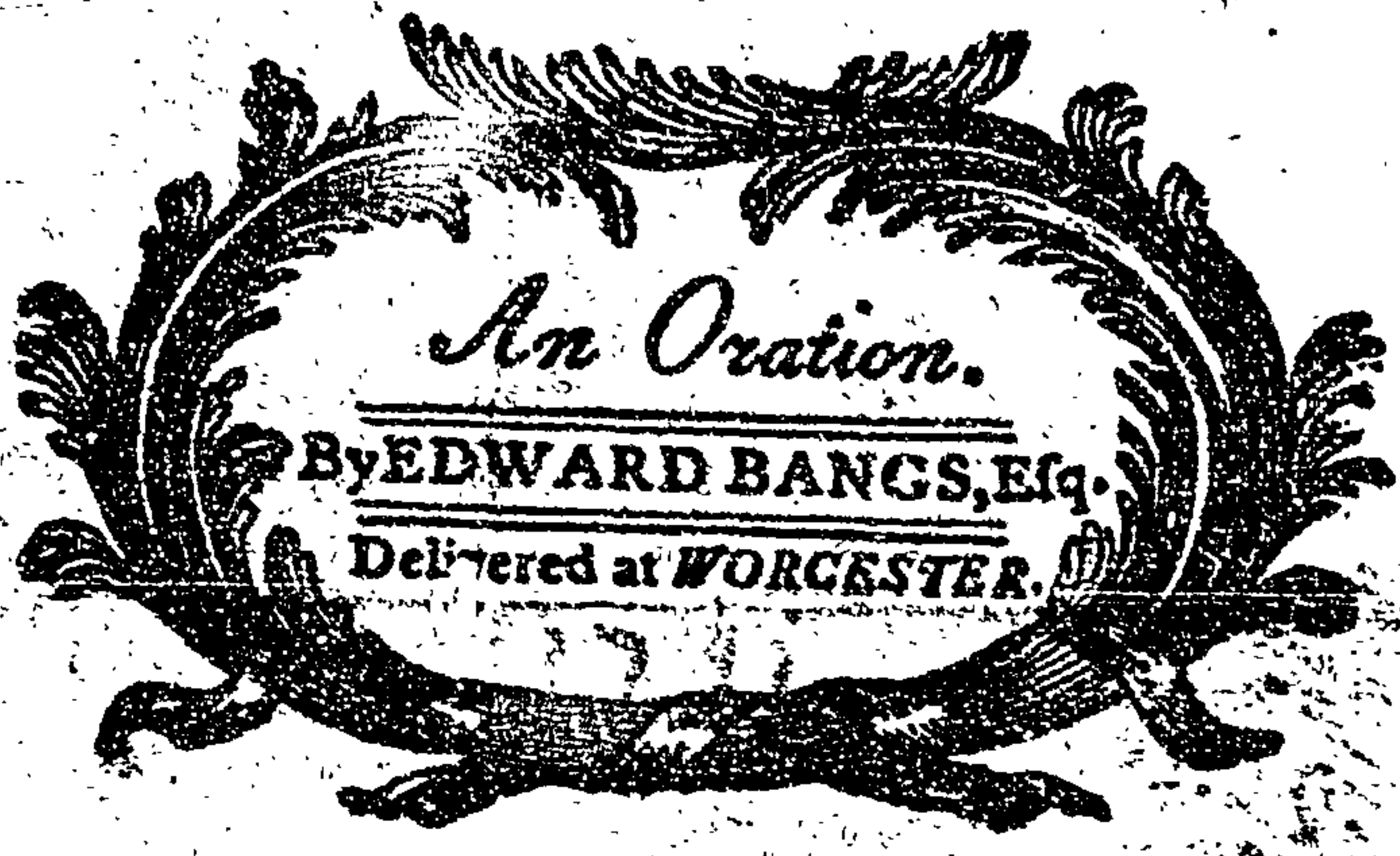


Dr. J. G. Adams & Son
to his friends

Richd. P.



O R A T I O N,

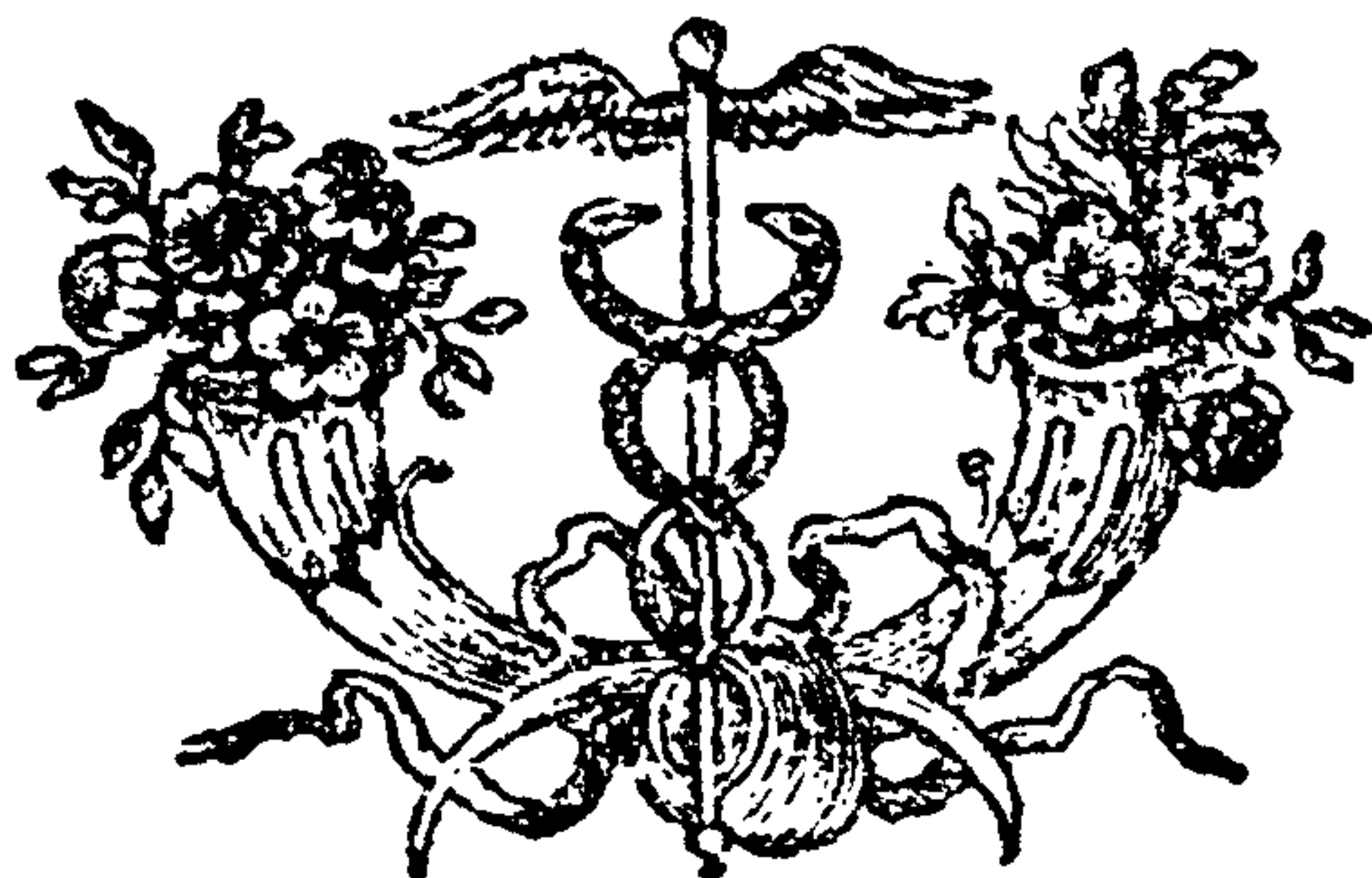
DELIVERED

AT WORCESTER,

ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1791.

BEING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE
I N D E P E N D E N C E
OF THE
U N I T E D S T A T E S.

By EDWARD BANGS, Esq.



PRINTED AT WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS,
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1791

AN O D E FOR THE D A Y.

[Composed by Doctor O. FISKE.]

Performed previous to the Oration.

HAIL blest AMERICA!
Happy thy natal day!
Glorious in peace!
On this auspicious morn
Millions of Sons were born,
Fair Freedom to adorn—
'Till time shall cease!

Ah! with what fierce alarms
Columbia flew to arms!—
'Twas GOD's decree—
Heav'n sent his favour'd Son—
Far famed WASHINGTON—
Soon the vast work was done—
Fate said—BE FREE!

Heroes who bled and died
At Freedom's sacred side,
Godlike shall live—
High on the list of Fame,
Time holds each Patriot's name—
Bright glory is their claim,
Which Heaven shall give.

Far as bright Phœbus' rays,
Liberty spreads her blaze
Throughout our land—
Offering her choicest stores,
Science opes all her doors—
Art all her blessing pours
With lib'ral hand.

Commerce in every gale
Spreads her propitious sail—
Explores each isle.
Wealth her rich favour shows,
In ev'ry breeze that blows—
Peace, where our canvass flows,
Greeted with a smile.

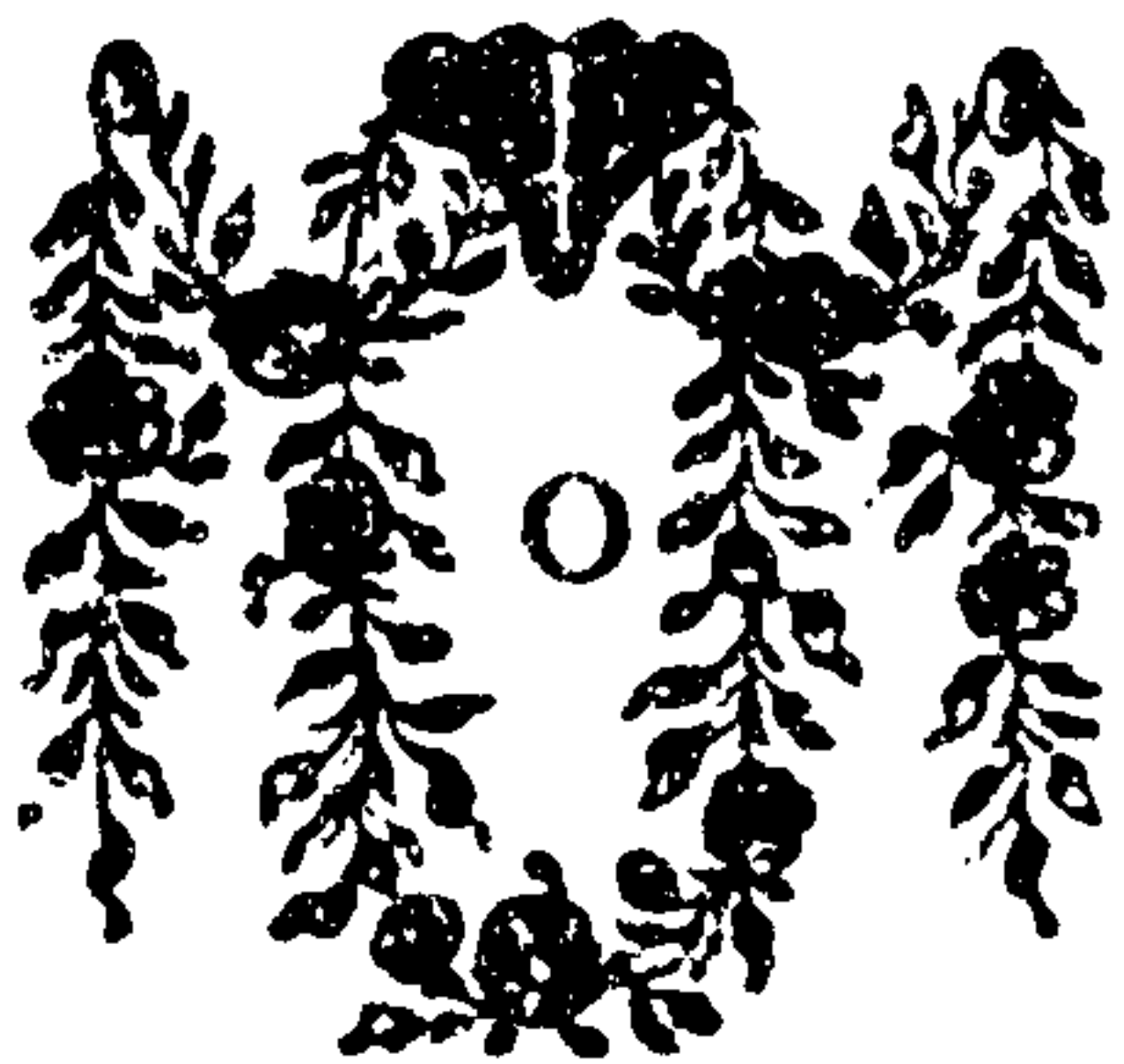
Freedom in rapid course,
Quick as electric force,
Fires Gallia's shore—
Tyranny stands aghast—
Liberty binds him fast,
May the strong fetters last
'Till Time's no more!



A N

O R A T I O N .

Delivered at Worcester, on the Fourth of July, 1791.



IN a day like the present—an anniversary designed to bring to our remembrance those united and virtuous efforts which made us all brethren, and called forth the exertion of every unexperienced power—accounting it a virtue for each one to surmount his natural diffidence:—On such a day, it would betray a want of candour in the speaker, to doubt the candour of his audience.

IT has been the wise practice of most nations, to endeavour to commemorate those great events, which have been fraught with any signal benefit or instruction to mankind. To this end, monuments, columns, pillars, have been erected, with engravings upon stone: But as the mind of man is weak, and liable to lose the strongest impressions; as man himself must soon fall into the earth, and give way to succeeding generations; so all, even the most lasting things on earth, are still liable to decay and change.

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The pillar tumbles ; the column moulders, and is shaken down ; and even the broad based monument is washed away by the current of time, and all the engravings obliterated.

SHALL we then seek, by anniversaries and festal days, to make frequent impressions, and thereby preserve in the mind those images which brass and marble cannot hold ? Alas ! what crowds of thoughtless men, carried along blindfold by the custom, have perverted their festal days to folly and riot—ignorant of the occasion.

SHALL we attempt, by orations and publick ser speeches, to catch that attention which the historian has lost ? Shall we repeat the wonderful things which have been done in our days, and tell them to our children, and to our children's children, that they may hand them down to future generations ?—But the story has frequently been told. We can no longer expect to please the ear with novelty. We must be satisfied, and think we have every success, if we can improve the mind, and warm the heart to virtue.

EXCEPTING only the appearance of the Great Author of our religion, history has no other event on her pages of more importance, than what this day commemorates. It is the birthday of a free, expanding, multiplying nation : It is the birthday of the western world. Let us call in our remembrance, and step back, by recollection, to the period when Congress first published the declaration of our independence. What were the feelings—what the palpitations of our hearts ! Educated in the full belief of British irresistible power, and accustomed to sink ourselves in comparison with them, the warmest patriot, the boldest soldier of America, (they will forgive me) almost trembled at the thought. Daring, said we, daring indeed, is Congress—but not rash, not treacherous.

treacherous. Our confidence in their wisdom and integrity forbade that thought. That confidence was the cement of our union ; that confidence inspired with courage and strength every nerve in the struggling states ; and reciprocated fresh encouragement into the bosoms of those heroick spirits, that first dared the bold declaration, and pledged their sacred honour, greatly to die, or force their way to independence.

WHAT cannot a wise choice of rulers, and a proper confidence in them, after choice, perform !

JEALOUSY has, for a long time, been considered as a political virtue : It has even been dignified with the titles of noble, generous, manly ; the jealousy of a free people for their rights. In my mind, jealousy, of any sort, must be but an uncomfortable feeling at best : And it is said, that in many instances, where it has been unreasonably entertained, it has had a tendency to produce those very evils, of which it was so overmuch afraid. But granting jealousy to have been necessary in other governments, less perfect than ours, still we dignify it highly enough, in styling it a necessary evil.—An evil it most certainly is ; and must unfit the mind for many of the pleasures and enjoyments of life.—Heaven guard us from it, and enable us to live, and enjoy our independence, without it.

SOME nations have been over cautious in the first establishment of the necessary governmental powers ; and by the jealousy which they have discovered in this respect, have finally lost their privileges. Government in its own nature requires, and always must and will have the necessary adequate powers of regulation and defence : If you give them, they will probably be exercised constitutionally ; if you give them not, they must and will be assumed. For

in any dangerous crisis, the most faithful and conscientious magistrate, if too much circumscribed, must from necessity transgress the limits of his authority ; and that necessity obliges you to pardon ; nay, obliges you to approve of the transgression. This becomes a dangerous precedent. The constitution is no longer strictly observed ; but arbitrary power begins. A wise man affords his servant sufficient provisions, implements, and materials, for his service ; the avaricious man sometimes denies them ; whence the servant is obliged to cut and carve for himself, becomes his own judge of what is necessary, and soon learns to despise his master's authority. There is, my friends, you have often read, "There is that withholdeth more than meet, and there is that by giving increaseth riches." The United Provinces of the Netherlands are an example to our present purpose. Just escaped from the jaws of Spanish tyranny, glowing with an intemperate zeal for liberty, and too sparing in the gift of power, they have essentially lost their privileges, possessing now the shadow only, and the form of liberty. We have had pilots that saw the rock on which they split, have steered us clear, and brought us safe to harbour. In this respect we have had the proper confidence, and by it have earned the blessings and the praises of future rising nations throughout our own vast Continent : And Europe too, and all the world, shall taste desirable fruit, from our fair tree of liberty, and learn to plant and cultivate therefrom, till tyranny can find no place to grow.

WHEN we compare our government, in ever so slight a manner, with that of other nations, we shall soon be convinced, that we have more room for *confidence*, and less occasion for *jealousy*, than any other people, ancient or modern. If we take a view of the ancient states of Rome and Greece, so famed for wisdom and for liberty ; (I am sensible I shall offend the admirers of antiquity) but
if

if we take an intimate and comparative view of those nations, we shall find them mere babes in politicks, compared to the present times. Their constitutions were never settled, or known to themselves; the functions of their magistrates were never properly defined; they had no legislative assemblies by representation, capable of collective wisdom and deliberation. Their laws were generally framed by artful men, at the head of affairs, insidiously to increase their own authority; and suddenly proposed to a whole assembled nation, worked up for the purpose, and in agitation like the waves of the tempestuous roaring ocean, not to be deliberated upon—how was that possible in such an assembly—but to be enacted. They were often passed in the violence of passion, *ex post facto*, to punish the perpetration of some recent offence; and never after observed: Or, full as often, to sacrifice to the mistaken fury of the people, some innocent, virtuous, worthy man, their best friend, whose honest advice had given them present displeasure; but whose advice, when it was too late, was found to be good; and the man lamented, honoured, and his name adored, by the very people who, in their rage, had lately deprived him of life. Of what value is liberty like this? What is the advantage, to a considerate, thinking man, to live amidst a confused chaos of free citizens, to be carried about, and hurried around by the eddies of faction, where reason and discretion are never known? Such liberty can only be followed by regret; because it can never fail to be misused. These nations boasted of liberty; but it was only the liberty of fierce spirits, to be forever contending for their liberty. They were constantly surpris'd to see their demagogue, the head of their mob, to whom they looked up, as to the very son and guardian of liberty, after trampling down the former tyranny, become the very worst of tyrants himself. No wonder that this experience should make them jealous; but, Of what avail was jealousy? Still the defects

in their constitution forever prevented the tranquillity of the state, or the enjoyment of the true blessings of personal liberty by the citizen. If we had time to observe on the constitutions of modern states, which have the reputation to be free, we should find their condition not widely different. A question naturally presents itself. Why have not nations heretofore formed for themselves better, and more regular constitutions? It has partly been owing to their want of skill, and partly to their want of opportunity, under favourable circumstances, like those which fell to us. The constitutions of ancient and modern times, What were they, what are they, but the productions of chance? The settlement of contrary contending interests and factions, after their fermentations had subsided? We have been favoured with the rare opportunity—suffer me to quote the preamble to our state constitution—“deliberately and peaceably, without fraud, violence or surprise, of entering into an original, explicit and solemn compact with each other, and of forming a new constitution of civil government for ourselves and posterity.” An opportunity which no nation ever enjoyed, accompanied with the like favourable circumstances:—It was a time when many bright stars of learning shone to illuminate our political hemisphere. I would name some; but others rush upon my mind; and, Who can count the stars of heaven? What tongue can call them all by name. It was a time of general information.—Besides, we had among us no hereditary claims to particular privileges; no proud nobility, or haughty ecclesiastical orders, to compromise with: No different ranks or grades in society; but all stood together, as we now stand, upon the same extended plain of free citizenship. What occasion then have we for jealousy? Why may we not repose a pleasing confidence in the rulers which we ourselves have chosen?

our Military, they are not the livery servants of a court, the tools of tyranny to enslave us. We have none of those standing armies, in times of peace, which have so often proved destructive to the liberties of their own country. And yet, I trust, our country would not be found defenceless, should any power think proper to attack it. It has been the court policy, in governments where standing armies have usually been kept on foot, to cry down, and affect to despise a militia : But Britons have been taught to their cost, others have seen and been convinced, and the names of Bennington and Saratoga will ever call to mind, that an American militia is not to be despised.

THE Freedom of the Press is not among the least of the numerous advantages which we enjoy ; it is another, and a firm ground of confidence in our rulers. This is our great political source of light and intelligence, from whence their beams are darted and diffused, like the rays of the sun, in a moment, into every part of the union : We are made hearers, we are made spectators of all that is said or done by men in power. This must prove a constant spur to activity, a strong incentive to virtuous actions, and at the same time, a powerful check on any who might be disposed to misuse their authority : For we can scarcely conceive of any man so lost to all the feelings of fear or shame, so regardless of the good or bad opinion of his fellow citizens, as not to feel and be wounded by the bold censures, the just reproaches, and the keen shafts of satire, which may be levelled at him, like a storm, from the press. When a man is thus set up as a publick mark, there is nothing, but the precious heavenly shield of innocence and conscientious virtue, that can protect the heart. And if impudence should put on his brazen helmet, and offer to confront the publick, the next election reduces him to his proper station.

I HAVE mentioned a few only of our chief advantages, and those briefly, for time would not allow. But these few circumstances make it evident, that the doctrine of jealousy is not so essential in our government, as it may have been in some others, and that the designs of government are better answered. Secure, that our watchmen are embarked with us in the same ship, and that while they watch for us, they watch for their own lives, for their posterity, as well as ours, we may turn each one to his private occupation with dignity, enjoying the independence of our minds, the freedom of our thoughts and speech, and the fruit of our labours ; only taking care, as the times of election come regularly round, to make a proper choice of our publick servants, and occasionally amusing ourselves, at leisure hours, with overlooking them in all their proceedings, by reading the publick printed papers.

BUT to be entirely exempt from care, is not the lot of humanity. It would be childish to expect it. One thing has been mentioned, of which we must be careful ; that is, to make a wise election of our publick officers. On this depend our prosperity, the wisdom of our laws, the stability of our constitution, and the preservation of our morals. If a man employ unskilful workmen, Can he expect to have his business well performed ? If we choose unskilful legislators, Who can we blame but ourselves, should we have confused, foolish, weak and unconstitutional laws ? If we promote to places of publick power and trust, men of licentious manners and unfair characters, What do we, but give encouragement to vice ? If, on the contrary, we prefer to high stations men only of superiour eminence for virtue, we take the surest method to produce a laudable emulation for virtue among all the people. True merit, my friends, is apt to be diffident of
itself.

itself. It will not push itself forward, or solicit our suffrages ; much less will it endeavour to elbow others out of place, to make room for itself. This conduct is an infallible mark to prove a man unworthy of the office he solicits. It is sometimes argued by those selfconceited men, who, having neither riches nor learning, therefore think themselves the only proper persons for places of publick power and trust, that it would be of dangerous tendency to put our confidence in men of wealth and learning ; because, say they, these men are naturally inclined towards an aristocracy : As if we did not know, that an aristocracy is a government by an hereditary nobility : As if we did not know, that learning is not hereditary ; and that men cannot long continue their estates in their own families, until they can find out some method to prevent the children from squandering what their fathers earned ; and until they can prevent an industrious virtuous poor from rising their superiours. If we cast our eyes around us, we shall be surpris'd to observe, how many men of eminence, of the last age, have left their descendants undistinguished among the common multitude of the people. Again, how many of our present best and brightest characters, are the sons of poor but honest men, and received nothing from their parents but an honest education—the principles of moral rectitude early and strongly impressed on the mind. Persons not accustomed to look at things in the common course of cause and effect, attribute these striking changes to the wheel of fortune. Whatever wheel it may be called, it is seen to revolve oftener in this than any other country ; and one reason for it, among others, may be our law directing the descent of intestate estates. These are not, as in the countries in Europe, transmitted to a single heir, in exclusion of

others as nearly related ; but are divided, as reason and equity would have them, among all the children alike ; hereby often making from one overgrown estate many moderate ones. And with regard to learning, my friends, it is like the water, like the air we breathe, like the light of heaven. All who thirst and pant after it, all who please to turn their eyes toward it, may take portions equal to their several capacities, with which they ought to be satisfied : May I not compare it to the common road, in which any one may travel ; while the expence is borne by the publick. It is seen that I now speak with reference to our town grammar schools—an admirable institution, if rightly improved. It is the gate opened, and the pathway pointed out, that leads to the fair fields of science. Here the poor man's young son may commence his studies ; and if he feel in himself a true relish for knowledge, let him read the life of FRANKLIN, and he will be encouraged to proceed ; let him peruse it often, and he will find a pattern and a guide, whose steps are sure, and worthy to be followed. Besides, there is no country in which an academick education may be obtained with so little expence, as in this ; where the sons of men in very moderate circumstances are often seen to receive all its honours, and all its advantages : And we know from observation, that as necessity is called the mother of invention, so poverty, properly encouraged, is the parent of exertion : And in a country like this, where all the faculties are free, it needs but exertion to climb to the highest eminences.

I MAY further add, that these are not the times to apprehend degeneracy in governments. It is true, that history has hitherto presented us with little else than a constant series of governments, growing more and more corrupted as they became older : And these

these political bodies were aptly enough compared to the human body ; it being thought as impossible for the one to renovate itself, as for the other to renew its youth. But change of circumstances, and new events, are giving us occasion to alter many articles in our political creed. Our good allies, the French, an old nation, for a long time depressed, without being degraded by the arm of arbitrary power, are now, in a manner unexampled since the beginning of the world, framing for themselves a rational constitution, founded on the rights of man. A revolution is brought about by reason, and not by arms. This is owing to the diffusion of knowledge by the Art of Printing. It is impossible for an enlightened nation to be slaves. And in these days, the nations that were in darkness have seen great light ; and to those that sat in the region and shadow of political death, light has sprung up.

O HAPPY United States ! rejoice, and be not unmindful of your gratitude to Heaven on this auspicious day : For on this day ye were freed from participating the perpetual quarrels and wars of Europe ; where men are forever troubled by the folly, the pride, and the avarice of kings.—Removed at a happy distance from the havock and devastations that now threaten them, in bringing about their necessary revolutions, ye may view the scene unconcerned, but for the cause of liberty, the cause of humanity. No longer restrained, as once we were, we may now entertain the whole peaceful circle of the industrious, enriching arts ; and add to the virtuous number by new inventions. Ambitious of no conquest, but over the foil and the seas, our ships may now explore the most distant coasts, and approach the natives with benevolence, and the friendly offers of mutual advantage. Before our husbandmen the wilderness recedes, and fat herds, and smiling fields

fields of corn appear, promising plenty, and inviting to partake the generous repast. These are the times in which a man should wish to live. Verily the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places; and we have a goodly heritage.

