

A N

O R A T I O N

D E L I V E R E D AT W A T E R T O W N,

M A R C H 5, 1776.

T O C O M M E M O R A T E

T H E B L O O D Y M A S S A C R E AT B O S T O N :

P E R P E T R A T E D M A R C H 5, 1770.

B Y

P E T E R T H A C H E R, A. M.

Afellum in prato timidus pascibat senex
Is, hostium clamore subito territus,
Suadebat alio fugere, ne possent capi.
At ille lentus: quæso, num binas mihi,
Clitellas impositurum victorem putas?
Senex negavit. Ergo quid refert mea,
Cui serviam? Clitellas dum portem meas.

P H Æ D R U S.

W A T E R T O W N :

Printed and Sold by BENJAMIN EDES, on the Bridge,

M, DCC, LXXVI.

At a Meeting of the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of
the Town of BOSTON, legally assembled at Watertown, MARCH 5th,
1775.

RESOLVED, That the Thanks of the Inhabitants of the Town of Boston,
be given to the Rev. Mr. *PETER THACHER*, for his elegant
and spirited ORATION, now delivered at their Request, in Commemo-
ration of the horrid MASSACRE perpetrated on the Evening of the 5th of
March, 1770, by a Party of Soldiers of the XXIXth Regiment, under the
Command of Capt. Thomas Preston.

Voted, That a Committee be appointed to wait upon the Rev. Mr.
Thacher, with the above Vote, and desire a Copy of the ORATION for
the Press. Attest. *WILLIAM COOPER*, Town-Clerk.

GENTLEMEN,

A Sincere Desire to shew my Respect to the truly worthy Inhabitants
of the Town of BOSTON, alone induced me to deliver the fol-
lowing ORATION; the same Motive influences me in consenting to its Pub-
lication.

1775 - 15 - 20 - 1162

I am,

Gentlemen,

With the utmost Respect,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

PETER THACHER

A N
O R A T I O N.

MY FRIENDS,

WHEN the ambition of Princes induces them to break over the sacred barriers of social compact, and to violate those rights, which it is their duty to defend, they will leave no methods unessayed to bring the people to acquiesce in their unjustifiable encroachments.

IN this cause, the pens of venal authors have, in every age, been drawn : With Machiavelian subtilty, they have laboured to perswade mankind, that their public happiness consisted in being subject to uncontrouled power ; that they were incapable of judging concerning the mysteries of government ; and that it was their interest to deliver their estates, their liberties, and their lives, into the hands of an absolute Monarch.

MITER'D hypocrites, and cringing, base-souled Priests, have impiously dared to inlist the oracles of GOD into the service of despotism ; to assert, that by the command of the supreme lawgiver, we are bound to surrender our rights into the hands of the first bold Tyrant, who dares to seize them ; and that when so seized, it is rebellion against God, and treason against the prince, for us to attempt to resume them.

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DEPRAVED

DEPRAVED as is the human understanding, it hath yet strength enough to discern the ridiculous falacy of these assertions : The votaries of ignorance and superstition may indeed be imposed upon by them : When we place unlimited confidence in our civil or spiritual fathers, we can swallow, with ease, the most improbable dogmas ; but there are feelings in the human heart, which compel men to recognize their own rights, to venerate the majesty of the people, and to despise the insult which is offered to their understandings, by these doating absurdities. Had princes no other methods to accomplish their purposes, could they not establish their usurpation, without convincing mens judgments of their utility, they would be more harmless to mankind than they have ever yet been ? They might be surrounded with the fascinating gew-gaws of regal pomp ; a few parasites might bow the knee before these idols of their own creating ; the weak and the wicked might obey their mandates ; but the baseful influence which they now have upon the interests of individuals, and of society, would come to a period : they would not revel in the spoils of nations, nor trample upon the ruins of public Liberty.

CONSCIOUS of this, they have used arguments, and pursued methods, entirely different from these, to effect their designs ; instead of convincing the understandings, they have addressed themselves to the passions of men : The arts of bribery and corruption have been tried with a fatal success : Men, *We* know, have sold their children, their country, and their **GOD**, for a small quantity of painted dirt, *which will perish with the using.*

EXTENSIVE as are the revenues of princes, they are still inadequate to the purpose of bribing large communities to submit to their pleasure ; corrupting therefore a few, they have overawed the rest ; from small beginnings, and under specious pretences, they will raise a standing military force, the most successful engine ever yet wielded by the hand of lawless domination.

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WITH such a force, it is easy for an ambitious prince, possessed by nature of very slender abilities, to subvert every principle of liberty in the constitution of his government, and to render his people the most abject of slaves; if any individual feels the injury done to his country, and wishes to restore it to a state of happiness, with a bayonet at his breast, a dragoon will compel him to silence: If the people, awakened to see their interest and their duty, assemble for the same purpose, a military force is at hand to subdue them, and by leaden arguments, to convince them of their error.

AN easy task would it be to enlarge upon the fatal consequences of keeping up such a standing army in time of peace, and of quartering a lawless body of men, who despise the just restraints of civil authority, in free and populous cities: That no vestige of freedom can remain in a state where such a force exists; that the morals of the people will be gradually corrupted; that they will contract such an habit of tame submission, as to become an easy prey to the brutal tyrant who rules them; hath been heretofore largely and plainly demonstrated, by persons so much more capable of doing it, than he who is speaking, that it would be presumption in him to attempt it now.

THERE is no need of recurring to the ancient histories of Greece and Rome, for instances of these truths. The British nation, once famous for its attachment to freedom, and enthusiastically jealous of its rights, is now become a great tame beast, which fetches and carries for any minister who pleases to employ it.

ENGLISHMEN have been wont to boast of the excellence of their constitution; to boast that it contained whatever was excellent, in every form of government;

government, hitherto, by the wit of man devised; in their King, whose power was limited, they have asserted that they enjoyed the advantages of Monarchy, without fear of its evils: While their house of Commons, chosen by the suffrages of the people, and dependant upon them, represented a republic; their house of peers, forming a balance of power between the king and the people, gave them the benefit of an aristocracy. In theory, the British constitution is, on many accounts, excellent; but when we observe it reduced to practice, when we observe the British government, as it has been, for a long course of years, administered, we must be convinced that its boasted advantages are not real: The management of the public revenue, the appointment of civil and military officers, are vested in the king: Improving the advantages which these powers give him, he hath found means to corrupt the other branches of the legislature: Britons please themselves with the thought of being free; their tyrant suffers them to enjoy the shadow, whilst he himself grasps the substance of power. Impossible would it have been for the kings of England to have acquired such an exorbitant power, had they not had a standing army under their command: With the officers of this army they have bribed men to sacrifice the rights of their country: Having artfully got their arms out of the hands of the people, with their mercenary forces, they have awed them into submission. When they have appeared, at any time, disposed to assert their freedom, these troops have been ready to obey the mandates of their sovereign, to imbrue their hands in the blood of their brethren.

HAVING found the efficacy of this method to quell a spirit of liberty in the people of Great-Britain, the *righteous* administration of the *righteous* king, George the third, determined to try the experiment upon the people of America. To fright us into submission to their unjustifiable claims, they sent a military force to the town of Boston. This day leads us to reflect upon the fatal effects of the measure! By their intercourse with troops, made up in general
of

of the most abandoned of men, the morals of our youth were corrupted: The temples and the day of our God were scandalously prophaned: We experienced the most provoking insults; and at length saw the streets of Boston strewed with the corpses of five of its inhabitants, murdered in cool blood, by the British mercenaries.

THE indignant rage which swelled your bosoms upon this occasion, the fortitude and humanity which you discovered, the anguish of the friends and relatives of the dead and wounded, with all the horrors of that memorable night, have been painted in vivid colours by an HANCOCK and a WARREN: They have shewn the necessity of those exertions made by the town, which defeated at that time, the designs of the enemies to American liberty, and preserved us, for the present, from the calamities of war.

BUT the past year hath presented us with a Tragedy more striking, because more extensive, than this: A Tragedy, which more plainly proves the fatal effects of keeping up standing armies in time of peace, than any arguments whatsoever: We have seen the ground crimsoned with the gore of hundreds of our fellow-citizens,—we have seen the first city in America for wealth and extent, depopulated, we have seen others destroyed, and heard our savage enemies breathing out thirstings for our blood.

FINDING their arts insufficient to flatter, or their treasures to bribe the people of America, out of their freedom, the British government determined, by force, to subjugate them to their arbitrary will: In consequence of this determination, a large party of their troops marched from Boston, on the morning of the ever memorable nineteenth of April last, flushed with the hopes of certain victory,

and defying the armies of the living God, they broke through every divine and political obligation; they wanted in cruelty; they shed again American blood.

AROUSED by the unprovoked injury, like a lion, awaking from his slumber, we sprang to arms! we felt ourselves inspired with the spirit of our ancestors, we heard our brethren's blood crying to us for vengeance, we rushed into the midst of battle: we compelled our enemies to betake themselves to a disgraceful flight, we pursued them with avidity, and desisted not till they took refuge in that city, of which, by fraud and treachery, they had possessed themselves.

TRUSTING to the divine protection, from that hour we determined never to sheathe the sword, till we had reparation for our injuries, till we had secured our own freedom and the freedom of our posterity: From that hour the den of our enemies hath been surrounded by an American army, *brave and determined*: although they had before boasted of their superiority to all the troops in the world, they have scarcely dared to set their feet out of their strong holds since that time; and instead of ravaging the American Continent in a single campaign with a single regiment, they have proceeded ——— *one mile and an half* in the conquest of it.

THE heights of Charlestown witnessed to the world, that Americans, fighting in the cause of freedom, were a formidable foe: although they were surrounded by troops, hitherto deemed invincible; although they saw the habitations of their countrymen enveloped with flames; although the cannon roared on every quarter, and they beheld scenes of desolation and bloodshed, to which they were entirely unused, yet they retired not till they had compelled their
 enemy.

enemy twice to retreat, and had expended the whole of their ammunition: The British forces gained the ground, but they lost the flower of their army.

FROM one end of the continent to the other, a series of successes hath attended the American arms, instead of having troops of savages poured down to our frontiers, (which the murderous policy of the tyrant of Britain induced him to attempt) we have, through the favour of Heaven, carried our victorious arms into the very bowels of Canada; instead of having our stores and provisions cut off by the enemy, we have made important captures from them: Success hath crowned our enterprizes, while disappointment hath followed those who oppose us.

THAT elation of spirit, which is excited by our victories, is damped by our feeling the calamities of war. To hear the expiring groans of our beloved countrymen; to behold the flames of our habitations, once the abodes of peace and plenty, ascending to Heaven, to see ruin and desolation spread over our fruitful villages, must occasion sensations in the highest degree painful.

THIS Day, upon which the gloomy scene was first opened, calls upon us to mourn for the Heroes who have already died in the bed of honour, fighting for GOD and their country. Especially, does it lead us to recollect the name and the virtues of General WARREN! the kind, the humane, the benevolent friend, in the private walks of life, the inflexible patriot, the undaunted commander in his public sphere, deserves to be recollected with gratitude and esteem.

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This audience, acquainted, in the most intimate manner, with his numberless virtues, must feel his loss, and bemoan their beloved, their entrusted fellow-citizen! Ah! my countrymen, what tender, what excruciating sensations rush at once upon our burdened minds, when we recall his lov'd idea! when we reflect upon the manner of his death; when we fancy that we see his savage enemies exulting o'er his corpse, beautiful even in death; when we remember that destitute of the rites of sepulture, he was cast into the ground, without the distinction due to his rank and merit; we cannot restrain the starting tear, we cannot repress the bursting sigh! We mourn thine exit, illustrious shade, with undissembled grief; we venerate thine exalted character; we will erect a monument to thy memory in each of our grateful breasts, and to the latest ages, will teach our tender infants to lisp the name of WARREN, with veneration and applause!

WHEN we traverse the Canadian wilds, and come to the plains of Abraham, where WOLFE once fell, we are there again compelled to pay a tribute to exalted merit, and to lament the fall of the great MONTGOMERY! Warmed with a spirit of patriotism, too little felt by his venal countrymen, he espoused the cause of American freedom: He left domestic ease and affluence: He girded on the sword which he had long laid aside, and *jeoparded his life on the high places of the field*: Victory followed his standard, she hover'd o'er his head, and crowned it with the laurel wreath: She was just ready to hail him the Conqueror of Canada, when the fatal sisters snapped, in a moment the thread of life, and seized, from his eager grasp, the untasted conquest! Americans, bear witness to his humanity and his valour, for he died fighting in your cause, and the cause of mankind! let his memory live in your breasts; let it be handed down to your posterity, that millions yet unborn may *rise up and call him blessed!*

THE tender feelings of the human heart are deeply affected with the fate of these and the other heroes who have bled and died, that their country may be free : But at the same time, sensations of indignant wrath, are excited in the breast of every friend to freedom : He will listen to the voice of their blood, which cries aloud to heaven, and to him for vengeance ! He will feel himself animated with new vigor in the glorious cause : Nothing daunted by their untimely fate, he will rush into the midst of danger, that he may share their glory, and avenge their death ! Every idea which can warm and animate him to glorious deeds, will rush at once upon his mind ; and when engaged in the warmest battle, he will hear them, from their heaven, urging him to action : He will feel their spirits transfused into his breast ; he will sacrifice whole hecatombs of their murderers to their illustrious *manes* !

INDEED, my countrymen, the people of America have every thing to animate and encourage them in the present contest. Formidable as was once the power of the British Lion, he hath now lost his teeth ; universal dissipation hath taken place of that simplicity of manners, and hardiness of integrity, for which the nation was once remarkable : The officers of the British army, instead of inuring themselves to discipline, and seeking for glory in the blood-stained field, wish alone to captivate the softer sex, and triumph over their virtue. The legislature of Great-Britain is totally corrupt ; her administration is arbitrary and tyrannical ; the people have lost their spirit of resentment ; and like the most contemptible of animals, *bow the shoulder to bear and become servants unto tribute*. The national resources are cut off ; she is loaded with an intolerable public debt ; she is become the scorn of those foreigners, to whom she was once terrible ; and it is easy to see that her glory is in the ware.

HOW different from this is the present state of our country ! Descended from a race of hardy ancestors, who loved their freedom better than they loved their lives ; the Americans are jealous of the least infringement of their rights ; strangers to that luxury, which effeminates the mind and body ; they are capable of enduring incredible hardships ; with eagerness they rush into the field of battle, and brave with coolness, every danger : They possess a rich and a fruitful country, sufficient to supply them with every necessary and convenience of life ; they have inexhaustible resources for carrying on war, and bid fair soon to be courted for their alliance, by the proudest Monarchs of the earth. Their statesmen are equal to the task of forming and defending a free and extensive empire : Their Generals are brave and humane, intrepid and prudent. When I name a **WASHINGTON**, my audience will feel the justice of the remark, and acquit me of the charge of flattery.

POSSESSED of these advantages, we should be inexcusable to God, to our posterity, to the whole world, if we hesitated, a single moment, in asserting our right, and repelling the attacks of lawless power. Freedom is offered to us, she invites us to accept her blessings ; driven from the other regions of the globe, she wishes to find an asylum in the wilds of America ; with open arms, let us receive the persecuted, fair, let us imitate the example of our venerable ancestors, who loved and courted her into these desert climes. With determined bravery, let us resist the attacks of her impudent ravishers ; by resolution and firmness we may defend her from their power, and transmit her blessings to millions upon millions of our posterity. Let us then arouse to arms ! For, upon our exertions, under God, depends their freedom, upon our exertions depends the important question, whether the rising empire of America, shall be an empire of slaves or of freemen.

AN O R A T I O N.

ANIMATED by these considerations, my friends and fellow-citizens, let us strain every nerve in the service of our country! What are our lives, when viewed in competition with the happiness of such an empire! What is our private interest, when opposed to that of three millions of men! Let our bosoms glow with warmth of patriotism; let us sacrifice our ease, our fortunes and our lives, that we may save our country.

THAT a spirit of public virtue may transcend every private consideration, you, the respected inhabitants of the Town of Boston, have plainly manifested: With pleasure you have sacrificed what selfish men hold most dear, to save this oppressed land! With firmness you have resisted every attack of arbitrary power! Like the sturdy oak, you have stood unmoved, and to you, under God, will be owing the salvation of this extensive continent.

WE feel, my beloved friends, our obligations to you! Our hearts confess them; we cordially wish it were in our power to reward you for your patriotism; to restore you to that ease and affluence, of which, for our sakes, you have deprived yourselves; it is not. But our morning and evening petitions to the guardian God of America shall be, that he will bless and reward you.

WITH transport, my countrymen, let us look forward to the bright day, which shall hail us a free and independant state. With earnestness let us implore the forgiveness and the patronage of the Being of all beings, who holds the fate of empires in his hands! With zeal let us exert ourselves in the service of our country, in life: And when the earthly scene shall be closing with us, let us expire with this prayer upon our quivering lips; O GOD, LET AMERICA BE FREE!

F I N I S .



Barnstable

Obya Mason

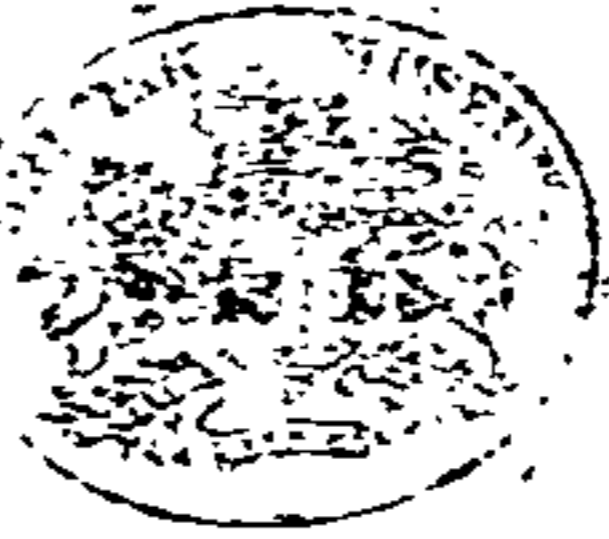
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