and fought and expired in the cause of freedom and the

rights of man ! Thy martyrdom is embalmed in the memory of thy descendants, and thy fame is immortalized in the archives of glory and valor. Independence and liberty, and every essential and unalienable right, are yet dearer than life to the American heart. Let Europe commemorate the birth-days of Dukes and Emperors, and Kings and Popes. We hail not the wickedness, the oppressions and duplicity of Dukedoms, Kingdoms nor Popedoms. We celebrate not the birth of an individual ; but one of the wonders of the world ; a nation born at once. We commemorate the joyful day on which our nation burst the womb of oppression, and injustice, and servitude, breathed the vital air of independence, and soared sublimely to the pinnacle of liberty. The first words which she uttered in her national and independent character, ought to be engraven in golden capitals on every American heart : “ We solemnly publish and declare, that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States ; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown ; and that all political connexion between them and the kingdom of Great-Britain is, and ought to be totally dissolved.” Let every American, let us who have assembled on this anniversary, respond with enthusiasm, “ These States are, and of right ought to be, free and independent.” Let us do more ; let us renewedly declare before God and to the world, that we will defend and transmit unsullied to posterity the blessings of freedom and independence, or die martyrs in her holy cause. By inglorious submission to any tyrant, by selfishness or traitorous pusillanimity, we will never dishonor the shades of our fathers, who valiantly faced and defied danger ; who toiled, and fought and bled for our liberty. It is believed, these are the feelings of the generality of this nation. Undoubtedly some are not of this description. All governments are infested with traitors, and all societies with hypocrites. There may be here and there a Judas Iscariot, who would betray his country to that which is more dreadful than crucifixion—to the intolerable thralldom of monarchical despotism. There may be political Jeroboams, who artfully flatter us to abandon the unalienable rights, the inestimable privileges and the invaluable blessings, to which our fathers waded through rivers of human blood ; but the great mass of the people will oppose, with patriotic firmness, the nefarious instigation. The glory of America has been sublimated by a host of worthies too numerous to mention ; but shaded by the treachery of an Arnold, and the apostacy of a Burr. But charity whispers, the name of the former is legion, and the number of the latter, comparatively, but few. Talents and patriotism are exclusively possessed neither by federalists nor republicans. A majority of both classes is worthy of the exalted blessings of freemen ; and both may be enlisted with infidels. The bigot and the hypocrite assume the garb of sincerity and sanctity ; and the political apostate covers his de-

formities with the habiliments of the disinterested patriot. Shall we renounce christianity because some of its professors are unholy? or proscribe a whole body of politicians, because a few demagogues have professed their principles? No: let us obey the command of the holy Redeemer—"Judge not that ye be not judged."

Since the formation of the United States Constitution and its adoption by the separate States, four Presidents have filled the gubernatorial chair. Each one has been eulogized and calumniated; and perhaps the eulogist has exaggerated the merits, and the calumniator the demerits of each. Errors may and possibly have been committed under the administration of both federalists and republicans. Imperfection is the common lot of humanity. It is coeval with the birth of man, and its province extensive as earthly nature. Every human institution, whether civil, political or religious, is the production of imperfect intelligence. And the administration of all governments, whether monarchical, aristocratical or republican, is effected by the exertions of fallible mortals. Moses, the servant of the Lord, rebelled at the waters of Meribah; and the top of Pisgah is a memorial of his imperfection. And Solomon, whose wisdom was the boast of antiquity, has pronounced vanity of vanities upon all beneath the sun. Paul, the chiefest among apostles, repeatedly did evil when he would have done good. Why, Americans, should we blush to confess, that the same common infirmity may exist among our rulers? Why should we, who have renounced the blasphemous sentiment of human infallibility, require perfection in a President, or any subordinate servant of the people? "To err is human;" why then indulge aspersion? "To forgive is divine." The restless spirit of faction has ever been more fatal to the prosperity of America, than the errors of any, or even all of our Presidents. If the rulers degenerate to folly, to weakness or apostacy, we have shortly a constitutional opportunity to remove them, and choose others who will be the guardians of our rights and the promoters of prosperity. The laws enacted by one administration may be abrogated or altered by that which succeeds it. But the immortal WASHINGTON has declared, that "the very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government, presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government;" that "all attempts to counteract the regular action of the constituted authorities, all obstructions to the execution of the laws, are destructive of this fundamental principle, and of fatal tendency." Reason teaches, that both safety and interest demand of every individual, not only submission to, but a cheerful support of every constitutional measure under any administration whatever. This is not the doctrine of passive, but of constitutional obedience. The constitution points out a safe, an easy and peaceable way of redressing any wrongs inflicted by the public servants of the nation.

It would be useless for me to praise or to censure either what is called the federal or republican administrations. If different, one is necessarily more favorable to public liberty and prosperity than the other. The right of private judgment is interwoven in our natures, and its exercise is guaranteed by the wholesome laws of the land. I forbear to trouble you with mine, and call your contemplation to the causes which led to the declaration of Independence; the perilous hardships and sacrifices by which it was obtained; its immense blessings, and the course of conduct most favorable to their preservation.

The American revolution, and the consequent independence of the United States, are a striking proof that the Deity makes intolerable evils the avenues to invaluable blessings. Persecution was the prime cause of America's settlement, and oppression of its independence; but a holy devotion to religion and liberty effected the mighty work. It is proper on this glad occasion to refresh our memories with a moment's retrospection on Columbia's settlement.

Mournful to remember, a nation, who had professedly flung off the papal yoke, who had renounced the audacious dogma of a mortal's infallibility, and professed themselves the friends and followers of the merciful Jesus; this nation drew from its scabbard the sword of destruction against its own citizens. Those who could not conscientiously submit to the puerile ceremonies, to the lifeless, unmeaning formalities of the established church, but endeavored to walk worthily as communicants of the church of the Lord Jesus, felt the iron rod of relentless persecution. They fled from the murderous fury of the church of England. The noisy dangers of the untraversed deep; the illimitable gloom of the howling wilderness; the hideous yells of the barbarous savage, and the terrific growlings of voracious beasts, were less dreaded than the thundering proscriptions of the English priesthood. The pinchings of penury, the gnawings of hunger, the chilling horrors of the scalping knife, tomahawk, sickness, famine and death, were preferable to the sacrilegious outrages of an apostatized church. They fled to America, hitherto uninhabited by civilized beings—consecrated it to civil and religious liberty, and proclaimed it an asylum for the oppressed.

A few errors in their subsequent conduct, which darken the glory of their character, we forbear to mention. Suffice it to say, they committed their destiny to the providential care of the Almighty; they toiled and prospered. A rapid increase of population inspired new energies and flushed with new hopes. By persevering industry and a rational frugality, they approached to opulence beyond a parallel. Agriculture displayed his golden treasures. Commerce spread her wings to the gentle breeze. Manufactures blossomed for future usefulness. Literature and Science shed their progressive fragrance. The golden trumpet of the ev-

erlasting gospel sounded good news of great joy through the land. But alas! the desolating frost of envy and rapacious avarice, suddenly dropped the opening bud of prosperity. To dwell peaceably with a nation possessing natural rights and privileges, and approximating to superior opulence to themselves, was too humiliating for the monsters who swayed the councils of England.

An host of soldiery, greedy for plunder, for rapine and assassination, was sent against the descendants of those whom irreligion had driven from their native country. Lexington's ensanguined streets witnessed the commencement of the unnatural tragedy, which reddened the bosom of Columbia with the blood of innocence and eventuated in her independence. Bunker's awful summit is a living witness of America's fortitude and bravery; and the solemn monument which reminds the pensive traveller of her sufferings. The summit of Mount Washington; the blood-stained plains of Jersey; the eastern banks of the St. Lawrence, and other places too numerous to mention, have witnessed the systematical butchery of Americans, their rights trampled upon, the laws of nations outraged, and even the sacred jewel of female chastity shamefully, yea more than brutally violated. But the unconquerable Patriots, who had manfully asserted the rights of an injured people, with an army of invincible yeomanry, "unskilled in the science of human butchery"—at times almost "destitute of the fatal materials for execution," with intrepid magnanimity, with unabated ardor and indefatigable perseverance, continued to confront the British Samson. After eight years of desolating war, of unparalleled sufferings and sacrifices and toils, they cut his locks, repelled the unholy invasion, and forced the acknowledgment of America's independence. Peace to the sacred ashes of all the patriots and heroes who nobly fought, and, covered with honor, fell in the contest. Long shall their services be remembered, and, watered with the richest tears of America, hyacinths of glory shall freshen and bloom on their tombs. Memory weeps, humanity shudders at the savage barbarities of Great-Britain during the revolutionary war. But should we forget the perils and fatigues, the sufferings and sacrifices by which independence was obtained, we might become insensible to the profusion of blessings which succeeded those days of "perilous hardships;" and from the glories of an independent, powerful and prosperous nation, rush precipitately to colonial servitude, to shame and irrevocable ruin.

A morning without clouds, and an air salubrious, succeed the most tremendous tempest. Serene and prosperous were the days of America for some years after the tempest of the revolutionary war. Blessed with a Constitution, produced by the combined experience and wisdom of the most illustrious statesmen and benefactors of this lower world, whose maxims were carefully observed, safety, tranquillity and prosperity were the natural consequence. The jumble called the English Constitution, a mere farrago which has grown out of the emergencies of a plundering na-

tion, compared with this "stupendous fabric of human wisdom," shrinks into merited contempt. The nations of the earth have viewed it with more profound astonishment, than the Queen of Sheba did the riches and wisdom of Solomon. In attempting to illustrate its intrinsic excellencies, a wiser than Daniel would fail. The eternal, inalienable and equal rights of man are its immutable foundation. It is supported by the seven imperishable pillars of political science. Though liberal in its provisions, it contains the most noble stimulus to persevere in knowledge and usefulness; every qualified person having a right to elect or to be elected to any office of honor or emolument—and the most effectual barrier against the treacherous propensities of the human heart, all officers in the legislative, judicial and executive departments receiving their power from the people, and must, on discovery of malconduct, return it to them again, and become subject to the laws which they have made or sanctioned. It exalts not the idiot, the maniac or debauchee to the supreme executive chair; but smiles upon talents, virtue and merit, though found in the humbler walks of life. Greater blessings than this Constitution is calculated to afford, if its maxims are sacredly observed, would cause a nation to burst all sublunary bands and leap to the sublimer beatitudes of celestial liberty. But we proceed.

Equally distant from the scorching heat of the torrid, and the chilling frost of the frigid, we inhabit the richer province of the temperate zone. We have a pleasing variety of mountains and vallies, woodlands, meadows and fields, plentifully watered with majestic rivers, with living springs and meandering rivulets and rills. Here luxuriant nature lavishly bestows her richest bounties. Here agriculture unfolds his nutrimental treasures. Around the spacious dwelling and the humbler cottage smiling plenty profusely scatters her mildest blessings. Manufactories, a main pillar in the edifice of real independence, have rapidly increased. Commerce, though at all times more or less embarrassed, has wafted our surplus products to other nations, and in return brought the necessaries and the luxuries of the world. The rich and the poor have equal access to the holy Scriptures; a lamp to our path and a guide to our feet through the windings of time to the temple of endless life and glory. The glorious gospel of the blessed God is preached, and all have a right to worship the Divinity agreeably to their own consciences.

These are some of the general blessings which we reap as the fruits of independence. Ignominy be the portion of the monster who would tear them from us, and shame cover the wretch who will not defend them. Such animals are fit for no society but tigers and slaves. No nation ever possessed so numerous and so great blessings; and few ever enjoyed peace for so many successive years. But the Lions of Europe will not be peaceable with the American Lamb. France has burnt our ships and plundered millions of our property. The spirited exertions of our ministers

at the court of France have as yet been insufficient to obtain satisfaction. But the despot, whose decrees have caused these spoliations, is hurled from the throne and consigned to obscurity. Louis the sixteenth was the friend of America. May we not hope that Louis the eighteenth will imitate his august example? We may hope.—But England claims for a moment our attention; and no language is more appropriate than what is contained in the Declaration of Independence. “The history of the present King of Great-Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations; all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these States.” More than twenty years Great-Britain has continued to embarrass our commerce, plunder our property and impress our citizens. Repeated remonstrance has repeatedly wept, to witness an increase of commercial embarrassments and the horrible practice of impressment: a practice provoking to heaven, and insufferable on earth. These outrages have been peculiar to no one administration, though they have increased with each. Both federalists & republicans viewed them with abhorrence and reprobation. The voice of Washington and Adams, and Jefferson and Madison, has successively demanded the discontinuance of these infractions on national sovereignty—remuneration for past, and security against future aggressions. The forbearance of America, her repeated attempts at conciliation, are jewels in her diadem of national glory, which will awake the astonishment of future ages.

But, exhausted by repeated disappointment, Congress, clothed with constitutional authority to declare war, flung the gauntlet at the kingdom of Great-Britain. Of the justice of this war, as it respects England, but few are doubtful; but respecting its expediency, the case is different. Many faithful friends of the Constitution, of “free trade and sailors’ rights,” consider it a rash and unnecessary measure. It is not for me to determine its justice or expediency. Suffice it to say, that the constituted authority of the United States considered it just and necessary, and it is the duty of every citizen to submit to its privations, till it can be constitutionally removed.

Dreading the ravages of war, we desire an honorable peace; but, possessing the souls of Americans, we detest submission to the enemies of our rights. The progress of this war, it is true, is not so propitious as could be wished. The barbarous allies of England murder and plunder on our frontiers; the more savage crews of her navy infest and desolate our sea-coast; and the infernal Beelzebub of party-spirit ravages in the bosom of our country. How shall we end this horrible strife, and cause the balmy wings of peace to extend over the land? Will the bickerings of faction, mutual recrimination and proscription effect the desirable object? No: the crisis is alarming, and demands the resources and united efforts of every American. Let us remember, that independence, obtained by mutual sacrifices, mutual toils and exer-

tions, can be preserved, and peace, its great blessing, restored in the same way only.

The immortal Washington has pathetically forewarned us of the fatal tendency of party spirit. Shall the holy voice of the great Washington be disregarded by those, for whose liberty and rights he wore out his life, and who acknowledge him the saviour of their country? Forbid it, heaven—forbid it, Federalists—forbid it, Republicans! Like Washington, swear that you will faithfully serve your country in war and in peace. Like him, pay your vow to your God, your country, and your own heart. The thousand ships of England, which whiten every sea and plunder every coast—her veteran troops who, hardened in the school of inhumanity, are greedy for rapine—and her barbarous allies, skilled in the science of torture—are less to be dreaded than the sweeping destruction of intestine commotion. Let this auspicious day consign it to oblivion. Let us toll its funeral bell, and weep not, but rejoice over its tomb. Like the patriots whose valor achieved the the blessings of Freedom and Peace—like Jones, and Decatur, and Bainbridge, and Hull, and Lawrence, and Perry, let us be united and dauntless, and peace will be the speedy consequence. “United we stand, divided we fall”—be the motto of every heart. In unison respond, “We are all federalists; we are all republicans:” or renounce, as obsolete, both the terms, and assume the exulting name of AMERICAN. “We are all Americans,” be the rallying word. “Don’t give up the ship” of Independence, be the tune through patient suffering to sure victory. “We have met the enemy, and he is ours,” will be the chorus. If united, Great-Britain cannot conquer us: and God forbid that we should conquer ourselves. Through whatever dubious scenes we may pass, let it ever lie with weight on our minds, that virtue is necessary to the continuance of a republican government.

I must not close, without reminding you, that Religion and Morality are essential to national and individual happiness. Let us all revere the institutions of the Christian Religion, and exemplify, in our lives and conversation, its holy precepts. Then shall our sons be as plants grown up in their youth; our daughters, as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace; our gardens be full, affording all manner of stores; our sheep bring forth thousands and tens of thousands in our streets; our oxen be strong to labor, and no complaining in our streets. The thunders shall rumble the downfall of tyrants; but the sun in his circuitous journey shall carry the glad tidings of Columbia’s Independence and prosperity, till the final ruin of empires, and the universal crush of worlds.