



ORATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE TAMMANY SOCIETY,

OR,

COLUMBIAN ORDER,

OF BROOKHAVEN, (L. I.) AND A NUMEROUS ASSEMBLY
OF CITIZENS, ON THE 36th ANNIVERSARY
OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

JULY 4, 1811.



BY BENJAMIN F. THOMPSON.

(Published at the request of the Society.)



BROOKLYN :

PRINTED BY ALDEN SPOONER.

.....

JULY, 1811.

E 286

.B 872

1811

Office

314133

27

A.M.

Ms. A. 9. 2. 19

ORATION.

Friends and Fellow-Citizens.

PERMIT me cordially to felicitate you on the recurrence of another Anniversary of that auspicious event which fills every truly American breast with rapture. The theme on which we are now to expatiate is one vastly important and productive of sensations which elevate the mind and swell the heart with inexpressible satisfaction. When we take a careful retrospect of the catenation of causes and circumstances which preceded and accompanied the American Revolution, how are we filled with mingled astonishment and delight. In viewing the commencement of the contest, our anxious minds are beset with many doubts and seeming insurmountable obstacles; but as we proceed in the progressive stages of the conflict, our anxiety becomes relieved by momentary flashes of hope—amid all this scene of misery, the soft sunshine of prosperity penetrates the veil of darkness and sustains the mind from sinking into hopeless despair. To those who look forward upon scenes as yet enveloped in the womb of futurity, a thousand bugbears start into view, which threaten to disappoint our most sanguine hopes, and frustrate the most desirable intentions. Unpractised in the science of arms, our revolutionary fathers could, of course, place but a feeble reliance upon their military ex-

perience—the contest on every side presented an unequal aspect. The weak efforts of an undisciplined yeomanry, opposed by an host of veteran soldiery. The alternative under all its disadvantages is before them, of perpetual slavery, or liberty at the risk of all—if unsuccessful, even life itself would be forfeited as the price of their temerity, or be made the sacrifice of their rebellion. The hand which had been accustomed only to the plow, now driven reluctantly to grasp the weapons of death, to defend themselves from oppression and avert a deluge of misery from their descendants. With courage and resolution they seize upon the destructive instruments of slaughter, and march with undaunted heroism to the direful field, about to be encrimsoned with the blood of men. The sweet harmony of rustic innocence is now to be superceded by the confusion and alarm of war. No more the melodious notes of birds salute their early rising. The matin lay is now to be exchanged for the more awful sound of cannon and the groans of dying brothers. The fertile fields, once clothed in nature's livery and teeming with rich abundance for the comfort and subsistence of man, now laid waste—and where the golden harvest used to wanton in the gales, now awfully smoaking with the tepid blood of its patriotic sons, who gave up their lives in defence of their invaded rights—where sweet mirth and innocent festivity once enlightened the busy haunts of man, there discordant sound of war is heard, and drums, fifes and trumpets, proclaim the dire rage of embattled hosts. Language must ultimately fail to depict, in real colors, the awful concomitants of this dreadful catastrophe.

Unprepared, as she must have been, for such an enterprise, yet America was not destitute of characters eminent for talents and valor. The exigency of the times called every latent virtue and energy into action, which might otherwise have remained buried in obscurity. In the Cabinet we possessed a Franklin, a Hancock, an Adams and a Jefferson, besides a list of other worthies little less deserving of the highest praise. These enlightened personages

had discernment sufficient to discover the hidden resources of our country and ability to know how best to employ them.

Equally discerning, and no less ready to execute the wise measures projected, was the immortal Washington, a person of whom too much can hardly be said—a man in whom were associated the most splendid talents, the most benevolent disposition and most determined bravery, a zealous advocate and firm champion for the unalienable rights of human nature. Ever ready to vindicate the honor of his country, he deemed no sacrifice too dear, nor any personal considerations too valuable to deter him from exerting every energy, both of body and mind, to protect his country from insult and slavery. Oh, thou exalted character! we venerate thy name and cherish with purest admiration thy many excellent qualities. Thy memory will be revered by the latest posterity and nations yet unborn will feel a pride in speaking of thy greatness. America also possessed other heroes, who, tho less conspicuous than Washington are deserving of our love and veneration. Like the fabulous relation of Deucalion's Deluge, statesmen and warriors sprung, as it were from the earth, ere we could realise the dangers that surrounded us, and who at the call of their country were ready to engage in her defence. It would be an useless and invidious task to compare the merits of those many luminaries who flourished in the revolutionary horizon. Their numerous virtues will preserve them from the overwhelming vortex of oblivion and secure their blessed memories from the effacing effects of time. To recount even the most prominent circumstances and events of the American revolution, would be an useless repetition of what you are already, in some measure, acquainted. A transition from our former oppressed situation, to our present enviable condition, is productive of the most pleasing emotions. From a state of miserable dependence and subjection, to a station characterised by every circumstance which can render a people happy and respected. From a liability to be transported beyond the seas to be tried for

supposed offences, to the enjoyment of self-government and of laws founded in humanity and justice. From a load of taxes and duties designed to support the luxury and prodigality of English nobility, to a state of exemption from all unnecessary pecuniary exactions. From the maintainance of a wretched ecclesiastical despotism, to the participation of an universal toleration in religious opinion and worship. From an impious and mean servility to illegitimate authority, to a decent and respectful regard for superior merit—and, lastly, from a forced interference in the petty quarrels and collisions of foreign despots, to the full fruition of a state of perfect neutrality among the nations of the Earth.

From this brief exposition of the United States, before and after the revolution, we might proceed to an examination of the several administrations, and trace out the origin of those various opinions which are cherished with so much zeal by the advocates and opposers of our government. Passing by the two preceding, you will permit me to indulge a few observations relative to the last and present administrations—since they have experienced the fiercest opposition from that portion of our fellow-citizens who, during the struggle for Independence, ranged themselves on the side of Britain and have since continued the inveterate enemies of our republican government.

Thomas Jefferson was born, of respectable parents, in Virginia, about the year 1750,* and was educated in his native land, from which he was never absent until his country demanded his residence at the Court of France. His country called him forth at a very early period and promised herself in his abilities those very important services which have been so conspicuously realised in whatever he has been engaged. In his ardor for scientific and literary pursuits he has left no useful subject unexplored. He had been bred to the bar and acquired considerable reputation for extensive attainments in the science of politics. He had been several years a member of the Virginia Legislature, and was the efficient means of counteract-

* See "*Public Characters of 1806.*"

ing an episcopal intolerance in his native state and thus establishing an universal freedom in religious worship—he was a member of the second Congress, and afterwards elected Governor of Virginia—in 1784 he was appointed to succeed Dr. Franklin at the Court of Versailles. His notes on Virginia, wrote at 20 years of age, were generally considered as an able specimen of his talents for composition, and as evincing the correctness of his political opinions—he was the principal person who formed that monument of political wisdom, the Declaration of Independence—he was appointed Secretary of State in the year 1789. It was at this time that the French minister Genet, began his unlawful proceedings against national law in the port of Charleston—these unwarrantable measures roused the indignant feelings of Mr. Jefferson, he remonstrated in the most energetic manner, enforced by the most luminous reasoning on the laws of nations and the principles of independent neutrality. This masterly production may be considered the most able state paper which our annals can boast. On the 4th of March, 1797, he was elevated to the Vice-Presidency of the United States, and in 1800 to that of President. Succeeding circumstances have abundantly justified those high expectations which his countrymen had indulged from his worth and ability. Indeed his whole life has been a chain of the most elevated actions—and now that he hath retired from his high stations to the peaceful occupations of domestic life, we may embrace this opportunity to express our esteem and gratitude, and say to him, in the sincerity of affection, Go thou persecuted man into the shades of Monticello, there, in dignified retirement, devote thy leisure hours to the science of philosophy and reason; and since you have declined the highest employments of public life, let us profit by the wisdom of thy long and valuable experience—continue to cultivate those excellent maxims of wisdom and virtue which have marked the productions of thy pen, and so nobly characterised every measure of thy administration, and, lastly, bequeath to future ages those nicer principles of republican liberty which have been so successfully inculcated and vigorously pursued thro the whole course of thy active life.

In so doing, you will have the fullest assurance that the friends of virtue, in our country, will continue to venerate thy name, and posterity, in reading thy life, be proud to emulate so illustrious an example.

The administration of Mr. Jefferson commenced at a most auspicious and eventful period for his country, but to himself most portentous and alarming. His accession to the Presidency was accompanied with the most gloomy and discouraging prospects—an impoverished treasury—taxes accumulating—debts increasing—party animosities rapidly multiplying—and above all, fearful apprehensions excited by the incessant clamors of British partizans, and their uniform endeavors to involve the United States in a war with France. At a time so peculiar and a crisis so portentous, no person appeared more likely than Mr. Jefferson to remove the existing grievances—appease the rage of party, and ward off, effectually, the impending dangers. The first objects of his administration were a total abolishment of direct taxation, decrease of salaries, annihilation of unnecessary offices, repeal of all oppressive laws and the most effectual means to reduce the national debt. These wise and patriotic endeavors have been successful; we have been preserved from the horrors of war, relieved from the burden of taxes and stamp duties, unmoled by the operation of gag-laws, alien and sedition acts, and witnessed an extinguishment of many millions of the public debt. The repeal of the Judiciary, altho much censured by his political opponents, is not among the least of the wise and salutary measures of his administration. Experience has completely evinced the importance of the step. With pleasure and admiration we view the splendid acquisition of Louisiana, a territory of vast extent and possessed of every natural advantage which can render a new country valuable and inviting, and insure it to become, at some future day, the grand emporium of this western world. The price of its purchase is a mere iota when compared with the wealth and population already acquired. We must not, in this review, pass without notice that much derided measure, so well known to us all by the hor-

rid and blood-chilling appellation of Embargo, which has been industriously employed by its enemies as a battering ram against the immortal fabric of Democracy. Having in our national capacity experienced repeated indignities both from France and England, and especially from the latter, who have for a series of years practiced all manner of abuse upon us, murdered our citizens, kidnapped our seamen, plundered our property, obstructed our trade, contemned our flag and disregarded in every possible manner the laws of nations and the principles of neutrality; and we having by every honorable and consistent endeavor sought redress in vain, no other alternative remained but withdrawing from the offending nations the benefits of our trade. The adoption of this strong measure was rendered unavoidable by the unprecedented posture of things. It was the easiest measure to be endured by ourselves, and at the same time the most distressing to our enemies of any in our power to adopt and enforce. In such an unavoidable and critical dilemma, when all we held most dear was threatened, it was but reasonable to expect that the heart of every American would glow with virtuous indignation at the outrageous conduct of foreign powers, induce them unitedly to rally round the standard of their country, and pledge, in support of Independence, their lives, property and sacred honor. In this awful situation of the public affairs, nothing could have prevented the accomplishment of every purpose which the friends of government anticipated, had not the malignant spirit of faction and foreign influence raised its hydra head. The tocsin of alarm was sounded in the east, while the voice of treason and sedition reverberated to every extremity of the country. Add to this, a few unprincipled animals, besotted with the love of gain, sought every opportunity to evade and oppose the laws. These circumstances, combined with many others, presented an aspect so very alarming, that Congress, as tho apprehensive of the greatest danger, caught the delusion, and, in an unpropitious moment, consented to the repeal of the Embargo act and substitute in its place a non-intercourse law. Thus terminated the administration of Thomas Jefferson, a man whom his cotemporaries ad-

mire and love, and posterity will delight to honor. Regardless of the multiplied reproaches and false accusations which the voice of slander and malignity have so liberally lavished upon him; neither diverted by temptation, nor dismayed by the numerous discouragements which he has so often been doomed to encounter.

Hitherto the administration of Mr. Madison hath equalled our most sanguine expectations. It needs not the spirit of prophecy to assure ourselves that he will experience, equally with his predecessor, the opposition of those who are exerting every artifice, which malice can invent, to prostrate our glorious cause and effect a mean alliance with the base plunderers of the ocean. In their rage to destroy the confidence of the people in the government and men of their choice, they appear to be actuated by the infernal maxim that the end justifies the means. Knowing that stratagem sometimes accomplishes what fair means cannot, they have, among other means to delude the ignorant and unsuspecting, had the bare-faced impudence and presumption to shield themselves under the name of Washington, arrogating to themselves the merit of being the particular disciples and sincere admirers of that unrivalled statesman and patriot; among this troop of hypocritical pretenders are to be discerned hundreds and thousands of his ancient enemies, who, in the time that tried mens souls, would, exultingly, have accepted a price for his life. How well their conduct assimilates with the sage councils of Washington, may be gathered from contrasting his sentiments with the tenor of their proceedings. To demonstrate fully the inconsistency of federal management, with the valedictory advice of this father of his country, when about to retire from the theatre of public life, is an easy task; suffice it to say, they have uniformly manifested the most sov'reign contempt for all our republican institutions and the principles of democracy, which inculcates the doctrine of equal rights. They have unceasingly indulged a partiality for England and a disposition to palliate the injustice which she has exerted towards us; they have acted in direct opposition to the best interests of their

country in condemning, without exception, every measure of the past administration, constantly vilifying the best and purest characters in the nation and attempting, by the most unjustifiable means, to distract the national councils and thus render us odious and despised in the eyes of other powers ; entertaining opinions derogatory to our government, exciting jealousy and discontent among the people, alienating the affections of one portion of their fellow-citizens from the rest, and to cap the climax of wickedness to cut asunder the national compact. Their expressions of contempt for the constituted authorities of the general government have become proverbial, thereby inviting the citizens to rebellion and tumult, by which the government may be overturned and this fair fabric of liberty be superseded by a state worse than Egyptian bondage. Even the Tabernacle and Altar have been prostituted to the purposes of division and faction. The most violent anathemas have proceeded from the sacred desk, by those whose business it is to minister in holy things and to pour the oil of consolation into the afflicted bosom. Witness the publications of Osgood and Parish, whose language would disgrace the meanest sycophant that basks in the sunshine of royal favor. These men are more fit subjects of a lunatic asylum, than instructors in the benevolent truths of the gospel of Christ. Surely these revilers of their government pay little deference to the precepts of their Lord and master, who even condescended to be taxed, and exhorted all his followers to pay a decent respect to the "powers that be."

Such are a few of the odious features of that party, who, while employed in the most contemptible arts of prevarication and treason, can even pretend to shield themselves under the venerable name of *Washington*, and boast of their attachment to American liberty ! We must not, however, impute base and unworthy motives to all who are associated with the federalists in their unmanly opposition to Republicanism. To those who can conceive the omnipotency of political delusion, when carried on under the mask of truth and accompanied by appearances of hon-

esty, it will not appear strange that many of the uninformed and well meaning yeomanry of our country should be duped and deceived ; who have been brought first to question the wisdom and virtue of our rulers, next to oppose their public measures. The firmness and moderation with which the friends of government have met their adversaries, originates only in a consciousness of their own integrity and the justice of the principles for which they are contending. With a firm reliance, therefore, in the goodness of our cause and the patriotism of our rulers, let us look only to the means of perpetuating the independence of our country.

No people possess more permanent advantages than we do for attaining the most complete national glory and happiness ; an extensive sea-coast, an immense inland country, abounding in large and navigable rivers, extending through a variety of climate and a diversity of soil fitted to the production of every thing which can enhance the comfort and insure the subsistence of its numerous inhabitants. Our mechanics and artizans have arrived at a state of considerable perfection in almost every species of useful occupation, and our manufactories equal those from whom we have usually been supplied. In the means of defence and of facilitating internal commerce, America can boast, too, of the most extraordinary discoveries, viz. that of Sub-marine explosion by Torpedoes and the propelling of vessels by elastic fluid, in the Steam-boat. It is, no doubt, owing to commercial enterprize, that the United States have made such astonishing progress in wealth and dignity ; but it by no means follows that such would always be the case, there is, no doubt, a point in the progress of trade which may be called its zenith, and which if exceeded produces a contrary effect. Happy will it be for America, if, perceiving this crisis, her citizens can be persuaded to restrain that over-bound love of foreign traffic, which has fascinated the minds of so many and led them to sacrifice all other considerations to the sordid desire of gain, and such is the nature of man and the constitution of his mind, that virtue and moral honesty are forever made subservi-

ent to the means of interest and ambition. Commercial avarice, more than all other causes, have produced the greatest misery among mankind and has been the cause of almost all the wars which have deluged the world in blood. All the nobler virtues have been lost in the overwhelming vortex, and nations, after arriving at their zenith, have been ruined by the very means which raised them to it.

America is, without exception, the most favored people in existence ; a system of government like ours was never before enjoyed, except in the imagination of some speculative theorists, who rather wished for than expected to witness its operation. The feasibility of a government like ours has often been doubted ; we find, however, by happy experiment, that it is possible for a people to govern themselves and thus save the expense and trouble of maintaining Kings, Lords and Military establishments. If we contrast our present situation with the nations of Europe, what an inconceivable difference do we behold ; while they are bleeding at every pore and are overwhelmed by a thousand horrid calamities, we are enjoying every blessing which perfect peace and plenty can afford. While they are bowing the suppliant knee to a tribe of designing, unprincipled tyrants who subsist on the miseries they create, we are in possession of a most excellent government, and yield to our rulers such willing obedience as promotes the felicity of the citizen ; while they are writhing under an accumulation of taxes expended in unnecessary wars, or employed to support the pomp and splendor of regal power, we are unmolested by any further exaction than what is indispensable to the full administration of justice, and to maintain the honor of the nation ; while they are compelled reluctantly to the field of battle, or hurried by press-gangs on board their floating dungeons, we can sit peaceably under our own vines and fig-trees, while there be none to molest or make afraid.

I shall close this address by the following observations to the members of the Tammany Society.

BROTHERS,

The great Spirit has given us a good day for our Meeting; he hath continued to us the blessings of health and brought us together, at this time, in friendship. 319 suns have run their courses since this country became known to the White people. Our forefathers, a great while ago, came to this land, then wild and uncultivated. Greatly were they oppressed and persecuted by the savages of Britain, forced to remove from their former habitations and cross the great waters in quest of a settlement where they might enjoy the happiness of society, and the exercise of religion, undisturbed by the enemies of human nature. With their squaws and papposes they launched their big canoes into the mighty deep; with inconceivable courage and patience they surmounted the dangers of the waves and effected a landing upon this great continent. Tho beset with many evils, yet they were enabled to establish themselves here; since then the Great Spirit hath showered upon us innumerable blessings. Our people separating into different tribes, have spread themselves over an immense territory, even from the rising to the setting sun. They have become like the stars of Heaven for multitude, and the fame of their virtues been carried to nations far remote; our fields yield us an abundant supply; our forests teem with rich delicacies, and our lakes and shores abound in fish and clams; our springs afford streams of pleasant waters; our wigwams, unrivalled for beauty and magnificence, are scattered over the surface of our country and furnish proud indications of riches and power. In the useful arts we stand in the first rank, and yield to none in the advancement of science and the perfection of government.

To the services of Washington, the great warrior, let us devote a moment of respectful contemplation. In dignified silence drop the tear of sweet sensibility over his departed memory. 150 Moons hath his body mouldered in the dust, while his exalted soul hath ascended to the participation of unspeakable bliss in the bright mansions of ce-

lestial glory. In depriving us of a Washington, the Great Spirit hath not left his children without hope; Jefferson, our late Grand Sachem, still lives; his worth is deeply engraven on the tablet of our hearts. In Madison, the father of the 17 fires, who presides over our United Tribes, we realize the best of characters. In him we place our hopes, and Heaven permit our hope may be propitious.

BROTHERS,

Notwithstanding the excellence of our government and the freedom of our laws, we have yet serious cause of alarm; our old enemies, in Britain, still retain their enmity to us, and are exerting every means to bring us again into slavery. Our brothers have been kidnapped by their naval force, and our shores have been stained with blood; our produce has been plundered; our national canoes have been attacked; our rights have been invaded, and the grand Standard of our nation openly insulted. Even the Grand Sachem of the United Tribes has not escaped an accusation of duplicity and treachery, by a savage whom the King of England sent here with pretensions of peace.

These sufferings are greatly aggravated by the unwarrantable part which some of our citizens have acted, who, instead of shewing that love of country, which all true natives feel for the soil which gives them birth, have apostatized from honor and virtue, and taken sides with our wicked oppressors. Ever ready to excuse and vindicate the most atrocious acts, and shake hands with the workers of iniquity, it therefore behoves us to be on the alert and not indulge in fond hope that all is well. In proportion as our situation is enviable, do the enemies of Independence redouble their exertions to annoy us. The murder and robbery of our citizens remains, yet, unatoned for, except by reiterated aggression. While war is the trade of nations and crimes are sanctioned by repetition, we shall have reason to be anxious for the preservation of our rights and the happiness of our country. While virtue and patriotism reign among our tribes, we shall be safe. The enemy may practice their insidious schemes, but

these will not prosper, so long as by our conduct we merit the favor and indulgence of the great Spirit. The sun of liberty will dissipate those clouds which show themselves in our political horizon. Let us preserve an eye fixed and immoveable upon our Constitution and Laws; let wisdom be our guide, patriotism our boast, and justice the polar star of our public conduct. Let us venerate the virtues of our worthy ancestors. Let the sacred flame of Freedom burn with resplendent lustre upon our altar of Liberty. Let the chain of our union be undissolved. Let harmony and friendship be studiously promoted, and the reformation of manners demand our careful attention. Let us spare no pains to enhance the reputation of the Columbian Order. Let us cheerfully co-operate with our sister societies, in every thing which tends to promote the best good of our country and the happiness of mankind. Let us persevere in the glorious cause of freedom, never to part with our Independence but with our lives. Let us guard with eagle eye, the motions of our enemies and make them know, with a voice that shall be heard and a language which can neither be misunderstood or evaded, that we are determined to oppose every appearance of hostility to the republican institutions of our common country. Let us wage an eternal warfare against every kind of oppression, and swear to "live free or die."

FINIS.

7-5:4
 0-0-7-1