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The Author

ORATION, *Bailey*
20: 8:

PRONOUNCED AT LEXINGTON, MASS.

IN COMMEMORATION

OF THE INDEPENDENCE

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

AND THE

RESTORATION OF PEACE.

4TH JULY, 1815.

BY JAMES T. AUSTIN.

“ Let us be for our Country.”

BOSTON :
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1815.

AT a meeting, holden at Lexington, (Mass.) for the purpose of celebrating Independence, July 4th, 1815,

Voted, unanimously, That the Hon. Samuel Dana, George Blake, James Brown, of Lexington, Hon. Samuel Hoar, and Enoch Wiswell, of Watertown, Esqrs. be a Committee, in behalf of this meeting, to present their thanks to JAMES TRECOTHICK AUSTIN, Esq. for his elegant and well timed Oration, delivered this day, in commemoration of American Independence, and the restoration of Peace—that they request a copy for the press, and cause so many copies to be printed, that it may have general circulation.

HENRY DEARBORN,

President of the Meeting.

SIR—The Committee take pleasure in communicating to you the thanks of the people assembled here, this day, as expressed in the above vote, and they request a copy of your Oration for publication.

Lexington, July 4, 1815....For the Committee,

SAMUEL DANA.

JAMES T. AUSTIN, Esq. *Counsellor at Law.*

ORATION.

THE declaration of your Independence, Americans, is an era in political history.

A new world had risen from the waste of these western waters—the persecuted Puritians who fled to it multiplied into a powerful people, and a new nation burst on the view of astonished Europe, claiming, contending for, and acquiring its separate and equal station among the powers of the earth.

That great revolution by which the colonies of England became free, sovereign and independent States, was the result of no common exertion.—It demanded efforts from your statesmen which the most profound talents alone could devise or direct. It demanded from your warriors irreproachable courage and incessant devotion to arms. It demanded from a whole people, for seven long years, that patience and perseverance, and toil and labor, and suffering and sacrifice, to which only the most disinterested patriotism could submit.

Nor even then did the energies of the country give assurance of success. It required faith in the justice of the cause—a dependence on the providential and almost miraculous interposition of that Almighty Being, who, as he once led his chosen people from the task-masters of Egypt, was able to carry his American Israel

through the waves and wilderness of revolution and to place them in the Canaan of Independence and Peace.

To great trials were they called who obtained the freedom of your country. The result of the war was an ample remuneration of their labors. The American character became associated with the proudest civil and military virtues. Subsequent forms of government which united the destinies of the whole confederacy into one great nation; the enterprise and activity which displayed themselves through all classes of the community; the agricultural and commercial prosperity of the country, and the general happiness which these blessings disseminated, were monuments of the fame of your revolutionary Patriots. In this diffusion of public and private felicity, the efforts of misguided men who had endeavored to retard it: who in the dark days which preceded, had hung dead weight on the car of revolution; who had labored to resist the national sentiments, to dispirit the efforts, weaken the zeal, diminish the resources, and enfeeble the force of the Republic, were obscured and obliterated, or remembered only to brand the name of TORY with pity and contempt.

This day of national greatness could not remain without a cloud. That Independence which your fathers obtained with so much labor, you have been required to defend with the sword. The Americans of the Revolution exhibited those difficult virtues which that great national struggle demanded. In the renewed efforts which have

been recently required, has there been the same generous devotion? Have the virtues of former times been repeated as a new lesson to posterity? Can you come to this consecrated ground, where you may almost expect communion with those gallant men whose grave time has not yet levelled with the surface of the soil, and ask them to witness that you have been worthy of their fame?—Their etherial spirits are allowed perhaps even now to hover round the spot where they died; to mingle on this sacred festival in the exultation of their countrymen; to rejoice in the effulgence of that meridian liberty whose dawn was sanctified by their blood!

Well may you make the appeal. Yes, my countrymen—there has been no degeneracy in the American character. The heroes of the revolution may acknowledge their affinity to those gallant warriors, who on land and ocean have waved triumphantly the American banners, alike the astonishment of other nations, and the admiration of their own. Yes! the roll of departed greatness is swelled by chivalric and accomplished valor—the best blood of the nation has been poured out for the honor of the country and the glory of its arms; and through the whirlwinds of war has survived a noble and distinguished band, to whose intrepidity and renown may safely be entrusted your naval and military fame. Yes! the war which is now most gloriously closed, displayed its connection with the war of the revolution. There has been exhibited the same characteristic spirit of the country, dazzled by success, but rising from misfortune with

renovated vigor ; the same gallant and devoted patriotism in arms, the same ardent and generous enthusiasm among the people ; while the same murky and cankering opposition has attempted to paralyze the arm and debilitate the heart of the nation ; till at last, recoiling with mortification and disgrace, it finds the only return of its ineffectual malice, in the anticipated execration of impartial posterity.

The frequent war, which it has pleased an overruling Providence to permit, might almost seem to indicate that it is a necessary condition of society. During the six thousand years which history has recorded, scarcely has the world enjoyed a single century of peace. It is not possible that a state of such frequent recurrence, can be wholly without advantage. Thus the war of the Revolution gave existence to the American nation, and enabled the increasing millions of your country to enjoy the blessings of self-government.—The war of 1812 has drawn into notice the republican virtue of the American people, and established the foundations of your national character. The imperishable archives of history will preserve the records of its glory.

War is a national calamity, but not the greatest of all possible evils. Such a proposition can be maintained only by men forgetful of all honorable feelings, and alike insensible to personal character and national fame. That it should be declared only in vindication of an essential right ; prosecuted with zeal and energy, and all the soul of the nation for the preservation of that right,

and closed at the moment when its object is acquired, are maxims of enlightened justice, and approved by the practice of your government. War was forced on them by a series of premeditated injuries, repeated till patience had almost become pusillanimity, and remonstrance been mistaken for fear. An apology is required rather for the delay, than the precipitancy of the declaration. But the policy of your government was of necessity pacific. Your constitution and laws, the temper of your magistrates, the genius of the country, were almost immovably attached to peace. A long period of prosperity had enervated the martial spirit, dissipated the military science, and scattered the resources of war. Against an enemy covering the ocean with his fleets, numbering his generals and his armies with the most celebrated warriors of the age, ambition itself had no great expectation of military fame.

The popularity of the cabinet was the fruit of peace. Not an individual in the councils of your country had been educated in the "pomp and circumstance" of war. Your soldiers and your generals were to be made, if at all, from the occasions which required them. No object of ambition, no hope of conquest, no wishes of personal glory influenced the declaration. On the contrary, the prospect was dark and discouraging to the men on whom the great responsibility rested.

Your Chief Magistrate had raised his glory as a statesman on the pillars of peace. His splendid and illustrious character, the result of thirty years of tranquility, could only be jeopardized on a

new and untried scene of things. The nation's admiration and esteem, growing round him with increasing luxuriance, were to be hazarded on a crisis, which, while every private and personal motive opposed, was in his opinion required by the public good. His enemies, with the dismal death-note of the raven, were croaking their appalling prophecy, that he who made the war should never be permitted to sign the peace. It was a moment of danger to his well earned reputation. The sacrifice he might be called to make was an awful one, and well might startle a high minded patriot. The temptation to withstand it was almost resistless. But his country and its honor outweighed every personal consideration. He did recommend the war. He did, with proud satisfaction, sign the peace ! Like the favored men of God, he walked without injury through the flames, and the redeeming spirit of patriotism has consecrated the character of MADISON for the admiration of mankind.

The injuries which compelled you a second time to resort to arms, were neither few nor small ; and Heaven has sanctioned the appeal which called for its attestation to the justice of your cause. The expediency of the declaration of war will be differently decided by different parties, as they estimate the comparative value of commercial profit with national character ; or the liberty of trade with the liberty of the citizen ! Any party who could willingly see the high way of nations converted into the domain of a proud and imperious people, who could find nothing intolerable in new

systems of blockade, new interpolations of public law, or repeated violations of personal liberty, so long as a communication was open to their favorite shores—who would calculate with mercantile arithmetic the price-current of national freedom, and submit to pick up the crumbs of commerce which the boasting mistress of the ocean left for them to gather; that party might well denounce the justice and the expediency of the war. They who declared every measure of resistance worse than the evil it was intended to remove; that the embargo and non-intercourse were separately more grievous than war; and that war, when it came, was a greater evil than both the former measures united, may be allowed to claim equal praise for the intelligence and consistency of their principles; but the world, which beheld the patience of the American nation with wonder, heard the appeal to arms with sympathy and respect. Other nations have watched your course with admiration, and exulted at the successful issue of your labors. It is indeed an eventful lesson to the ancient empires. It is a new demonstration that war has no machinery equal to justice. That the terrible array of arms, the formidable front of military power make no impression on a people who are contending, under a government of their choice, for principles of freedom.

But whatever were the proximate causes of the late war, its existence is attributable to those, who in all preliminary discussions took side with the enemy. A party among us have been more decided vindicators of the pretensions of England,

than the most venal of her subjects. They not only denied the claims of the American government, but ridiculed the spirit, contemned the preparations, and despised the evidence of an intention to seek redress by arms. The enemy, deceived by their clamor, trusted to their predictions; and refused to modify their offensive orders. Believing the spirit of the country to be as degraded as that of the opposition, they pleased themselves with the belief that all our menaces would end in discussion. The disorganizing violence of this party induced the enemy to suppose that our courage was not to be roused by the most aggravated insult; that no indignity could excite the spirit of the people. Under the fallacious expectations which this conduct excited, the orders in council, and that system of impressment were continued which no Algerine servitude ever equalled. It forced the nation into War; and all the evils of the conflict a righteous judge will require at their hands.

It protracted the war. By this ungoverned opposition the enemy were induced to believe you were divided even to civil commotion. They expected that this feeble minority, whose power was as evanescent as the fogs of the river on whose banks they assembled, would distract the nation and separate its parts. In this hope they continued the war. In this hope they made that disgraceful proposition as the sine qua non of peace, which would have struck your flag, then waving in triumph on the Lakes; devoted to Indian desolation one eighth of your territory, and one hundred

thousand of your people ; and severed an integral part of your empire.

Who prophesied you would be compelled to accept these terms ?—to submit to this most outrageous of all possible indignities. To reduce their prophecy to fact, who kept up a more violent opposition to the government than they had ever done to the enemy ? Who among you seemed willing, for the pitiful purpose of disgracing the administration, to immolate the country ? Such partizans are answerable for the protracted evils of the war. To other men, and to other councils ; to nobler principles and to firmer minds, belong the honors of the peace.

War again is about to unfurl its standard in Europe. In the new march of despotism, American rights may be at variance with belligerent policy. The cause of this collision will be your foreign commerce. With the politics of the continent of Europe, we have no concern, and no danger of entanglement. Our agriculture, manufactures, and internal occupations, would go on for a century, without generating a pretence for war.

Commerce, with the blessings it produces, has a natural tendency to bring this scourge in its train, and must either be abandoned to its own protection, or defended at the cannon's mouth. The late conflict, though ungenerously attributed to other motives, had Commerce for its real as well as ostensible cause.

The peace party, then, what course will they pursue ? Are they disposed to leave their ships and their sailors to the mercy of belligerents, or will they, in any case, defend their interest as well

as honor, by an appeal to arms? They boast of being commercial States! What can they offer to the agricultural and manufacturing community as an inducement for another attempt to defend their peculiar possession? Does the past give confidence for the future? Would it be their policy to raise that blaze of patriotism which should excite the energy of high minded men, or to gather that darkness and gloom, which is congenial to the bats, and owls, and reptiles of faction; which draws them from their retreats to crawl over, and cover with their slime, the monuments of national glory? Would that soil which once raised the generous defenders of a nation's rights, degenerate into a nursery of disorganizing demagogues? Would they, who have every thing at stake on questions of commercial privilege, take ungenerous advantage of the crises, which their defence produces, to overthrow the government that defends them? Such is, indeed, the pitiful tendency of New-England opposition. Such the necessary effect of the principles it advocates.

Those great and respectable classes of the community, merchants, seamen, and artizans, whom navigation nourishes, will judge who are the friends of commerce; and whether protection is best afforded to it by men, who unnerve the arm that defends it, or by those whose lives have been interposed for its security, whose blood has flowed as a tributary stream to swell the commercial greatness of the country.

In the review of the war, nothing probably will give the future historian more difficulty to reconcile to the belief of posterity, than that political

curiosity, the HARTFORD CONVENTION; the most ludicrous and lamentable monument of impotent menace, and party delusion. Fettered by local and sectional policy, incapable of comprehensive views, or national sentiments, governed by pitiful prejudices against southern men and southern interest, and creating a fictitious rivalry between parts of a great empire naturally tending to mutual support, the leaders of a PARTY seemed willing to sacrifice every thing to their political pride; and unable to direct the government of the union, were disposed to be known as rulers of the nation of New-England. The first attempt was in a Boston assemblage, under cover of a resolution "to resist the laws;" but the act and the agents were covered with confusion, by that early champion of your liberty, that consistent defender of your cause, that undeviating and original republican, the late lamented Vice-President of the United States.

Of virtue's cause, the pattern and the pride,
A nation mourn'd when this lov'd patriot died.

The distresses necessarily incident to war, afforded another inviting opportunity. The note of preparation sounded. A confederacy was formed—its object was already apparent.

Our most intelligent statesmen were of opinion that the legitimate powers of government were adequate to the crushing of it by force; but as no overt act of treason was displayed, and no positive rebellion declared, it was not considered by the administration as requiring its interposition. Still it was the object of much solicitude. It was believed to have been the formation of a volcano,

whose lava would be poured over the fairest fields of your country ; and though its devastation might be stayed by the energies of the people, its flames could be extinguished only by torrents of blood.

Unnecessary alarm ! False and exaggerated estimate of the nerves of opposition ! From such timid associates no real danger could ever exist. Their valor was discretion. The prudent courage of Jaffier was their model, rather than the bolder violence of Pierre. The very geese of the capitol would save the nation from a host of them.

It is recorded of an antient fanatic, that he threw himself inso the crater of *Ætna*, in search of immortal fame. His body was consumed ; but the mountain, in derision of his folly, threw back his shoes. The Connecticut crater, into which our leading spirits entered, with similar expectations, has been equally unkind to their fame. Their string of constitution amendments, like the shoe of *Empedocles*, has been received as the evidence of political fanaticism, and treated with derision and contempt.

The last act of this miserable farce, destroyed what little respect the actors might otherwise have claimed. The deputation of Commissioners—wise men of the east—received without the ceremony of official introduction. Advancing as the heralds of peace or war, and retreating with the celerity of fugitives from justice ! This is a commentary on the wisdom and dignity of a party who claim all the talents and all the virtue of the nation. But they advanced under cover of the darkness of war and misfortune. The victory at

New-Orleans opened upon them the effulgence of powerful day. Peace—a glorious and desirable peace, obtained by persevering courage and determined patriotism, consummated the glory of their country; and from its glare they fell back in dismay, like troubled ghosts, wandering abroad in the dark hour of midnight, but retreating to their cells of misery at the moment of returning day.

The insulting accusation of subserviency to the French Emperor, which has been urged against the conduct of the dominant party, in reference to the war, is too absurd for refutation. The reverse was nearer the truth. We commenced the late war with exaggerated ideas of English power, and admiration of her fame. Speaking her language, reading her history and her journals, deriving our laws, our taste, our fashions from her example, we believed in that magnanimity and greatness which she claimed as her national attributes. The storm of war has cleared the intellectual atmosphere of these clouds of prejudice, and opened to our view the dark realities of truth.

We do not deny to England the praise of gallantry and courage. In the various conflicts of the war, her soldiers and her sailors have unquestionably fought well. In a better cause, and against other enemies, that courage would have secured victory. But her vain glory has been shorn of its beams, and the mortification of wounded pride is seen in that prevaricating spirit, which perverted every action of the war. Her commanders have given to our countrymen the unequivocal compliment of never daring to speak the truth of us. Judging

from the notorious falsehood of British official accounts of this war, we form a very unfavorable estimate of her claims to distinction in the result of anterior battles. Has there always been shewn the same disregard to truth? Then, indeed, are her song writers the best architects of her fame. More is due to Collins and Dibdin than to St. Vincent or Nelson.

England boasts of her justice. It was her repeated violation of its principles which brought on the war. Its course has been marked by her habitual disregard of its dictates. Other neutrals have been as little respected as we were. Valparaiso, and Fayal, and Praya, and Cadiz, and the distant shores of Canton, testify against her. Arrogant in power, contemning all public law, pertinaciously pursuing its own views, the English government seems regardless whose rights are violated, whose territory is invaded, what innocent victims might be slain. Justice, indeed!

Earth is sick,
And heaven is weary with the hollow words
Which this proud nation utters, when she speaks
Of truth and justice.

If that iron colossus, who once bestrode the continent of Europe, was an object of alarm, how much more dangerous is that moving and tremendous tyranny, which claims empire over ocean, and would subjugate not a continent, but the world. That monstrous and gigantic power, which knows no law but its own pleasure, and freed from all moral obligation, carries on the most cruel desolation, with the accumulated terrors of pride, licentiousness, and plunder.

England boasts her magnanimity! Was it seen in permitting her savage allies to abuse and torture their defenceless prisoners? Was it seen in those worse than savage practices, of which her own soldiers were guilty at Hampton? Was it seen in the marauding expedition which devoted to the flames monuments of art, science and taste, in the capital of your republic? Or in that incendiary declaration which threatened to "destroy and lay waste such towns and districts on the coast as might be found assailable" by their arms? Was it seen in the allurements which were offered to her soldiery before the attack on New-Orleans? Was it seen in that most awful and appalling tragedy, the massacre at Dartmoor?

This event should never be forgotten. If policy refuses again to unfurl the standard of war, the atrocious murder should be held up to the indignation of mankind, and its tale repeated to your listening children as an antidote to the future poison of British influence.

Instead of the virtues, with which it has pleased her poets and admirers to enrobe her, the experience of the last few years has presented her true character, vain-glorious, haughty, mean, profligate, unjust; uniting the barbarities of savage life to the more refined cruelties of civilized man.

Is it suggested that at the close of the war, the mantle of charity should be thrown over the crimes of the combatants? No advantage can arise from self deception. There are those among us, who delight in the character of England, "monarchy and all;" who hold her forth as an example

for imitation, as the best model of political perfection. Believing this opinion to be the source of innumerable evils; that it has a tendency to sap the affection, which is due to our own constitution, and to the character of our country; and that the virtues, with which it is fashionable to surround her, are mostly illusive; it cannot be wrong to declare the conviction, that the reputation, which England has enjoyed, is the most monstrous imposition ever practised on the intelligence of mankind.

England was contending, it was said, for the liberties of the world. She acquired her object, it was thought, at the treaty of Fontainbleau. But scarcely had the hostile armies quitted Paris, than the people, she was so anxious to befriend, rose in resentment of the conditions imposed on them.

With this last revolution, so far as it respects the internal government of France, we, as Americans, have no concern. But if policy imposes silence upon statesmen, it would be denying our best feelings to disguise the interest, which it excites in us as men. Nor is it certain, that an enlarged mind can be justified in refusing to acknowledge the divine agency in an event, which mere human power was inadequate to have performed.

Napoleon, the author of more good and of more evil than all his imperial cotemporaries, is guarded by some mysterious providence, for purposes as wonderful as his fortune. His original elevation to the throne was only less surprising than

his exile ; and both fade into insignificance before that most stupendous event, which restored to him the sceptre his rival had not strength to wield.

Where is the principle, which gives right to power, if it be not found in the acclamations of a whole people three times repeated ? Who dare say that the representative of the Bourbons, resting on the divine right of kings, can compare the legitimacy of his claims to the French empire, with that wonderful Corsican, who was welcomed by the affections of his people from the rocks of Elba, and borne on their love to the bosom of his capital ! Who was shielded, by their attachment, from the dagger of the assassin, which, though invited by the imperial rewards of the great council of kings, no one, among thirty millions of Frenchmen, was base enough to use !

If Napoleon's return be followed by another desolating war, it must be attributed to the pretended pacificators of Europe. He seems willing to ratify the peace of the world.

If a new war be justified, its advocates must be sought for among that moral and religious people, who place the cause of a worn out race of Kings before the liberties of their countrymen. If such a war excites sympathy in favor of the aggressors, it will be displayed by our benevolent peace party, who find war odious only when declared against England ; and act as if no cause were so unjustifiable as " free trade and sailors rights."

But while War is about to spread its evils over the nations of the old world, you are happily exempted from its alarm. Your toils are over. You

have fought a good fight. Again your commerce spreads her sails to the ocean ; again agriculture and the arts court your encouragement.

Let then this day be devoted to festivity. Let it be remembered as the proudest anniversary in the calendar of joy. It comes with no ordinary claim on your affections, Americans !

With what anxious emotions did you assemble here on the last return of this sacred festival. Doubtful of the destinies of your country ; fearful of the fate which awaited her ; alive to apprehensions, which your best men entertained, that it might be the last anniversary of your existence as one people. It was, indeed, an awful period of doubt and dismay. The world, which had swelled for half a century the whirlwind of war, seemed settled to a calm, that its regathering storm might be poured in desolation upon you. A most powerful enemy, provoked at your presumption, exasperated by your success, suddenly relieved from the pressure of all other contests, and at liberty to roll his thunders round your shores. His veterans, recalled from the great theatre of martial fame, to move in sport over your unpractised soldiery. His thousand ships, liberated from the danger of adjacent war, coming to repeat in your cities the exactions, which their smaller forces had imposed on the villages of your coast. Without allies, without foreign assistance, you were called to contend, single-handed and alone, with that proud and powerful empire, which seemed to anticipate the contest rather as a sport than a labor.

Nor were the clouds which lowered over your

prospect abroad, relieved by any cheering radiance at home. A domestic opposition, hanging like a mill-stone round the neck of the nation, checked, or seemed willing to check, every effort for self preservation. Your citizens were discouraged from becoming soldiers. Your navy was with difficulty recruited. Your finances, the life-blood of the military system, circulated with a cold and feeble action, which threatened approaching atrophy. While faction, like the serpent that lives in darkness, on putridity and corruption, stretched out its ugly neck, and raised its horrid form, and prepared to fatten on the vitals of your country !

Great God ! We thank thee ! Thou hast changed the scene. To thee we owe our deliverance. God of the Fathers, thou hast been the God of the Children.

Where is that Faction ? Broken down—disgraced. Where that Enemy ? Scattered—beaten—degraded—overthrown.

Your nation rises with renovated fame. Its destiny is great. Imperishable be its glory.