

AN
ORATION,

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ORATION, &c.



AT the request of some of my valued friends, I now, though with diffidence, appear before you, my fellow-citizens. I am sensible that I travel in a field from which the fairest flowers have been culled, and the choicest plants selected; that I follow at a distance a train illustrious for their talents and eloquence. Still will I raise my humble voice to tell that glorious tale, at the recital of which the breast of youth glows with enthusiasm, and the veins of age are warmed with patriotic fire.

On this day, thirty years ago, America, jealous of honour, rich in virtue, glowing with patriotism, guided by heroes, burst asunder the bands which connected her with the mightiest nation on earth, and proclaimed herself free, sovereign and independent. This dignified declaration was in consequence of the attempt which Great-Britain made to establish, by the force of arms, the power she had claimed, of taxing the colonies without their consent. Our attachment to her had been daily increasing; it was

linked with our ambition. We proudly exulted in the reflection, that we were a constituent part of a nation so renowned for arts and arms. The glory acquired by Great-Britain, under the auspices of the illustrious CHATHAM, was still reflecting its dazzling light on the western hemisphere. Together we fought—together we conquered.—Companions in danger—companions in victory—together we walked the path of honour, and the names of Britain and America, entwined together, shone with refulgent glory on the loftiest part of the loftiest pillar in the temple of fame. Our affections, thus riveted to our parent country, nothing but a train of weak, injudicious, oppressive measures, on the part of Great-Britain, could, at this time, have produced the separation. Nine tenths of our citizens would have shrunk from the proposition of independence, even when hostilities commenced; but injury was added to injury, insult to insult, oppression “crowded on oppression, till the electric flame of liberty fired every breast; and, daring the worst, we struck the blow which severed us forever.”

Contemplating the rapidity with which our country has arisen to wealth, power and independence, the reflecting mind will find an easy solution in the temper and views of our ancestors. When we behold the pupil of society abandon the cultivated field, renounce the luxuries of polished life, and expose himself to the fierceness of the savage, and the barrenness of the desert, we cannot enough admire that elevation of sentiment, that pride of principle, which braved death to purchase independence; which sacrificed ease and personal security to freedom of conscience. It was not a needy adventurer, in pursuit of wealth, that formed here those habits of in-

dustry which subdued the wilderness; it was not a criminal flying from justice who planted in this soil the seeds of religion and law, and taught us how to be free. No; this nation was formed by rational and learned men, by men whose principles were too pure for corruption, and too proud for concealment; by conscientious Christians, who refused to conform their understandings to the dogmas of a church.

Among our citizens were found many averse to the contest; the few warlike stores which had been collected, were nearly all seized by the enemy, who were also in possession of many of our sea-ports; we had scarcely an armed vessel; our soldiers were composed of an undisciplined militia, unused to obey, who were ill paid, ill fed, and ill clothed; our exchequer was empty; our Congress were divided in their councils, and the nations of Europe withholding assistance. Such was our situation when the British king heard independence thundered in his ears. But vain had been our struggles, vain had been the assistance of a Louis, had not a WASHINGTON been our commander. In reverting to the scenes of the revolution, we are struck with wonder at the achievement of independence. Nothing but the wisdom, patriotism and popularity of the commander in chief, could have safely carried us through the contest; unmoved by censure, unterrified by disaster, hoping for the best, guarding against the worst, when it seemed scarcely possible for him to escape from an exulting, triumphant enemy; it was then for him to repair the errors of temerity by prudence, those of caution by intrepidity, and to snatch victory even from the very arms of defeat. His genius conquered, "and America, rising in

triumph, took her seat in the forum of nations."— But the conquest of his enemies was not the only conquest which WASHINGTON achieved; "he reached the summit of human effort," and conquered himself; he retired from the chief command, and mingled again in the mass of citizens.

But peace did not diffuse the blessings which we expected. The separate and unconnected governments of the different states, with no common tie of union, seemed to threaten the dissolution of all; private confidence and public credit were destroyed; business ceased; the industrious mechanic was unable to furnish his family with the necessaries of life; the cattle of the farmer were forced from his fields to discharge his taxes, and poverty and discontent were universally prevalent. Insurrection reared her hydra head, and the "mishapen legions of rebellion" attacked the very citadels of justice. Then was felt the necessity of consolidating our divided strength into one mass, and forming a bond of union which should extend the blessings of liberty and the security of property equally to all. Illustrious citizens, with WASHINGTON at their head, once more stepped from the walks of private life, and formed the federal compact; a constitution conceived by patriotism, dictated by wisdom, and ~~formed~~ *formed* on the rights of the people. Whenever the principles employed in the structure of this constitution are abandoned; the moment the wild spirit of *innovation* plunges into the ocean of experiment, that moment we are lost, our freedom is sacrificed to the caprice of the multitude, and the visionary projects of vain philosophy.

The blessings of the federal government were instantaneous. The hero who conducted us safe

through the perils of war, again assumed the chief authority of the country; again the fields smiled with cultivation; labour arose from the bed of indolence, walked over our plains, and scattered riches about him. The busy hum of industry pervaded our cities; the banks of our rivers were cheared with the noise of the axe and the hammer; credit, the life of business, revived; that inert mass of property, which had concealed itself from the ravages of paper money and tender laws, was again brought into circulation; commerce once more unfurled her sails, wealth was poured into the bosom of our country from the arid realms of Africa, and from the frozen shores of Kamschatka. Wherever the genius of federalism appeared, she seemed endowed with the powers of the heavenly Astræa, the flowers sprang up under her feet, "eternal sunshine settled on her head;" plenty poured her treasures around—in her hand she held a magical talisman; wherever it was displayed, it enlightened; whatever it touched, it enriched.

Such was our happy situation, when the French revolutionary storm burst over us: The fountains of vice and misery were opened, and the poisonous streams flowed in different channels through the whole world. The feelings which first pervaded America, on this occasion, were honourable to our character: We considered that revolution as the manly struggle of a nation determined to be free, and we rejoiced in the prospect of their success. But with the discerning part of our citizens the delusion soon vanished; soon they beheld the blood-stained monster, which the French called *liberty*, with fear and abhorrence. It was then, indeed, a most terrific time; thousands of years may pass

away ere such another scene is witnessed. A religion, to which the people were attached unto bigotry, was in one year entirely eradicated from their minds; a good and virtuous king, a numerous and gallant nobility, were in six short months expatriated and destroyed;—the proud fabric of monarchy, which had stood for such a length of ages, was in one day levelled with the earth.

Again was America indebted for her safety to the virtuous WASHINGTON. He saved us from a war with Great-Britain, and dared to receive justice from her hands; he rescued us from the fatal friendship of France, and from all the horrors which French influence, French principles, and French power, must have produced. It was then that party rancour aimed her envenomed shafts at the character of this illustrious man: Think well of it; WASHINGTON was calumniated!—And who were his calumniators?* But having fulfilled his course with honour to himself and glory to his country, with unexampled magnanimity and moderation he once more sought the shades of private life. ADAMS followed in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor: The events of the year 1798 will form a glorious epoch in the history of our country. It was then, when France was stalking triumphantly over the blood-stained fields of Europe, after she had prostrated the governments of all the nations which surrounded her, that she turned her grasping hands upon the commerce of America, spurned our propositions of peace, and

* Any one, by looking over the files of the Aurora, Chronicle, &c. in 1795 and 1796, will easily discover to what party the calumniators of Washington belonged; and a pamphlet, entitled "*The Prospect before us,*" will furnish everlasting proof of the baseness and ingratitude of certain GREAT MEN, to whose inspection it was submitted before publication.

insulted our Ambassadors, that the national spirit was roused, we prepared for war, and our manly efforts prevented the approach of the Gallic freebooters.

At this period, how did the furious partizans of democracy clamour! how did their presses groan with abuse! their infatuation seemed like the delirium of a raging fever, when our best friends are spurned from our bed-sides, and our worst enemies admitted.

The antifederalists placed before us a fairy picture, exhibiting nothing but images of happiness and joy.—Give us, said they, the direction of affairs, and a political millennium shall commence; taxes shall be lessened, and salaries diminished; the constitution shall be administered in its pristine purity; the neglected patriots of the revolution shall be rewarded for their labours; prejudice will yield to reason; philosophy will resume the seat occupied by priestcraft; oppression will fly before the benignant light of mild philanthropy; œconomy will succeed to profusion, and foreign nations shall be taught to respect our rights.

Have these tales been realized? The taxes have not been diminished. The additional duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. is a greater burthen than the internal taxes. The salaries in no instance have been lessened, but in many augmented. The attack upon the Judiciary department, plainly discovers in what light the constitution is viewed. And has the patriot been rewarded? The hoary veteran, who has often braved the torrid sun of Carolina, and whose blood has crimsoned the snows of Canada, who has wasted the bloom of his years in fighting the battles of his country, has been dismissed from

office, and in helpless old age deprived of the means of support.

Can the purchase of Louisiana for fifteen millions of dollars, and the payment of two millions more in tribute,* be adduced as evidences of œconomy? Our commerce is plundered and insulted by the ships of Great-Britain, France and Spain, and even our territories violated by the latter. What have been our exertions to repel invaders, to protect our commerce, the only source of our revenue; and our honour, the only source of respectability? The energy of government seems to have been exhausted in crushing federalism. While Spain was breaking the windows, Great-Britain bursting open the doors, and France setting fire to the building, all their attention was occupied in chastising the unresisting inhabitant within. Can the American people be much longer deluded? can they believe that the expenditure of fifteen millions of dollars in the purchase of wild land is œconomy; that the payment of two millions more in tribute is policy; that the revenging the murder of a citizen by a proclamation is vigour; that the dismissal of the soldier of the revolution from office, and the promotion of foreigners and tories, is rewarding the patriots of 76?

Why are we reduced to this ignominious situation? Do we want resources? No; every acre of our continent is fertile in the means of defence.— Do our citizens want valour? The trembling *Bashaw of Tripoli*, who fled in despair, on that terrific night when under the very walls of his palace the dread explosion was heard; when honour, chivalric,

* See note at the end.

honour, consigned a SOMERS and his gallant crew to certain death—will answer no!

INGRATITUDE, that bane of republics, has been our curse. Where do we see the patriots who braved the storm of the revolution? They are nearly all to be found in the walks of private life. We, the only remaining republic on earth, surely ought to beware of ingratitude, by witnessing its effects in other republics; in the history of them, we may read our own. The Athenians poisoned their best and wisest citizen: He who saved not only them, but all Greece, died in a prison: *Camillus* lived in exile in the time of his country's prosperity; but when the furious Gaul desolated his city, when this proud mistress of the world tottered on the brink of destruction, the haughty Romans once more implored the aid of the banished *Camillus*; the patriot forgave his injuries, forgot his resentments, and saved his country. But miracles are not always wrought; the *Phœnix* is seen but once in five centuries. What but the operation of the noble principle of national gratitude, has exalted Great-Britain to her present height of naval grandeur? Glory and affluence surround the hero; love and admiration await him; a generous nation rewards him, and a grateful king emblazons his name in the temple of honour: This is the way to stimulate the powers of man to action; he then will brave danger and death to purchase the meed of his country's approbation. Let not a sword, or a medal, be the only reward bestowed upon the hero, who led the Christian band through the burning deserts of Africa, to liberate his enslaved countrymen.—Let not dismissal be his reward, who carried terror over the ocean, before whom the trem-

—
 bling horde of Tripolitan pirates fled in dismay.— Cherish the heroes who have thus exposed themselves to avenge your wrongs.—Keep your faith good with all nations:—If they will plunder your commerce, invade your territories, and murder your citizens, use the means of defence which you have in your power.—Trust not to a navy of *Gun-Boats*.—Fortify your harbours.—Yield not one tithe of your rights to the British lion, or French tyger; but, above all, crouch not to the Spanish jackall.—Recollect that we can maintain a station, as independent as any nation on earth; from locality, free from all fear of immediate invasion; possessing a country vast in extent, abounding in all the articles which are necessary for the support of Europe and its colonies, inhabited by an enterprising and brave people, we might by a few vigorous efforts place ourselves on an eminence, where weakness would court our assistance, and power our neutrality; and, rising in the majesty of our strength, we might present a terrific front to an intimidated world: We might see a vast consolidated republic stretching from the frozen regions of Labrador, to the stormy mountains of Terra Del Fuego, embracing in its extent the whole continent of America; the wealth of the east would cultivate the wilderness of the west;—the rose of Damascus would bloom on the banks of the Missouri:—The same sun which warms the plains of Hindostan, would glitter on the fanes of cities extended along the shores of the River of the West:—Our Eagle would wave in triumph over those streams, which from the beginning of time have rolled their waters in majestic silence, through gloomy forests and trackless deserts, to the southern

ocean.—Here would be the last asylum of liberty and the arts—and should France accomplish her designs beyond the Atlantic, we might place limits to her ambition—we might emit a light which should illuminate desolated Europe.

When the objects of envy are removed, and passion does not interfere with judgment and sensibility, then Americans have done honour to the human character; their impulses have been humane and honest.—When WASHINGTON descended to the silent tomb, party animosity was buried with him; what heart did not feel, what eye did not weep, for our benefactor and preserver?—and when the unfortunate and mistaken HAMILTON was stretched on the bed of death; when that eye which once beamed with celestial brightness was dim—that tongue which once rallied every passion to the standard of virtue was mute—that heart which once glowed with the warmest philanthropy had almost ceased to beat, then did malice fly from the bosoms of all, to make room for grief:—And when an infuriated party, intoxicated with the first draughts of power, attempted to deprive the mild, the amiable STRONG, the man of the people's choice, of the office to which the people had elected him, and to drag their favourite candidate over the ramparts of the constitution into the chair of government—their murmurs, though not loud, were deep; they pierced to the soul; the madness of party was checked, the constitution was saved.—Then stifle not the impulses of your better feelings—let not the noxious weeds of envy choak every noble principle in the germ—wait not for the hour of death, when homage cannot soothe, or honours elevate, to reward your benefactors. Endeavour to strengthen

the bonds of your union:—In your choice of public officers, look “to the conduct of men, and not to their professions:”—Let not the siren sound of REPUBLICAN delude you; let not the magic of a word be the “guide of your faith, and the rule of your conduct.” Let us endeavour to secure the election of such men, and such men only, to public office, as who, either by their tongues, their pens or their swords—by education, by precept, by example, by zeal, or by the force of well directed opulence, are best calculated to promote our welfare.—We want none who will tamely bow the neck to the yoke of foreign oppression, and exhaust our wealth to support the luxury of the pampered minions of power.—We want no needy office-seeker—no disappointed demagogue—no fanatical partizan—neither do we want a time-serving, lukewarm seeker after popularity:—we want none of those pretended candid, moderate friends, who will tell us it is best to swim down the popular current—and who will frequently exclaim, “both parties are wrong”—these are the men,

“ Who find, with keen discriminating sight,
 “ BLACK’S not so black---nor WHITE so very white.
 “ Give me th’ avow’d, the erect, the manly foe;
 “ Bold I can meet---perhaps avert his blow:
 “ But of all plagues, good heav’n, thy wrath can send,
 “ Save, save, oh! save me from the *candid Friend*.”

Such men will never have the intrepidity to be warm friends, or generous foes; their efforts will be neutralized, and rendered of no avail:

“ I love the bold uncompromising mind,
 “ Whose principles are fix’d, whose views defin’d.”

We want a band who will meet our adversaries on the ground “face to face; who will return them blow for blow, fact for theory, solid reason for

superficial gloss, and contempt for ridicule.”—We have such men—men who have been tried, and who have come like gold from the fire—men who, by their genius and eloquence, can confound the wicked, and convince the deluded.—It is indeed a critical time.—The cord which connects our States is just ready to sever;—our fate hangs by a thread.—If we are careless now, all is lost—we are standing on the brink of a precipice, and it depends on *ourselves* whether we are hurled headlong down the steep.—Let us make every exertion, by vindicating our national honour—by protecting our commerce—by recruiting our finances—by rewarding our benefactors—by electing men to office who have our real interest at heart, to save ourselves and our country; and if all our efforts avail naught, we can exclaim, in the language of the great patriot of Rome,

“Heav’n and earth can witness,
“If Rome must fall, that we are innocent.”

Such, my fellow-citizens, are my opinions. I have expressed them to you with openness and sincerity. I am aware many will say that I have gone too far—that my sentiments are the wanderings of a youthful, heated imagination; but this is not the time for moderation.—These sentiments are my own; they spring from my heart—they are not founded on passion or prejudice—but they are the result of calm reflection, and I trust not an entire inattention to the occurrences of the age. I glory in the avowal of them.—I disdain concealment; “I wish they may be as public as the sun;” and had I the power, I would inscribe them with *letters of fire on a pillar of adamant.*

N O T E.

As many have stoutly denied that the 2,000,000 of dollars were paid as tribute, I beg them to turn their eyes to a speech delivered by the Hon. *John Randolph*, in the House of Representatives, April 7, 1806. In the course of that speech Mr. *Randolph* made the following assertions, which I quote in his own words. "I wish the President and heads of department had seats on the floor of Congress, that I might ask them a few questions, and that they might defend themselves in the face of the world, rather than rely on the miserable defenders of their conduct in the House. I would ask Mr. *Madison*, if he did not tell me, that France would not let Spain treat with us; that France wanted money, and that if we gave it, probably we might avoid a French and Spanish war. His answer, I will vouch for it, would be "yes." I would ask Mr. *Gallatin*, if, before the session of Congress, he was applied to by Executive authority for money to negotiate with France or Spain, and that he refused; I am certain his answer would be "yes." To this testimony, that of the Hon. *Thomas Spaulding*, a republican member from the republican State of Georgia, can be added---in a letter from him to a Mr. *Wilkes*, he has made assertions to the same effect---this letter has been published. To these evidences others equally important can likewise be added. Twenty-six members of the party styled republican voted against the appropriation of this money; would these gentlemen have receded from their party on this important question, unless they supposed their conduct to have been erroneous? All parties agree that the money was voted, was sent, and has been received in France; if it was raised for the purchase of the Floridas, why was it sent to France? We have no kind of evidence that these provinces were ever ceded by Spain to France; but, on the contrary, circumstances amounting to proof that no such cession was ever made: They are now in the possession of Spain, governed by Spanish laws, and those laws are executed by Spanish officers. France can therefore give us no legal title to them.

F I N I S.