



An Oration.



FRIENDS *and* FELLOW-CITIZENS,

ON this day, dedicated to *American Liberty*, the Speaker appears before you as the advocate of those *principles*, on which the American Revolution was bottomed. Unaccustomed to disguise the sentiments of his soul, uninured in the ways of political dissimulation, the sentiments which shall now be delivered to you, are the offspring of a mind, conscious of their truth.

IF there be any in this assembly, to whom the sentiments that may be offered shall give offence, let them be assured it is far, very far, from the intention of the Speaker. At the same time let it be known, that he wishes not the approbation of any man, if it must be obtained at the expence of what he deems *political truth*.

BORN and educated among you, in early life I imbibed the sentiments of civil liberty. They have ever been dear to my heart. Those principles, in support of which a HAMPDEN and a SIDNEY fell, but a WASHINGTON, a FRANKLIN, a HANCOCK and a JEFFERSON, far more fortunate than they, lived to see reduced to practice. Their principles, if I am not mistaken, are those on which the American Constitutions are founded. They had for their object the dearest and most invaluable rights of man—*Liberty, Safety and Property*.

“ *Whilst*

“*Whilst I live,*” said SIDNEY, “*I will endeavor to preserve my liberty ; or at least, not consent to the destroying of it. I hope I shall die in the same principles in which I have lived, and will live no longer than they can preserve me. Let them please themselves with making the King glorious, who think a whole people may justly be sacrificed for the interest and pleasure of one man, and a few of his followers. Nevertheless they may find the King’s glory is their shame, his plenty the People’s misery, and that the gaining of an Office, or a little Money, is a poor reward for destroying a Nation.*”

HAPPINESS is the favorite object of Man. To obtain this celestial plant engages all his attention. Without its cheering rays life itself becomes a burden. The pursuit of her is pleasing, although she may elude our grasp. He who will consent to be miserable without an effort to be happy deserves not to have lived. Happy is that Man who pursues this charmer wisely.

HE who formed us Man, has given to us understanding, which directs us in the path that leadeth to happiness. If we pursue her counsels and regard her instructions we may obtain the favorite object of our pursuit. If we neglect her counsels, misery is the certain result.

EXPERIENCE, that able instructor, teacheth us all, that the ways of *truth* are the ways of *pleasantness*, and all her paths are *peace* ; while the windings of *falsehood* are full fraught with many, very many *mischievous consequences*.—Blind must that man be, and destitute of intellect, who has not lived sufficiently long to learn this lesson. Were our existence confined to this life only, and had we no hopes from the future, our happiness would be derived from the practice of truth and virtue. But when our views extend to an existence beyond the present life, to a state of rewards and punishments, how much more essential is it, that our actions should be regulated by the rule of reason and squared by virtue.

As in the moral world, there is a distinction between *virtue* and *vice*, between *truth* and *falsehood*, the one leading to pleasure and the other to pain, so in the political world, there is a *radical difference* between a Government grounded on the principles of *nature, truth* and *justice*, and one bottomed on the sandy foundation of *deception, fraud* or *force*. The one promotes the welfare of the community, and the other inevitably works its destruction. It is therefore highly important to every man, that the Government under which he lives should be instituted on true principles, and pursue those objects for which it was constituted.

LET me not be told that Civil Liberty may possibly exist in this Country for some years to come, but, that in most other Countries, *absolute Government*, or in other words *monarchical, hereditary Government*, is both proper and necessary. That can never be proper in any country which infringes the laws of GOD and NATURE. Man was born *free* and *equal*. He knows no master. If, through a long, long course of dark ages, he has been subjugated by his fellow-men, does that prove the *right to enslave him*? GOD forbid! From the North to the South Poles of the World, in every climate and in every country, the Rights of Man are the same, and ought equally to be respected. But so is not the fact. Probably much the largest proportion of the human race are slaves to men no better than themselves!

LET me not be told that the form of our Government cannot, will not last long, but that we too, like the antient Republics, must pass under the *Yoke of Bondage*. That can never be 'till *truth, virtue* and *courage* are banished from our land. That can never be 'till we have unlearned that which we have once known, *the value of Civil Liberty*. The price which this GEM cost us is too dear to be bartered for *Stars*, or surrendered for *Garters*.

Is there any man in this country who would be base enough to exchange *civil liberty* for *political slavery*? If so,

let

let the *finger of scorn* point him out as the WRETCH, who would abandon one of the best gifts which the God of Nature has bestowed on him !

BLEST with the happiest form of Government that the World hath ever seen ; born to inherit the most extensive and valuable tract of country that any Nation can boast ; living in that period of time when *knowledge* and *liberality* have taken the place of *ignorance*, *superstition* and *delusion*, we have much to be grateful for to the author of our existence, and are under strong obligations to transmit unimpaired these high privileges to future times. If we fail, all posterity will imprecate curses on our heads.

To preserve our rights and liberties, it is necessary we should know them. A frequent recurrence, therefore, to first principles, must be highly proper. It is a duty which every man owes to himself, as well as to society. For it is not to be expected that a man will carefully preserve and defend those rights, which he does not know that he possesses.

OUR Constitution declares, that “ *all the power of Government is derived from the People, that Government is instituted for their good, for their protection, safety, prosperity and happiness, and not for the profit, honor, or private interest of any one man, family or class of men. That all Magistrates and Officers of Government are their substitutes and agents, and are at all times accountable to them.*” These are no new doctrines, no BARREUIL and ROBINSON tales, they are great and important truths acknowledged and recorded by the FATHERS of the *American Revolution*. May they stand on long record ’till the solemn sentence shall be pronounced, “ *time shall be no longer.*”

THESE are the fundamental principles on which the whole superstructure of American Government is reared — Take but these away, and like the baseless fabrick of a vision, it will vanish and leave no trace behind. So long as these

these self-evident truths are acknowledged and practised, so long shall we remain *free, prosperous and happy*. Every revolving year that finds us practising these principles, adds to the prospect of their duration. Habit has a vast influence upon human life. “*Even those nations who submit to arbitrary rule love their form of Government, if one may call that a form, which is without any, and like vice itself, knows neither law nor order.*” How much more then ought we to cherish and support that Government, whose principles are founded in the immutable laws of eternal truth and justice ?

WHERE is the People under Heaven, who derive more blessings from civil government than the *Americans* ? Where that Nation which is more prosperous and happy ? Let any man point them out on the Map of the World if he can.

WHILE war and slaughter is the policy of arbitrary government, peace, heaven-born peace, is the policy of our own. What if there be a few restless individuals in our own country, who are continually seeking for war, that they may riot on the ruins of their country's welfare ? The voice of the great body of the American People, with their Government at the head, is in favor of peace, honest peace with all Nations, and “*entangling alliances with none.*”

WHAT if there be a few individuals, whose minds are poisoned against our system of Government, and who deal out *slander* with their invenomed tongues against the constituted authorities ? Their tales of *falsehood* pass like the idle wind and are regarded not. The mischiefs intended to others recoil on their own heads.

STRONG in *Republican* principles, and shielded by integrity, our Government is pursuing the path that leadeth to political happiness. The suggestions of *falsehood* and the whispers of *calumny*, are weapons too futile to impede the course. The fictions of former days, the Tub Plots, Tailer Plots, and Ocean Massacres, have ceased to produce their wonted

wonted effect. Even the host of *malicious fictions* which are daily propagated against the well-earned fame of our beloved Chief Magistrate THOMAS JEFFERSON, produce no other effect than *vice* does on *virtue*, to make it appear more *lovely*. He, calm and placid, steadily pursues his object, the welfare of the American People. He seeks no revenge against his *calumniators*, but pities their *folly*.

CEASE then, *slanderers*, leave the ways of *falsehood*, and walk on the high ground of *truth*. If ye love not the principles of American Liberty, seek a land more congenial to your wishes. Those principles place no bar in your way.—Not so the practice of arbitrary government. That first makes men *slaves* and then prohibits them from going where they may be *free*:

I AM no advocate for the infallibility of men in office.—I believe not in the doctrine of passive obedience. He who is arrayed with the clothes of honor, the suffrages of freemen, is accountable for his conduct as much as others. His actions and measures are the subject of fair investigation.—So far as they tend to promote the public welfare, they deserve the public approbation, and no farther.

THE administration of our Government courts investigation—It shields itself under no *Sedition Law*—It shrouds not itself in *darkness*—The measures are open for the inspection of all—The only claim it makes on our liberality is, that we make a due allowance for the errors and frailties of Man.

WHEN the present administration came into operation it found the Nation about *eighty millions of dollars* in debt.—It found the People burthened with a *Land Tax, Stamp Tax*, and many other *Internal Taxes*. It found, notwithstanding the liberal use of taxation, that for three years of the last administration, the national debt had increased more than *three millions of dollars*! During the present administration the
land

land tax has been discontinued, and the stamp tax, with all the other internal taxes have been abolished.

IN two years of the present administration, without enhancing the taxes on other objects of taxation, the national debt has been reduced *seven millions eight hundred and forty-nine thousand dollars*, leaving in the treasury a sum more than *three millions of dollars* larger than when the former administration retired.

IF this statement be true, that the national debt has *decreased* at the rate of about *five millions of dollars* a year, for the last two years, when at the same time taxation has *decreased* also; and that it is true, we have ample evidence to prove,* it is a subject worthy of our inquiry, how has this been effected?

IT tests in the memory of all, that during the last administration, of *cockade memory*, an *Army of Vagabonds* were embodied in the heart of our country. For what purpose, it is not for me to explain. Every man may conjecture for himself. Whatever was the object, they have long since been disbanded, and other military corps have been reduced, to an immense saving to the Nation. A small *Army of Judges*, commissioned in the last moments of the former administration, they too have been *disbanded*. The mad project of *aping* the maritime nations of Europe in creating a navy, has been arrested. A reduction of Officers in the Revenue Department, and a limitation to the premium for their services has also been effected. These are some of the measures of the present administration, by means of which the reduction of the national debt has taken place.

* See the President's Speech of December 15, 1802—And Mr. GALLATIN'S Report of December 6, 1802—See also the statement made by "Algernon Sidney," a writer in the *National Intelligencer, the Government Paper*.

HERE

HERE let me ask, who disapproves of these measures? Is there any man who wishes to see another Oxford Army raised at the expense of the Nation? Is there any man who wishes for sixteen useless Judges pensioned on the People, at the yearly price of *two thousand dollars* each per year, when the whole business may as well be done without them?— Will any object to the reduction in the Revenue Department? And would it be good policy to vie with the powers of Europe with respect to a Navy?

NAVIES have ever been used more as engines of power, than as a protection to commerce. Commerce may very well exist without a Navy. And the expense attending the support of one, far exceeds any benefit derived to the community. It has been estimated that the expense of the Navy of *Great-Britain*, for thirteen years past, has been *twenty-eight millions of dollars a year*!* Now suppose we should be content with a Navy only one quarter part as numerous as the British, and instead of one hundred and twenty ships of the line, should only have thirty; the expense attending the same, according to the British rate of expenditure, would be *seven millions of dollars a year*! But we know that the expense to us in proportion would be vastly more than to them, for we pay three times as much to our seamen as they do.

AND would the Navy advocate, who would place our strength on the winds and waters, be content with a Navy less than a fourth part as powerful as the British? I presume not. Here then would be wasted, nearly the whole annual income of the present revenue of this country. And what should we gain by it? Nothing, comparatively nothing, but war, bloodshed and slaughter. Nothing but entangling our peace and prosperity in the broils and feuds of European am-

* See Mr. GALLATIN'S *Speech in Congress, on the bill for augmenting the Navy, in Feb. 1799.*

bition. Where is the man then, who is not pleased with arresting the progress of this wild project?

HERE let me stop, and ask the opposers of the present administration, for such there be, to point out, if they can, that act which is in opposition to the welfare of the American People? Are not our interests as well protected as under any former administration? Are not the laws duly executed? Is not our Government operating on the true principles of *American Liberty*? Has *Religion* been destroyed, and its Ministers brought into contempt? Has the marriage contract been dissolved, and our Meeting-Houses burnt? These and many other evil forebodings have been foretold, as the certain result of the administration of our Government, by men, whose whole lives have been devoted to the principles of *American Liberty*! But they were the vagaries of dis-tempered imaginations and jaundiced minds.

BUT let me not dwell too long on these illusory tales.— Rather let pleasing emotions take place of painful sensations. Let the unexampled advantages that we possess, teach us the value of *Civil Liberty*. Let us place a reasonable confidence in the men of our choice; and let us inculcate the principles of *Republicanism* in the minds of those who shall succeed us. In so doing, we shall regard the counsels of our own understanding, and transmit a rich inheritance to our children's children.

HAPPY! thrice happy Country this! which contains in its bosom a hardy race of *Freemen*! The tempest of *Faction*, the hurricane of *Anarchy*, and the stagnant calm of *Monarchy* may hover around our habitation. Still shall the beautiful fabric of *Republican Freedom* firmly stand; and the future historian shall record the fact, that, in the eighteenth century, while the Nations of the World were bowing their necks to the *Yoke of Despots*, the American People were alone FREE, INDEPENDENT, and HAPPY!