

ORATION,

DELIVERED ON THE

Fourth of July, A. D. 1806,

IN THE

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING-HOUSE,

IN THE

EAST PRECINCT

OF

REHOBOTH, MASSACHUSETTS.

By PAUL ALLEN, Esq.

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1806.

REHOBOTH, JULY 4, 1806.

AT a meeting of the Federal Citizens of Rehoboth, assembled to celebrate this Day, *unanimously* resolved, that DR. ISAAC FOWLER, CALVIN MARTIN, and NATHANIEL BULLOCK, Esq. be a Committee to wait on PAUL ALLEN, Esq. with the thanks of the Citizens, for the *elegant* and *patriotic* Oration, delivered by him on this Anniversary, and solicit a copy for the Press.

GENTLEMEN,

IN compliance with your request, so politely expressed, a copy of the Oration this day delivered, is "with all its imperfections on its head," presented for the Press.

PAUL ALLEN.

To Messrs. { ISAAC FOWLER,
NATHANIEL BULLOCK, and
CALVIN MARTIN.

July 4, 1806.



ORATION.

FROM the earliest times of antiquity to the present, amongst nations civilized, or savage, monuments have been erected and preserved to commemorate glorious exploits. In rude and unpolished times, while nature was as it were in the quarry, some rugged memorial, a stone, or a tree, was regarded with reverence, and consecrated by posterity with religious rites and observance. The misshapen mass brought warm to the remembrance of the natives the deeds of their fathers. They gazed on it, and the depths of antiquity, more impenetrable than the glooms of their native forests, were suddenly illumined. They beheld their ancestors writhing at the stake, amidst the slow consumptions of a lingering fire, surrounded by savages versed in the art and mystery of murder, and still bearing with immoveable constancy all the refinements of torture, for the preservation of their Country's Independence. The Coward felt the

pile, and was in an instant changed to an Hero. He seemed to touch the electric dust of his fathers. When civilization had worn off the asperities of life, when man began to find that the forest was not the boundary of his intellect, when the winds and the waves were reduced to discipline, and administered to his pleasures and necessities, the national memorial possessed a corresponding grandeur and magnificence. Superb monuments, embellished with whatever was bold in design, or splendid in execution, were erected to perpetuate the memory of those who preferred their country's existence to their own. Nay, the ardour of national gratitude, not satisfied with the allowance of earthly honours, followed the retreating spirit of a man beyond the grave, and assigned it a seat and agency amongst the Gods. Hence, in the legends of Heathen Mythology, we discover almost as many deities in Heaven to be worshipped, as there were mortals on earth to worship. The celestial regions were thus overstocked with gods of human manufacture. Before the light of revelation appeared, while mankind were left to the guidance of their own fancies, as to the proper objects of religious reverence, we may cease to wonder why those, the most eminent for popular virtues during their lives, were deified after their deaths.—We may cease to wonder, why such departed spirits partook largely of the virtues and vices of the bodies they once inhabited, and carried their

hostilities to Heaven. We may even without the imputation of idolatry, admire in others, what ourselves would not practise. The stream that tumbles in the cataract, is more an object of astonishment, than when it winds its gentle course along variegated meadows.

FELLOW-CITIZENS, in reverence to a custom thus corresponding with the first rudiments of the human heart, we are assembled on this day to commemorate your Independence. Thirty years have now passed into eternity, since our illustrious fathers in the face of the world declared, that "the United States were, and of right ought to be, free, sovereign, and independent."—Here let us make a solemn pause, and reflect, what strength and hardihood of nerve it required in them to abide the consequence of such a declaration! Before their eyes rested the pleasant fields of their fathers; their wives and children protected by innocence alone, felt under such protection happy. The boy, beheld the ascendancy of manhood, and the declivity of old age, smooth and unruffled, and calculated on silver hair, and the green boundary of existence, with the quiet that his ancestors had done. The mother, as she felt the decrepitude of her limbs, beheld those of her children invigorate; the compensation was more than sufficient, and she seemed in them to protract existence beyond the grave. The rising sun was their summons to

labour, and his farewell beam admonished them to retire. Vanity and ostentation had not as yet decoyed with their trinkets, and the luxury of a good conscience was the only luxury they felt, or aspired after. They had yet to learn the mystery of that refined folly, that first forms a wish beyond the grasp of obtainment, and then mourns because it cannot be granted. Such were the prospects that regaled the eyes of our ancestors on one side; but gloomy and portentous was the contrast on the other. They beheld a group of objects horrible and uncertain, and more frightful because uncertain, floating in shadows; the flash of the sabre, the tomahawk suspended, and still more remote, the features of the beloved Partners of all their joys and sorrows, lamenting their widowed state, and pressing their orphans to their bosoms. Such were the forms that dwelt in shade, until the light from Bunker's Hill illumined and brought the sable progeny to view.

THE question may now well be asked, what gave to our ancestors, that adamantine firmness, that enabled them to encounter such obstacles, and to dare the Declaration of Independence? The answer is easy. A certain grandeur of heart, the property of but few, who may in the strictest sense be called Heaven's favourites, goaded into ungovernable phrenzy by lawless aggression, and premedi-

tated insult bore them on. They “ smiled at the drawn dagger, and defied its point.” Life, with all its tender varieties, while under the influence of such paroxysms, shrunk from solicitude. Their bodies were mere organs through which was conveyed an extraordinary impulse. Like the prophets of the fabled gods of antiquity, they seemed to speak and to move, while under the operation of superior power ; it was not until its departure, that they sunk down to the level of mortals. Fellow-Citizens, your own Hancock in the cabinet, your Warren in the field, are now immortal witnesses of the truth of these remarks. Though their bodies moulder, and mingle with the clods of the valley, their graves still breathe with patriotism ; and I hope and trust that their latest posterity will catch the inspiration. Whenever man is released from the common entanglements of mortality, no wonder he dares to attempt what at other times would shake the tranquillity of his nerves. Whatever materials are wanted either for aggression, or defence, the abundant mind supplies ; the plough-share becomes a sword, and the pruning-hook a spear.

To pass through all the events of our revolutionary struggles, to notice all the chequered diversities of light and shade, would be an insult on the intelligence of the audience. To gather cypress with the one hand, and laurel with the other, forms a spectacle melancholy and affecting ; and is

the severe duty of the historic muse. We may well resign to her the performance of a talk equally painful, and unpleasant, and let our joy on this occasion be chastised by the thought that the flower which we pluck, and whose fragrance regales the sense, grew from the graves of our fathers. Your imaginations have already beheld the heights of Quebec immortalized by the death of Montgomery; you have already travelled with our little disconsolate army over the Delaware, and beheld the snows imprinted with the blood of patriot feet; the American splendour at Monmouth; its various and portentous eclipses, until its orb which even in its most gloomy obfuscation, was still silvered by a faint glory, emerged, and illumined York-Town with a sudden blaze. We have seen what Americans can do when guided by WASHINGTON, in the field, or in the cabinet. The head of the body imparted to every nerve life and vigour: Whenever that moved, all the other members moved: Whenever that suffered, they all suffered in unison with it. No discordant member, then said to the head "I have no need of thee."

WE owe it to the character of those illustrious men who achieved Independence, and bartered the awful price of existence to obtain it—we owe it to the fidelity of historical documents—we owe it to the gravity of fact, and to the sanctity of truth, to enter a protest against a doctrine

lately advanced and pertinaciously avowed, that the birth of American Liberty was coeval only with the birth of her Independence. This has been stated over and over again, repeated in private circles, and rung throughout all our newspaper changes, until it has acquired the solidity and permanence of a proverb. One of the miseries of disputation consists in our regarding as an axiom, a principle that will not bear investigation. We appeal to history with confidence, for the refutation of a calumny so shameful and degrading. Our fathers, bred in the sturdy habits of Republicanism, reluctant at the tyranny under which they suffered, fled from their hearths and their fire-sides, and sought the protection of a savage-haunted wilderness. Before they could bring their proud minds to submit, they dared the fury of the tempestuous element, the horrors of famine, and the threats of the tomahawk. Landed on an inhospitable coast, destitute of provisions, or of materials for defence, they laid the foundation of future greatness.

“ A world was all before them where to chuse

“ Their residence, and Providence their guide.”

MANIFOLD were their trials, and perilous their conflicts. No sacrifice, no personal danger, no species of privation, were deemed too great when Liberty was the object at stake. A kind and superintending Providence fostered their hopes into confidence, led them on, through every trying vicissitude, and sometimes by means little short of miraculous preserved

them. In process of time, new emigrations from Europe, impelled by similar motives, still added to the wealth, prosperity, and opulence of the country. One colony gave rise to another colony; hardy and adventurous enterprize penetrated still deeper the recesses of the forest; the spires of the christian temple sparkled amidst the gloom of surrounding foliage, until a large and opulent republic tempted the ambition and cupidity of Europe. Thus did population progress, and such was the consequence. From the time of the earliest settlement of this country, down to the date of those calamities that issued in the Declaration of Independence, never did Americans bow the knee and recognize slavery as their tutelary goddess. The allegiance, which we owed to the Monarch of Great-Britain, was little more than nominal. Parliament then neither exercised, or recognized the power of its newly created omnipotence "to bind and tax us in all cases whatever." It exercised general jurisdiction for the safety of the colonies, and left them in the quiet security and fruition of laws of their own making. Sheltered under such powerful protection from European rapacity, we felt happy and secure; life, liberty, and property, were preserved, and we neither thought, or dreamed of Independence. Afterwards, when tyrannical demands, un sanctioned by precedent, were made and enforced, the Americans roused from the quiet of confidence, and boldly remonstrated against the justice of the claims. The matter and style of those

petitions, so far from bearing the brand of servility and self abasement, display the indignant spirit of freemen agitated to alarm, and determined on resistance. Jealous for their ancient rights, and anxious for their preservation, they neither regarded, and at the outset scarcely considered, the strength and power of the nation they were destined to oppose. Read the Declaration of Independence! It complains in strong and emphatic language of the various aggressions pursued during the reign of the present Monarch of Great-Britain; but there is not one word of complaint against his predecessors. It recapitulates those abuses, as altogether novel, until that Monarch had succeeded to the crown of his ancestors. It declares that "his (not their) history, is an history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an uniform tyranny over these States." It charges him with violating the "*free system of English laws*," and establishing in their stead an "arbitrary government," and with "altering fundamentally the forms of our governments." It recognizes the "right of representation in the legislature," as the property of the people, before enjoyed. It charges the Monarch "with combining with others to subject us to a jurisdiction, foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws." Will it be asked, to what constitution, and to what law it bears reference? A constitution and law that recognized the King of Great-Britain as the proper sovereign of this coun-

try. It goes along in the same strain throughout, and ends in language to which the heart of every true American responds with the fidelity of an echo. This therefore is a solemn national declaration, that the Americans were always free, and whoever maintains the reverse libels his country, and spits his venom on the grave of his ancestors. Who has not read the speeches of Chatham, of Barre, and of Burke? They all along with a prophetic sagacity warn the cabinet of Saint James, against tampering with the ancient rights and liberties of America. Never did they indulge, never did they endure the thought that we were slaves for a moment. Would to God that the Americans had always entertained the same proud opinion of themselves, that foreigners have done! Further, is not the fact too notorious to require comment, that had our countrymen been familiarized to servitude, they never would have dreamed of such desperate resistance? What shall we say of Connecticut? That excellent, that truly Republican State, who entered heart and soul into our revolutionary contest, and was one of the foremost in the toil, hazard and victory of it; did that State attempt to destroy the charter that gave her a political existence? No. She fought and bled to confirm it. What was then a charter, is now a constitution, for the preservation of which she would once more embark in the dangers of battle. This charter, however, is indebted for its existence, not to a Republic, but to a Monarchy. Even where our sister States have deemed

it necessary to alter the forms of their charters, they preserve their substance, and recognize the same principles in a different manner. It may further be remarked, that this slavery, concerning which so much has been said as being the precious birth-right that we inherit, and about which the patriotic parrots of the day have prattled so much, notwithstanding our revolutionary struggles and victory, still exists. The writ of Habeas Corpus, and the trial by jury, are preserved. Yet if we may believe the Declaration of Independence, it was one of the causes that fundered our connexion with our mother country, that "we were deprived in many cases of the benefits of trial by jury." Long, very long, may we retain such honourable badges of servitude. The laws of England are to this day the ramparts of public and of private property, incorporated with our own, and sanctioned by the solemnity of our judicial decisions. Are we prepared to bid them an eternal adieu, and to declare that the right by which the honest farmer reaps the profits of his land, and which alone guarantees its enjoyment, is founded in downright usurpation? The principles of liberty are not hidden beneath the webs woven by the spiders of metaphysics; they are plain, and practicable. Moses first taught them to the Israelites by divine inspiration. Under his guidance they forsook, as our ancestors did, the dwellings of their fathers, and fought their freedom in the wilderness. Homer, the earliest of Heathen authorities, informs us, that

"Jove fix'd it certain, that whatever day

"Makes man a slave, takes half his worth away."

GROTIUS, Montesquieu, Vattel, Puffendorf, and all other writers on general law, did not originate those principles;

they merely collated them from observation and study. Our ancestors were not so profoundly ignorant, as to believe themselves the first asserters of liberty.—They were not strangers to the writings of a Russell, a Sydney, a Milton, and a Locke. They did not believe that the sun that blazed at the moment of their births, was specially kindled up by Omnipotence to illuminate them only, or that he would expire with them, and leave their posterity in darkness. Fellow-Citizens! I appeal to you—name one period, and all our antagonists are defied to do it, when a single son of Massachusetts was a slave.

FELLOW-CITIZENS, it is time to emancipate our minds from the tyranny of such ideal alarm. Newspaper is now set in opposition to newspaper, infallible oracles that rouse and agitate the public minds by gloomy predictions, that the rights of the people are endangered by the encroachments of government. They have foretold the period with as much certainty as an astronomer would calculate an eclipse, when our tyrants are to impose their fetters of iron, and to compel us to dance to the music of our chains. 'This very licentiousness of expression is decided evidence that no such tyranny exists. No arbitrary government would endure for a moment within its domains, an engine so calculated to defeat its own purposes. In France, the press is palsied, and inert, save when it is put to the torture, and compelled to utter panegyrics. The fire-brand of American jealousy requires no wind to make it sparkle. The true point of apprehension is this; by awakening such anxiety for liberty, we may endanger the existence of law. When the people are led to believe

that every restraint, however salutary, infringes their liberty, government is left destitute of all energy, incompetent to assert the rights, or to redress the wrongs of the people. It is a mere gaudy puppet set up to solicit scorn and insult. Paradoxical as it may appear in theory, it is nevertheless practically true, that the people may be free, and the government a slave. It may be compelled by an ill-timed, and fatal courtesy to public opinion, to adopt a temporizing policy when the times demand vigour; and when any thing short of decisive measures, may blot the name of our country from the catalogue of independent nations. History abounds with instances where governments have been weak, and pusillanimous, and the people hardy, and full of manly enterprise. If a time like this should arrive in our country, it should take warning from the fate of other nations; it should be the signal to alarm us into unanimity. The tyrants of the land, and the tyrants of the water, are now scouring their respective elements, and America is destined to be the victim of both. My countrymen, let me speak in the plainness, and with the sincerity of a dying declaration—it is not the hour of trifling now. The two monsters of Europe are whetting their tusks, and are ready to dye them in the best blood of America. On yourselves alone, depends your safety. Rely not on European treachery; the very power that preserves, will destroy; and further, it would preserve, only to destroy. Open every artery before you suffer insult unredressed. Life is what we must at last infallibly lose, and never can we lose it at a more glorious time, or in a more glorious cause, than by following the footsteps of our ancestors, who gained their Heaven by resistance. Did we but cherish the same antipathy to foreign friendship, as we do in

domestic politics ; were our country's honour as tremulously alive to the touch, as our individual, no nation on earth would provoke the contest. The American constellation, in its remote and peaceful corner of the political horizon, might still be preserved entire and brilliant, while star, after star, is hurried from its orbit, to add one more sparkle to the portentous tail of Gallia's Comet. Has my dear country yet to learn that treachery constitutes the essence of national friendship ? Has Europe been deluged in blood for our instruction, and do we refuse to learn the lesson until we are practically informed ? Must our ears be only open to the whispers of flattery, and deaf to the thunders of experience ? I will believe, that the Americans are not strangers to the tombs of their fathers.—I will believe that we inherit, not merely their bones, and sinews, but likewise their firm and invincible minds—the same proud sense of injured honour—the same abhorrence, and defiance of insult.—I will believe, that this spirit need only to be awakened to be formidable. But if this is all an illusion, painted on the retina of fancy, I should wish, as an independent American, to die before the dissipation of the dream.