

AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED AT

EAST-GREENWICH,

ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, 1809,

At the Request of the KENTISH GUARDS.



BY DR. HENRY E. TURNER.



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Tu ne hinc spoliis indute meorum
Enipiare mihi?

VIRGIL.

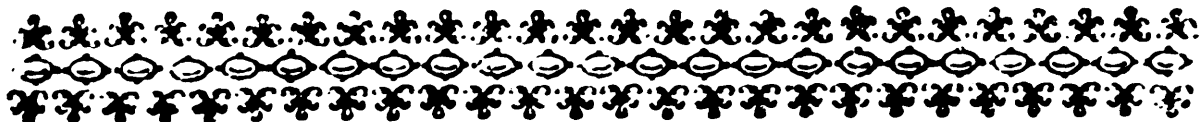
Traitor, dost thou---dost thou to grace pretend,
Clad, as thou art, in trophies of my friend?

DRYDEN.

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A N
O R A T I O N.



IF, Brother Soldiers, when I received an intimation of your wish, I could have known what the state of my health would now be, I should have declined a compliance with it; but, though afflicted by the hand of disease; though unaccustomed to the employment of an orator; though oppressed by a diffidence, which nothing but a sense of duty could have taught me to overcome; yet, in conformity to your expectations, with which I shall ever rejoice to comply, I appear before you, to attempt the part assigned me, on this interesting occasion. Forgive me, if, too presumptuous, I dare to express a hope, that your benevolence will prompt you to seek excuses for the deficiencies which you cannot but perceive; and that your kindness, generosity and candour, accompanying my exertions, will induce you not to censure, though you cannot applaud.

Nations have been accustomed to measure their glory by the duration of their empire, and have delighted to trace their origin up the stream of time to the remotest antiquity. Their poets,

and their orators, catching, at distant intervals, a transient ray of patriotism, or an evanescent beam of virtue, breaking through the dark mantle that envelopes them, have taught them, regardless of the crimes that stain the history of their elevation, and forgetful of the ignominy that marks the period of their depression, to look back to the past with no emotion but of pride, and forward to the future with the confidence of hope. Be it *our* pride, Fellow-Citizens, that, without having recourse to the lumber of ages ; without being obliged to ransack the archives of time, that store-house of iniquity, to call again into light deeds of more than questionable virtue : a period marked by the annual revolutions of thirty-three succeeding suns, offers us a subject for eulogy, compared with which, the birth of princes—the success of tyrants—the splendour of victories—and the triumphal march of conquering armies, shrink into insignificance. Be it *our* glory, that, though we celebrate the birthday of an infant nation ; yet, if prosperity—peace and happiness, give title to pre-eminence ; if Liberty be, as it has been declared to be, the dearest gift in the round of Heaven's blessings, our country admits no equal among the empires of the world. 'Tis true, 'tis too true, that, intoxicated with corruption—blinded by vice—infatuated with novelty—deaf to the voice of truth—and mad in pursuit of the chimeras of a visionary, she has, even now, been precipitated from the pinnacle of glory ; but, like earth-born Antæus, she rises with new vigour from her fall. 'Tis true, that the sun of American freedom, which once, “in unapproachable divinity, careered rejoicing in his fields of light,” has been for a moment obscured by the vapour of faction ; yet that vapour, now reflecting the ray it was intended to conceal, serves but to make more bright the course of the splendid luminary.

The dove of American hope, bearing in her mouth the token of safety, has been immolated at the shrine of treacherous experiment; yet, phoenix-like, self-regenerated and self-invigorated, she once more soars aloft on exulting wing.

When we reflect on the changes that a single year has produced in our political world, and look with retorted eye on the dangers past, and with increasing hope on the prospect before us; when we see the arm of our Executive changed, and the sword of anarchy returned to the temple of Jacobinism; when we contrast our present feelings with those that agitated us when last assembled to celebrate this era, when every cheek glowed with shame, and every eye glistened with indignation, the period becomes doubly interesting, and the bosom of every true American heaves high with a tumult of mingled emotions. He has seen his Country tottering on the brink of a precipice—her peace fled—her prosperity shaken—her happiness destroyed—her territory violated—her rights insulted—her name degraded. He has seen her treasury drained of the sums which no plausible pretext was found for bestowing on France, to be lavished on the undeserving minions of power, or squandered in schemes of political economy. Her *navy* dwindling, through excessive fondling, from a gallant frigate into a pitiful gun-boat. Her *law* relaxed till it would no longer vibrate, or stretched to a state of tone from which it can scarce recover. Her *constitution*, the rock of her power, and the altar of her honour, sapped by the infernal engines of art and intrigue, or violated by the impious hands of infidel philosophy. He has seen age relinquishing its title to respect, and attempting to snatch the hard-earned laurel from the brow of departed worth.—He has seen—You, Brother Soldiers, have deeply *felt* *

* See the "Trial of the Kentish Guards."

the arm of power lording it over defenceless right. He has heard the deep-drawn sigh of despair mingled with the exulting sneer of successful malignity. He has witnessed the withering hand of public calamity, and seen—let the tear of indignation forever blot it from Columbia's annals, the American Eagle, that once unruffled met the conflict, cowering to the Gallic Cock, and fleeing from the British Lion. To sum all in one word, he has seen a treacherous Executive, and a deluded people. But the hour of darkness is past ; truth again beams on our land ; prosperity resumes her happy residence ; the wing of commerce whitens the bosom of the deep ; the hard hand of industry is lifted in gratitude ; and Liberty, almost an exile, again pours her invigorating smile upon our cities and our plains.

While, with joy and thanksgiving, we commemorate the renewal of our freedom on the Anniversary of our Independence, may we not indulge a well-grounded hope, that the form of civil government, so pure as to be the envy of others, and the delight of Americans ; so firm as to withstand the united attack of foreign force and domestic treachery ; so perfect in its organization, as to be only consolidated by British thunder, internal discord and Gallic intrigue, aided by the iniquitous arts of bribery and corruption ; existing by its own power ; unshaken by the hand of ambition, the shock of faction, and the revolution of ages ; shall stand the brightest spot on the disk of time, a monument to posterity, of our virtue, and our Country's glory.

Originating not in the passions that commonly produce convulsions in states and empires, the American Revolution, unstained by the crimes that so frequently mark the historic page, offers to the poet, the philosopher and the historian, a

phenomenon hitherto unparalleled in the records of time. Greece boasts her Sparta and her Athens ; Italy, her Rome ; but the Genius of Liberty, disdaining an imposition so palpable, strips from their polluted forms the splendid veil of time and fiction ; and raising the mirror of truth, betrays the chaotic train that attends their glories.—Lust—rapine—ambition—sacrilege and murder, shrink from a contrast with patriotism—valour—wisdom and virtue.

The struggle of Americans, for the first and dearest of human privileges, resembles, in no period of its existence, the misguided wanderings of a deceived people, led by ambitious demagogues, through seas of blood and crime, after an ideal phantom of happier condition ; but slow to resolve, yet firm to execute, the fathers of our country saw their rights forgotten—their remonstrances disregarded—and their territory invaded ; ere reposing their trust on the justice of their cause, appealing to the God of armies for the rectitude of their intentions, and receiving from the hand of Nature the charter of their rights, and the fiat of their freedom, they declared these UNITED STATES FREE and INDEPENDENT.

It may be expected, and I believe is usual on this occasion, to trace the progress of our Country from the first dawn of Liberty, to the bright sunshine of Independence. Did I wish only to amuse you, and indulge my own feelings, this is the path I should prefer ; but, debilitated as I am by disease, it would require an exertion beyond my strength ;—indeed, were I equal to it, it would be vain and fruitless to detail the circumstances that attended the conflict. They are too indelibly imprinted on every American bosom to be obliterated by the hand of time, and present a picture to the mind so stained by the traits of oppression, bloodshed and devastation, yet so vivid

with the tints of virtue, fortitude and resolution, as scarcely to be recognized for the colouring of truth: yet, dark as the shade of the former, bright as the glow of the latter, it is not overdrawn, but exhibits to an admiring world a faithful portrait of the virtues that adorn, and the vices that disgrace the human character. Suffice it to say, that while the mind of man dwells with pleasure on interesting events—while military skill is admired, and bravery esteemed—while our mountains lift their heads, and our streams descend, Charlestown heights and Eutaw's sacred fount can never be forgotten.—While Liberty shall continue to be dear to the American bosom—while the soul pants to emulate the noble deeds it contemplates—while virtue shall be loved, and patriotism revered, the memory of a WASHINGTON and a GREENE can never die; but cherished as the talisman of our national safety, their names shall be to the American Soldier, for ages to come, the watch-word of Liberty, and the signal to battle. Sacred spirits! ye now reap the joys of the virtuous in the fields of the blessed.—If, indeed, a material tear may fill the eye of an angelic form, yours have already fallen over the wrongs of your beloved Country—ye have grieved in her grief; but, now, rejoicing in her joy, attended by the shades of WARREN, MONTGOMERY, and a host of departed heroes, ye come, on this auspicious morn, to bless with your smile this festival of truth—this triumph of virtue—this jubilee of Liberty. But why passes the frown of anger over the countenance of the heroic band? The cry of the injured and the oppressed rises with the joyful acclamations that rend the empyrean. It is not the expiring groan of regenerate Spain, or the Austrian cry to battle: their woes may excite our pity, but cannot disturb the festivity of this day's joy. It is not the spirit of the murdered Pearce crying loudly for

revenge : it comes not from the forms of those who fell on board the violated Chesapeake, howling o'er the wave, blood for blood. No. Their manes have been appeased. It springs from the prisons of our *friend* and *ally*, from the dungeons of the Corsican Usurper, from the agonized bosom of the American Tar, who, accused of no crime but his wealth and his independence, "suffering hunger, and thirst, and disease, and all the contumely cold-hearted cruelty can bestow," holds his wretched life on the precarious tenure of a tyrant's will. Methinks I see his emaciated form dragged to the scaffold, to glut with his blood the cruelty of the monster. In vain he calls on his Country—deluded—degraded and abused ; she disregards his anguish. In vain he calls on Liberty ; she shrinks, in horror, from the dominions of the despot ; for there she beholds the lifeless forms of the patriot Palafox,* and the gallant Moore. In vain he pleads the charter of his freedom, won by the blood and secured by the counsel of heroes : the guilty axe falls ; and his last groan, the groan of an indignant, of an unconquered spirit, uplifted by the winds of Heaven, is borne across the Atlantic, to shout revenge, in a voice of thunder, to every American ear.—It would say, Americans ! ye who are still blinded by prejudice, or misled by passion ! awake to the dangers that surround you. Behold the monster that plots your ruin. On his head is the helmet of a soldier ; yet his right hand is intrigue, and his left corruption : his eye, like that of the serpent on his destined prey, is already fixed on you : confident in his audacity and his crimes, he already calculates the moment, when, completely fascinated by his arts, you shall fall an easy victim to his snares.

Wading through blood and carnage—stained

* Palafox was supposed to be dead.

with oppression—murder—sacrilege, and every crime, he offers you the cup of friendship ; but as you value your Liberty, your Virtue, and your GOD, taste not the deleterious draught. Slavery lurks there. Spurn the hand of proffered alliance. 'Tis polluted with the blood and the spoil of your citizens.

Suspect not, my Countrymen, that I practice a deception on your feelings. This is a subject that will admit of none. Language would be too weak to express the sense you ought to feel of the injury he meditates—the injustice he practises—the insults he offers. Mad with insolence, as if secure of his victim, he has already boasted your co-operation in an attack on the liberties of the world. Ready for his purpose, his emissaries are amongst you, poisoning, with hellish industry, the sources of knowledge, and, with the art of demons, spreading wide the contagion of vice co-extensive with your territory, and, secret as the sources of your rivers, they reach from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi.

When, by your guilty assistance, his victorious arms shall have overran Europe, and his triumphant fleet rides every sea ; by what tie will you bind him to respect your rights, who even now disregards them ? His friendship ? His promises ? Spain can say, *that* friendship is death, *those* promises are deception.—His respect for Liberty ? His love of Virtue ? Holland can testify his homage to the one, and Switzerland his fidelity to the other. His justice ? His gratitude ? Unhappy country ! The fiat of thy dissolution shall have been given, when thy existence is made to depend on a tyrant's virtue.

Deluded men ! ye who are or pretend to be the dupes of Gallic art ! plead not, that you have not heard the warning voice. Say not, that signs and symbols, tokens and omens, have not been afforded you. I will not urge a remem-

brance of the moment, when, warmed by the best of human feelings, your Country extended her arms to embrace a sister republic ; but recoiled, in confusion and dismay, from the blood-stained grasp of crime and chaos. I forbear to force a recollection of the fatal plains of Austerlitz and Jena—I will not dwell on the fall of Saragossa—the revolution of Sweden—palsied Russia—conquered Prussia—wretched Holland—dejected Switzerland—miserable Italy.—I only ask, have you not seen France, with colossal stride, advancing to universal dominion over the liberties of prostrate Europe ? Have you not in your internal regulations, in non-importation, embargo and non-intercourse laws, had an ample specimen of the benefits to be derived from French policy and Corsican kindness ? Do you hope their continuance, or wish their increase ! Crouch to the tyrant. Call Napoleon friend and patron. Obey his mandates. Lick the foot that spurns you. And the full tide of imperial favour shall flow upon you. Ye shall behold your harbours groaning beneath the weight of invading navies ; your fields ravaged ; your cities wrapped in flames ; your infants butchered on the bosoms that nurtured them ; the spotless forms of your virgin daughters polluted by the grasp of brutal violence, and your plains strewed with patriot forms, and smoking with the blood of your sons. These are the blessings his alliance brings. These, the favours his love confers. Would you escape their influence ? Would you live free and happy ? Would you bequeath to your children the glorious inheritance of Liberty ? Denounce him foe. Mindful of your virtue, your glory and your Country's happiness, forget not the fate of Athens ; but watch, with jealous eye, the motions of the modern Philip, and defy his power.—So shall the flame of Liberty forever burn on the altar of Independence. So, when the torch of

war shall be lighted, and hostile legions pollute this hallowed soil, with one voice and one soul, the sons of Columbia shall rise to defend their Country. Then, arrayed for the conflict by the affectionate hand of a Mother, a Sister, or a Wife, needing no Spartan exhortation, but burning with an enthusiasm which Liberty only can inspire, every American Soldier shall become a Leonidas, and every defence a Thermopylæ. So shall your Country, self-supported, self-dependent, like the world on its own centre, hang; and warped from its course neither by the gravitation of internal debility, or the momentum of foreign influence, continue to revolve, for millions of ages, in the ecliptic of glory.

