

AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED IN LEOMINSTER,

1825.183

JULY, 4th, 1809,

UPON THE

ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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1809.

ORATION.

ANIMATED by the sacred impulse of liberty, we hail, with enthusiasm, the glorious anniversary of its establishment in America! Deeming it important to preserve in our recollection the causes which produced, the circumstances which attended, and the effects which succeeded this memorable event, it will become us to celebrate the day, by a grateful retrospection, and a temperate conviviality.

We are assembled, fellow citizens, not for a servile imitation of former usages; not for a season of noisy mirth, and disgusting inebriety; not to arraign, censure, and condemn, the form of our government, the laws of our country, or the measures of our administration; not to fill the public mind with dissatisfactions, contempts, and disgusts, by torturing the conduct of our rulers into a tissue of error, folly, and fault; nor yet for the purpose of indulging in party recrimination, virulence, and invective. Motives, so reprehensible, we wholly disavow—Motives more dignified, and congenial with the spirit of republicanism, we claim. Let intemperate indulgence, and party asperity, yield, on the present occasion, to the superior enjoyments of a “feast of reason, and a flow of soul.”

Varying in their tempers, desires, and pursuits, mankind find the necessity of civil government involved in the very idea of association. No sooner have they quitted the fatigues of the chase, and ceased to be tenants of the wilderness; associated with those of their species, and commenced the experiment of civilization, than their interfering claims require arbitration. Hence the origin

of civil government ; which, though somewhat uniform in its birth, before it arrives at maturity, becomes a perfect Proteus, assuming as many different complexions, as it has places of operation. In one respect, however, there is in all a resemblance. In their origin, simplicity is a prominent feature. A defect of provisions, for the redress of injuries, is rather a complaint, than a perversion of them, to means of oppression and fraud. Natural liberty is little abridged : few of man's natural rights are surrendered ; and restraint is scarcely perceptible. As government advances in age, remedial provisions are multiplied ; greater sacrifices, in rights, and property, are required, and opportunity and power are furnished, for legitimated oppression, and legal imposition. Of these, some forms of government admit far more than others : a limited monarchy, perhaps the most of any. This may be thought a novel position ; but a moment's investigation will establish the principle ; a recollection of facts will demonstrate it in practice.

An absolute despotism is a government of men. Its measures and adjudications are not fettered by precedent, but are accommodated to the circumstances of each particular case. If the monarch have capacity and virtue, no government can be more powerful or happy. —Delay of justice—legal oppression—are excluded. All the danger, in this form of government, arises from the chance of being ruled by an impotent, unprincipled, or ambitious man. And against this, there is no guarantee ; for it, no remedy.

But in a limited monarchy, where “ the king can do no wrong,” because he has no responsibility ; where the faults of administration are imputed to his ministers ; and a change therein is the only remedy for the most fatal errors ; where royal ears are open to nothing and filled with nothing but importunity and solicitation for places and pensions ; where streams of honor and authority are flowing, from the king, through the veins of a great nobility, in proportion to whose elevation and ennoblement, the common people are depressed and degraded : it is here that legitimated oppression and le-

gal imposition have an unimpeded career : it is here, that civil, and religious liberty are infringed, by seditious laws, and test acts : it is from such a government, that intolerance rears her arm, and drives the noble spirit of independence to emigration.

By such a government, previous to the settlement of America, were the people of Great Britain ruled. By such a spirit were our fore-fathers animated ; and by such intolerance, were they driven to emigration. Suppressing all the “fond recollections” of local attachments—despising the terrors, perils, and dangers of the sea—venturing the hardships, privations, and sufferings attendant on a new settlement, our ancestors crossed the Atlantick, and planted themselves in the inhospitable wilds of America ! Noble spirit of independence ! Dignified specimen of resistance and resolution ! Inimitable example of fortitude, perseverance, and enterprize.

By one, no further than this, acquainted with the history of America, it would be deemed probable, that the country, which had forced this feeble band of persecuted fugitives from their shores, would not presume to exercise over them, the power of legislation : still less probable would it appear, that the injured emigrants would consent to receive, and obey, the injunctions of their unnatural oppressors.—Yet however improbable it might appear to one unacquainted with the facts, it is well known, that, with all the loyalty and submission, which might be expected from the most favoured subjects of a favorite king, the American colonies did acknowledge the sovereignty of his Britannic majesty ; received the charters, manufactured in his kingdom, as gracious pledges of his benignity, and as the great bulwarks of their liberty. Thus having acknowledged the supremacy of England ; thus having been recognized, by her, as owing the most sacred and inviolable allegiance to the crown ; the American colonies, for more than a century and an half, remained subjects to, though not so much under the immediate, and oppressive exercise of, the same authority, that compelled them to emigrate.

Perceiving, at length, the arm of civil power extended to their annoyance ; unwilling to acquiesce in the arrogant pretensions of the mother country ; fearing the establishment of the dangerous principle, that “ *she had a right to bind the colonies, in all cases whatsoever ;*” deeming resistance necessary—and deeming it wise early to resist ; disgusted withal at the impolitic conduct of some of their imported magistrates ; a majority of the people ceased to be actuated by motives of loyalty, subordination, and acquiescence ; resorted to remonstrance, anticipated contest, and entertained the bold sentiment of *independence*. Suffice it to say, that in the event, their remonstrances proving totally inefficient, their anticipations of a contest were realized. The contest, though long and severe, was favourable in its termination ;—*freedom and independence the glorious result.*

Longer to dwell on the melancholy story of our revolution ; minutely to describe (were it possible) the horrors of this scene of blood and suffering ; to wound your sensibility, by detailing the cruelty and outrage of the enemy, and the barbarities, which, at their instigation, were committed by the infuriated savages—a recapitulation of these, taught by dreadful experience, and to which, tradition and memory are ever faithful, would be but to feast you with sorrowful sympathies ! And would ill accord with the appropriate festivities of the day. Gratefully recognising the services of that intrepid hero, who led the American armies, amidst innumerable difficulties on to victory and triumph ; who skilfully piloted our political ship through the novel and early stages of her course : after acknowledging the worth, admiring the virtues, and lamenting the decease of the illustrious Washington ; let us dismiss a recollection of the distresses of the field, for an inspection of the cabinet. An employment cannot be more useful, than that of tracing the origin and progress of our civil institutions ; investigating their principles ; animadverting on their excellencies ; detecting their deformities, excrescencies, and perversions ; and in devising means for their perpetuation and plenary enjoyment. To these objects let us devote a momentary attention.

Our government is a representative democracy. The first, and chief maxim of a democracy, and one that grows out of the etymology of the word, is, that "*the voice of the people is the law of the land.*" So large is our extent of territory, that the people cannot all assemble, and personally express their will. Of course it must be done by representatives. Aware of this, the framers of our constitution have designated the number, described the duties and powers, and limited the official duration, of these "servants," or agents of the people. As all power ultimately resides in the people collectively, whatever is delegated to their agents, during their continuance in office, confers on them permanent distinction; nor does it give them, or their descendants, any *inherent right of rule*. Neither does the accumulation of wealth, or a superiority of talents, confer hereditary distinctions. *All men by birth are equal*. All have a right to the protection of *life, liberty, and property*; to exact justice; and an immediate, and adequate redress of injuries. As every person pays a fair price for these privileges and rights, in his allegiance, and the levies for the support of government, he has as perfect a claim upon the government, as in any other purchase: And the faith of the nation, and the great national compact, the constitution, are violated, when any of these rights are infringed, without indemnity. Hence the thousand instances of foreign impressment of our seamen, are so many infractions of our constitution; so many violations of national faith, to those individuals; as well as so many insolent attempts of a foreign power to correct and revise our national institutions.

Hostile to the genius of our government, are permanent military and naval establishments: for besides the prodigious influence, these powerful engines might confer on designing men, who might command them, they would rob agriculture and manufactures of men and funds, without which they cannot be supported.

Another admirable provision of our government is, that there shall be no religious tests. Conscience ought surely never to be the subject of human legislation.

“*Let it be free as air.*” Religion is either of human or divine origin. If it be of human origin, it is imposition, hypocrisy, deceit, delusion—all; and is not worthy support. But if its origin be divine, Divinity will support it; nor wants he the impotent aid of human laws.

The liberty of the press, and a freedom of discussion and debate, on characters, measures, and principles, are essential to the security of our liberties. Hence all sedition laws, and such as circumscribe the means of disseminating truth, and portraying characters, who may be candidates for office, are incompatible with our republican system.

Public economy, a careful regard to our national expenditures, the exclusion of sinecures, exemption from duties of the necessary articles of subsistence, and a transfer of them, to articles of luxury and superfluity, and, above all, the general, and measureably equal diffusion of knowledge, are desirable objects in a republic.

These are the excellent principles and provisions, embraced in our admirable constitution, and carried into operation, by our republican administration. But, unhappily for the United States, to these principles many of her citizens will not subscribe. The slightest observation discovers, to us, *two great contending parties*, the one denominating themselves *republicans*, the other *federalists*. They each arrogate to themselves political rectitude and a vivid patriotism; and mutually denounce each other, as entertaining and inculcating political heresies; and as merging their country's love, in a servile attachment to a foreign power. So great a diversity of sentiment cannot obtain, and yet the adherents to both parties be correct; nor are we compelled to pronounce them both wrong. A careful examination of their principles and practices will enable us to adjudicate between them. The leading sentiments of the republicans we have just rehearsed. Let us now examine some traits in the character of the opposition,

In our revolutionary struggle, there were many, who, from principle, or interest, or timidity, were opposed to our declaration of independence, and to every step that

was taken towards its achievement. Most of them were men of wealth, talents, and influence. Many of them viewed with an appropriating eye, the peculiar charms of privileged orders, the dazzling distinctions of nobility. Though viewed in prospect, they were considered probable, till the projected revolution blasted their fond, fallacious hopes. It is not strange that men of this description should oppose, with their most vigorous efforts, the chilling hand of republican inflexibility. In the event, our revolution completed, our liberties established, and our government framed and organized, those of the *tories*, who did not seek a refuge in the bosom of the mother country, were permitted to enjoy all the privileges of our benign government, in an equal degree, with the most active revolutionary patriots. At this time, the most perfect unanimity pervaded the breasts of the revolutionists. The opposition was confined exclusively to the *tories*. Memory, ever faithful to the disappointments and chagrins of the ambitious, kept the minds of these men in a continual state of excitement; nor was it long, before they commenced their exertions, to secure the sympathy and co-operation of the capricious, insincere, disaffected, degenerate, and debased among the *whigs*. Artful, and practiced in deception, they could easily disguise their secret intentions, under the pretext of a *non-concurrence* with some of the measures of the government; ostensibly advocating one, republican in form, but differing in the mode of its administration, *they yet bore a deadly, rankling hatred to its fundamental principles*. But with this plausible exterior, assuming to themselves, the still more imposing appellation of *federalists*, they secured adherents to their ranks, with unparalleled rapidity and success. To the most direct and accessible avenues of the human heart they skillfully directed their operations. They wrought upon the *pride* of the ambitious, by flattering them with the prospect of *self aggrandizement*: they addressed themselves to the ignorance and *credulity* of the unambitious; and by ringing in their ears the changes of *jacobinism* and *infidelity*; by arrogating to their party, all the wealth,

talents, and respectability ; and by declaring that order, and morality, and religion were in danger of being prostrated by democracy ; they succeeded in deluding their thousands. When the party became respectable for numbers, men ceased to reflect on its debased origin ; but regarded it, rather as a consequence of a division in sentiment, among those, who were equally attached to our government, than the corrupt growth of a factious germ. None, but such, as possessed distinguished abilities, and unquestionable circumspection, were initiated into the secrets of the party. Having succeeded so far beyond probability, and even beyond their own most arrogant expectations, and obtained many of the principal seats of power, they began, and pursued to its utmost extent, a system of *proscription*, and removal from office, of all such, as did not concur with them in opinion, or adopt their practice. And “ the emoluments of office ” may emphatically be said to “ have been held out,” as a “ bribe to induce political apostacy,” as a “ reward ” for party “ fidelity ! ”

Thus, for a few years, they were the dominant party. But the abuse of their “ brief authority,” and the more general diffusion of knowledge, opened the eyes of the people, who had well-nigh been juggled out of their liberties. They beheld, with indignation, the abortive attempts to usurp their rights ; and by the intelligent, and careful exercise of their elective franchise, substituted a wise, and inflexibly republican statesman, for him, whose signal exertions, in our revolutionary contest, portended a better issue. than that he would become the victim of his own ambition, and the leader of a faction. But, as it is believed that his retirement from office has dissipated his visionary schemes of personal aggrandizement, and liberated him from the pestiferous advisings of the insidious and the designing, his original orthodoxy and patriotism have again taken possession of his mind, and rule his actions. Would to God, the convictions of other of the more honest and intelligent of the party, were not stifled by obstinacy, but might operate their political conversions.

Having witnessed the recent exertions of this distinguished man, to strip the MASK from the "British faction," the existence of which, cannot be doubted, though our political opponents have the effrontery to deny it, since we have so commanding an authority, as the testimony of one whom, being high in their confidence, they elevated to the highest chair of state; having noticed his candour in disclosing, and his success in depicting this domestic monster, the most deadly foe to republican liberty; we cannot, without doing violence to our feelings, withhold from him the well earned meed of exalted praise. Venerable Adams! respected hero! honest sage! we cheerfully accord a release to thy former errors; and, with our illustrious American patriots, assign thee a place in our hearts, adequate to thy services in the cause of freedom.

From the moment popular intelligence, and political investigation, developed the schemes, scanned and exposed the views, and *ulterior* hopes, of the opposition, federalism assumed a more audacious, and undisguised shape. Frequent meetings and combinations produced a more perfect organization. False notions of honor prevented many, who were fully convinced of their errors, from deserting their party; while others were preserved from a dereliction, by the variant methods of menacing, flattering, patronizing. Sometimes by a feigned acquiescence in the result of one election, the opposition have quieted the apprehensions of republicans, and induced them to remit their vigilance; then, like subtle beasts of prey, sprang forward, at another, and obtained their desideratum.

Their conduct, more recently, has been of an opposite description. Embarrassments, in our foreign relations, have occasioned partial embarrassments and distresses among the people. Calculating on their avarice, or ignorance, federalists raised a boisterous and continued clamor against the measures of our own government, falsely attributing all the inconveniences suffered in our country, to the indiscretion, or criminal policy of our rulers; denounced them basely subservient to the

dictates of a transatlantic despot, at the same time, entertaining violent prejudices against his enemy; and taken every available measure to alarm the public mind, excite disgust and hatred of our rulers, and alienate the affections of the people from their government. Thus endeavouring to build up their party to the subversion of our republican institutions, which are deservedly the pride and boast of every intelligent patriotic American.

But to the utter confusion of the British faction in America, their charges against the administration, of being influenced by foreign predilections and antipathies, and of having pursued a weak, inefficient, and ruinous policy, are not only refuted, by the potent, lucid, and irrefragible, arguments of a Grenville, and a Whitbread, conspicuous members of the English parliament; but by an explicit and unequivocal declaration of his majesty's minister plenipotentiary in America. Mr. Erskine expressly states, that the non-intercourse act (which the minority in Congress opposed in every stage, "*totis viribus*," and, because it was connected with their favorite hobby, the repeal of the *embargo*, opposed *that* likewise) places our relations, with the belligerent powers of Europe, on terms of perfect equality. Hence a door for amicable negociation, between Great Britain and America, is open; satisfactory reparation for the outrage on the Chesapeake has been officially tendered; a suspension, as it respects American commerce, of the British orders in council, pledged; and notice given of the intended mission of a special envoy to the United States, for the purpose of forming a commercial treaty. These important propositions induced the president's proclamation, which filled our political opponents, with more consternation, than the thundering accents of a papal bull, fulminating its excommunication, would a religious devotee. Making a virtue of necessity, they acknowledge the merit of this accommodation, but insidiously propagate the opinion, that it is a departure from the policy of the late administration. Upon Madison they bestow fulsome adulation, while they still denounce the illustrious Jefferson. This is but a counter-part of

their despicable, canting, hypocritical policy. Nothing is more apparent, nothing more demonstrable, than that these brilliant luminaries are irradiated from the *same* source of political wisdom and intelligence; preserved from aberrations by *equal* and inflexible political integrity; and, losing all disposition for invidious comparison, we equally admire, venerate, and eulogise them *both*.

The auspicious prospect, recently disclosed in our foreign relations, which promises an adjustment of our differences with Great Britain, we consider the effect of an uniform system of wise, pacific, and conciliatory measures, highly honorable to our national government, and peculiarly grateful to the feelings of every republican. Notwithstanding, it has been the unremitting endeavour of the belligerent powers, and their American adherents, to involve our nation in their controversy, yet the correct policy of our administration has nobly preserved us from the horrors of such an event, and we presume will secure us the blessings of strict neutrality, and commercial intercourse.

Let us indulge the better feelings of the heart, by uniting in a tribute of cordial and respectful gratitude to our late chief magistrate, whose eminent services for his country can only be measured, by the extent and ardour of his patriotism. Illustrious Jefferson! The grateful recollections of an impassioned people follow thee to thy voluntary retirement; and the page of impartial history, enrolling thee, with the brightest luminaries of modern times, shall do justice to thy merits. On thy successor rest the well placed hopes of a great people. Great is his acquaintance with public life. Long have his political services been in requisition; and the innumerable specimens of his ability, correctness, and integrity, are an infallible guarantee of his faithful and judicious administration.

Having this solace, fellow republicans, we will not be dismayed, at the temporary success of the leaders of a faction, in this section of our country. What if the executive officers, and a majority in the councils, of this commonwealth, are enemies to our republican institu-

tions, and the secret advocates of royalty and revolution? What if, by one mighty effort, in which *principle, interest, honor, have fallen a sacrifice*, they have been able to elevate their party, to seats of authority and rule? Yet they hold not, in their hands, the destinies of the state. They have no power paramount to the good sense and patriotism of the people when brought into exercise. Be then persuaded to investigate, persevere, be active, united. Let no personal antipathies, local animosities, or private prejudices, divide you, on great political questions; or deter you from the decided, and fullest exercise of your elective rights. Be assured that to encourage such antipathies, to excite such animosities, and inflame such prejudices, is an essential part of the system of the opposition. To quiet all apprehensions, to lull into indifference and inactivity another. But let not these stratagems of theirs longer be successful. Being satisfied of our political *orthodoxy*, equally so of our political *integrity*, let political ENERGY be a prominent trait in the republican character. For want of *this*, our legislature speaks a language, and adopts a course of measures, hostile to our national councils, and abhorrent to the feelings of republicans. For want of *this*, our chief executive office is filled by a character, whose foreign prepossessions and aversions, (sufficiently manifest from a production, emphatically denominated his "*war report*,") may be productive of incalculable mischief.—If, through defect of this trait in the republican character, such have been the mortifying consequences, "learning wisdom by the things we suffer," shall we not be admonished of its necessity, and let it be conspicuus in our future conduct. While we ever preserve a sense of the dignity, the justice, and the worth, of our cause, let us pledge ourselves, to use all honorable means for its support. Let no exertion be wanting, to familiarize to our own minds, and to inculcate and impress on those of others, the pure and excellent principles of our constitution, and the genuine nature and spirit of republicanism.

When liberty, and the most valuable enjoyments of human life, are in issue, who can be a disinterested spectator? When the fate of millions is involved in the result of our political experiment, who dare censure an honest zeal, and a vigorous circumspection? Ardently would we desire the return of any, who may have inadvertently pursued the devious path of error. Most cordially would we welcome the event, which should paralyze the heralds of delusion, and disconcert their nefarious purposes. With undissembled fervour, do we invoke the *spirit of freedom and independence*, to make the United States of America, her *permanent abode*.