

AN *Samuel Little*  
**ORATION,**  
PRONOUNCED  
*AT MIDDLEBOROUGH, (MASS.)*  
AT A MEETING  
OF THE  
**FEDERAL REPUBLICANS,**  
OF THE  
*COUNTY OF PLYMOUTH,*  
ON THE  
**ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,**  
*JULY 4, 1808.*

BY *William Baylies.*



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FROM THE PRESS OF



1808.

# ORATION.

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I RISE to address you, my respected Fellow-Citizens, in obedience to an injunction, which I have felt it my duty to obey. I am sensible, fully sensible, that my literary attainments have but ill qualified me to perform the task, which I have undertaken to execute. But an honor, so distinguishing, conferred in a manner highly flattering to my feelings, I had not the resolution to decline. I chose rather, by accepting the invitation, with which I was honored, to put at hazard the little reputation I might possess, than, by resisting it, to incur the imputation of not placing a just estimate on your favor, and of a fastidious indifference to that event, on which I was solicited to address you.

With motives, I trust, the most pure and honorable, we are, at this time, assembled to claim our part among millions throughout this far-spread empire, in celebrating the return of that day, which gave Independence to our nation. The promulgation of that immortal edict, which proclaimed our sovereignty, and announced our separation from Great-Britain, forms a splendid era in the annals of our history. An act so sublime in itself, and so highly important in its consequences; which secured to us our liberties, and the enjoyment of those rights,

to which we were entitled “by nature, and the British constitution,” will ever be cherished in our remembrance, whilst we are free, and have the virtue to prize our freedom. The American Revolution was not an unprincipled opposition to a constitutional exercise of power, by a government, whose legal subjects we were, and professed ourselves to be; but a laudable resistance to claims, which had we acknowledged, we should have acknowledged ourselves to be slaves—and tyrannical encroachments, to which had we submitted, we should have deserved to have been. It was a noble contest for principles—it was a glorious stand for our birth-rights, which the rude hand of arbitrary power, with unfeeling insolence, had violated. Those brilliant achievements of our heroes and patriots, which have illustrated the history of the American Revolution, with imperishable glory, have, generally on this anniversary, constituted the subjects of address; but they are so familiar to the recollection, and have been so frequently, and so eloquently traced, as to render unnecessary, in my opinion, any apology for departing, in some measure, from what may be deemed the appropriate themes, and from what may be denominated the propriety of the occasion. Every subject, the investigation of which may have a tendency to render us, either wiser, or better citizens, cannot be considered as wholly foreign from the object of this commemoration. By

impressing on our minds those principles, which give life and vigour to our national compact, and thence deriving our duty to support them, we enlarge, as it were, our attachment to our government—extend the means of its defence, and multiply its securities. What are the duties which we owe to our country, must therefore be an useful and interesting enquiry—There have of late been such repeated appeals to the pride of our natures, by an exhibition of the Rights of *Man*—that it may not be unprofitable to devote a small portion of time to a consideration of his *Duties*.

That all government is an evil, the necessity of which will be removed, when man shall attain to that state of pure intelligence, to which the perfectability of his nature will, in a short time, advance him, is a position, which many writers of great “dexterity of sophistry,” and splendid popularity, have, in several celebrated productions, made the basis of their reasoning, and the foundation of their visionary theories. But if we take experience, observation, and the collected testimony of ages for our guides, we shall be impelled to the conclusion, that man is a being, so imperfect in his nature, so limited in his understanding, that he will always require the controul of government—that he will always possess passions, which ought to be subjected to restraint—that he will always practise

vices, which ought to be subjected to punishment. Society is essential to our happiness—Society cannot exist without the protection of government—Government therefore is so far from being an evil, that it may, in the true and legitimate sense of the word, be denominated a blessing—a blessing which every good man will consider it his duty to preserve, by contributing his services to the support of that system, under which he may chance to be placed. To decide, on abstract principles, which is the best form of government, is impossible—Every government is good, which is adapted to the manners, genius, and information of the people. To prescribe one form for every nation, is no less absurd, than the application of the same medicine to diseases, differing in their natures. A republican government is not best for every people—though that people are unquestionably the most happy, whose government is republican, and who are capable of supporting it.

The government, under which we have the happiness to live, may correctly—without vanity, enthusiasm, or affectation, be denominated, in theory, a free Government—Its origin was legitimate---It was neither imposed by force, nor by conquest---but was deliberately formed, and voluntarily established, by the people themselves. A government thus constituted, it is the duty of every one, who shares its protec-

tion, to support ; and if we consider the blessings, which have resulted to us from its establishment, our sense of the obligation we are under to support it, must be increased. The support of our government, will not then be considered a minor duty---of doubtful obligation, which may be discharged by a frigid neutrality ; but a duty of binding force and primary importance. Our attachment to our government will not then be a feeble tie, to be broken by every breeze ; it will not then be a dormant affection, to be exhibited, as convenience shall afford opportunity. No ! it will be an active, ardent, impelling principle ; invigorated by difficulties, and strengthened by opposition. The patriot, and he only is entitled to that honorable character, " whose conduct is regulated but by one motive---the good of his country," will with an ardor, which cannot be abated---with a constancy which cannot be wearied, contribute his exertions to the support of this system---Believing it, in the impassioned language of the eloquent MORRIS, " to be the bond of our union ---that on it depend our harmony and our peace, that without it, we should soon be plunged in all the horrors of civil war---that this country would be deluged with the blood of its inhabitants, and a brother's arm be raised against the bosom of a brother," he will cling to it, as the rock of our salvation---he will " grapple it with a hold of death."

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It is not only our duty to support our government, but its administration---Subjection to the powers that be, is the dictate of reason, and the injunction of revelation. In vain would be the most excellent system of government, which the wisdom of man ever devised, if those appointed to carry it into execution, and dispense its blessings, might, with impunity, in the performance of the duties of their offices, be arrested by the daring hand of opposition, or deprived of the attachment of the people, by the shameless insinuations of slander. To those, ~~we~~ ~~entrusted~~ entrusted with the high dignity, and important trust of legislating for the nation, or presiding in its councils, a liberal confidence is due. It is our interest that our nation should be possessed of a character to command respect---every high minded man feels for the honor of his country, and is proud of its glory. The character of a nation depends essentially on that of its administration---if *that* is impotent, the nation will stand low, in the estimation of the world. Without the confidence of the people, every administration must be feeble. By supporting the administration, we elevate, as it were, the national character. If power has passed into the hands of those, to whose elevation we were opposed, still we are not released from the obligation of obedience---Obedience in that case is no more than a "compliance with a law which we ourselves have enacted." To a con-

stitutional expression of the will of the people, we should ever yield a prompt and willing obedience. It is not intended by these observations, to inculcate the slavish, disgraceful doctrine of *passive obedience and non-resistance*.---- Base and degenerate must that man be, who would invite the encroachments of *tyranny* by servile adulation, or justify its impositions by abject submission. Liberty is dear to the heart of a freeman, and he, who would renounce it, but with his life, deserves not the name.

“ What constitutes a State ?

“ —Men, high minded men,—

“ Men, who their duties know ;

“ But know their rights, and, knowing, dare maintain.

“ Prevent the long aimed blow,

“ And crush the tyrant, while they rend the chain.”

Our government is founded on the rights of the people. Its object is their preservation. Blind submission or servile obedience is not among its principles---for the standard of right and wrong of political conduct, we do not appeal to the actions of our rulers---We have a surer, a more determinate test, to which there is a satisfactory appeal. We have established principles---We have a Constitution. According to the terms of this compact, we have a right to be governed. We have a right to all the advantages, that will result from a just and impartial administration of it. Should therefore, in an evil hour, the administration of our government pass into



base or incapable hands---into the hands of those, who, forgetting the duties of their high station, and unmindful of its dignity, should debase themselves into a faction, animated with passions, the most hostile to the best interests of their country, and to the very existence of that charter, under which they had been called to act, and from which they derived their authority, the obligation of obedience would then cease, and opposition become a duty. The support of the government, the first of political duties, would of necessity involve in it an opposition to the administration.

By opposition, I mean not a resistance by force. Though undoubtedly a long train of illegal, oppressive and unconstitutional acts would justify a resumption of power by the people, and the removal by force of an administration unworthy of their confidence---Yet a prudent people will suffer, as long as suffering is consistent with the preservation of their liberties.

Few of the errors or faults of an administration will justify "a resort to anarchy."

To ascertain the precise point, at which obedience ought to cease, and resistance begin, is impossible---and were it possible, would be attended with dangerous consequences---It would involve the investigation of those principles, which ought not lightly to be submitted to dis-

cussion---principles, which may be compared to “those pillars, the depth of whose foundation cannot be explored, without impairing their strength.” When a case that will justify resistance occurs, it will bring with it its own indications---“The necessity will be apparent---a necessity paramount to deliberation---that admits no discussion, and demands no evidence.”

But if we are true to ourselves---if we possess that virtue, which is the vital principle of republicks---the right of *suffrage* will ever afford an easy, constitutional, and adequate corrective of all the errors or abuses of a weak or wicked administration. But it is a truth worthy of being written in Letters of Gold, though ignorance has misunderstood it, and malice perverted it---that we are sometimes our own worst enemies.

In an Elective Government, like ours, to select and depute those, by whom the powers of sovereignty are to be exercised, is an important trust—a trust which it is our duty to discharge with the most sacred regard to the interests of our country. The freest government on earth may degenerate into tyranny, under a corrupt or wicked administration, and all those provisions, which wisdom has devised for the security of person and property, be rendered nugatory.—A free constitution is of but little worth, if those appointed to administer it are too ignorant to un-

derstand its principles, or too wicked to regard them. In exercising therefore the right of suffrage, we ought to act under the most solemn impressions of our obligation to exercise that right, according to the dictates of reason, and the eternal principles of justice.—We cannot, it is true, be arraigned and punished by any earthly tribunal, for an abuse of this power—but the consequences we shall experience, in the misery and degradation of our country—and we shall be accountable to our God.

There are, however, in every society, restless and perturbed spirits, of more talents than integrity, and of more ambition than either, who are ever impatient to elevate themselves to place and power, “from that state of insignificance, for which God and Nature designed them”—Unable to effect their purpose, by direct and honorable means, by proving their title to the confidence of the people, by exhibiting a disposition and ability to serve them, they resort to the base and contemptible arts of flattering their passions, to impose on their understandings, and of exciting their jealousies, to make them the victims of their prejudices.

By artful misrepresentations, the people are induced to withdraw their confidence from men, who, from their talents and integrity, have superior claims to it, and to entrust the powers of

government and the guardianship of their Rights to the hands of those, whose pretensions are founded on zeal without knowledge, or abilities without moral principle.

Does not the history of our country afford evidence of this ? Has not this sordid game been played among us again and again, with almost uniform success ? Have not our best men, men of the brightest talents and purest virtues, been thrust from office, or condemned to obscurity to make way for the hypocrites of patriotism ?

Yes, the asserters and defenders of our Rights, in those times, which emphatically tried mens souls...the authors of our Independence... and the founders of that fair fabric, the National Government, to which, under Heaven, we owe our prosperity, have been assailed by every charge, that malice could invent, or falshood utter. “ Their names are hung up in the tables of proscription, and art joined to malice endeavours to make their best actions pass for crimes and to stain their characters”---What though they staked their fortunes on the issue of that contest, which terminated, in the acknowledgement of our Independence. What though they jeoparded their lives in the battles of the revolution---What though the uniform tenor of their conduct has borne evidence as strong as “ proofs of holy writ,” of their love of rational liberty, and

the legitimate rights of man. Malice has not been diverted from her purpose...party spirit has not ceased its persecution. Low minded cunning still repeats the tale, while ignorant credulity swallows it, with all the avidity, that Eve did the glozing doctrines of the Devil in the Garden of Paradise...that these are great men..enemies to the common people...friends to monarchy.... and to comprise the black catalogue of their crimes and their guilt in one comprehensive epithet—*Old Tories.*

Ye base revilers of virtue and exalted worth !  
Ye unprincipled columniators ! Was the venerable ADAMS a Tory.. when, in the all important debate of that memorable day, which was to result in chains or empire—elevating his mind to the magnitude of the occasion...he cast “ his oath of allegiance in the face of his sovereign,” and calling to his aid the genius of eloquence, stood forth the bold, decided advocate of Independence ?

Was the noble minded, the generous hearted, but ill-fated HAMILTON, a Tory, when at the head of a gallant body of Americans, he encountered the veteran hosts of Britain, and carried death and defeat into the trenches at Yorktown ?

Was the Saviour of his Country, the beatified WASHINGTON, “ the first in our dangers... the wisest in our days of peace”...was he a Tory,

when, relinquishing the ease of affluence and the pleasures of retirement...putting at hazard his life and his reputation, he devoted himself to the service of his country, “and plunged on a purpose big with death?” Was he a Tory, at the retreat from New-York, a day that covered the arms of America with defeat and disgrace, when pursued and goaded by a triumphant enemy---shamefully deserted by his own men---disdaining to fly, he desperately bared his bosom to the assailing foe, and invoked the stroke of death to terminate the anguish of his soul?--- Was he a Tory, at the close of the war, when surrounded by a brave but discontented army, devoted to his purposes---the liberties of his country, at his disposal---he nobly threw away ambition, and rising above human nature, with submissive humility, resigned into the hands of his country that sword, which had been drawn in her defence?

Need “I pause for a reply?” No! your own indignant feelings have given the lie to these shameless, malignant, unfounded slanders, to utter which, requires a contempt of truth, “an audacity of falshood” that would almost deny merit even to the sufferings of our Saviour.

To illustrate and enforce the principles here advanced, by an application to our own situation, as it may involve in it animadversions

upon the conduct of our rulers, whose pre-eminent merits, and illustrious services are, with their partizans, the subject of unqualified eulogy, will by some, undoubtedly, be condemned as daringly presumptuous---no less presumptuous than it was in *Diomede* to assail with sacrilegious arm the divinity of Heaven. But liberty of speech, which, to borrow the language of an eminent civilian, consists in speaking truth from good motives, and for justifiable ends, though it reflect on magistrates or individuals, is secured to every citizen, in that great charter of our rights, the Constitution, to which each party still appeals as the rule of action. Having for our justification, this high authority, let us, with decent boldness, direct our attention to those, in whose hands are the destinies of our nation. Let us with impartiality and truth, explore the grounds upon which rest their claims, so proudly urged to our confidence and support.

The arduous task of putting into operation a new and untried system of government, under the embarrassments created by an opposition hostile to its principles, had been successfully accomplished. We possessed a productive and increasing revenue, more than adequate to the ordinary exigencies of the country---a vast debt, the price of our Independence, had been liquidated, and provision made by law for its gradual extinction.

Our Commerce encouraged and protected, had been extended to every part of the world.--- A navy that would have been easily improved into a respectable maritime force, had been created. “The Indian tribes on our frontiers had been repressed and quieted.” By an amicable adjustment of differences, peace had been established with the powers of Europe ; and our nation, experiencing the full effect and operation of the principles of our excellent constitution, with the preservation of her honor—the vindication of her rights—the establishment of her credit--the maintenance of her dignity—and the increase of her security was exalted to a height of prosperity, unparalleled in history. In this our high and “palmy state,”---in this our “full tide of successful experiment,” were the present administration invested with the powers of government.

“ An Eagle towering in his pride of flight,  
 “ Was, by a mousing Owl hawk'd at, and kill'd.”

Would to God, that in the remembrance of what we *have been*, we could forget what we *are*.---- But I descend from this proud eminence----I turn from these scenes of our nation's happiness and glory, which I cannot revisit even in imagination, but with melancholy regret, for they have passed away like a dream---they have vanished like fairy prospects, on the touch of the talisman of the magician----I turn from them to



a "barren waste, in which no salutary plant takes root, no verdure quickens." Having been placed in office, under circumstances so highly favourable and propitious, what account can our administration now give of their stewardship?--- Have they improved these advantages to the interest of their country, turned their boasted popularity to its permanent benefit? Can they surrender the fair estate, committed to their care and management, "unwasted and unimpaired by their use of it?" Have their promises been fulfilled? Have our burdens been lessened? Has our revenue been more wisely or providently managed? Has our commerce been more encouraged, or better protected? Has greater provision been made for the defence of our country? Have we become more formidable? Has the peace, which we enjoyed with foreign nations, been established on a more solid basis? Have we become more respectable abroad? Have the means of domestic happiness been increased? Have the principles of the constitution, or the rights of the citizens been more sacredly regarded? By the proscription of one half of the community, as an odious sect---to be excluded from office, for the heresy of their political sentiments, a determination was early announced by the administration, that government should be conducted on party principles---and an attack was made on that independence of mind, which is the brightest feature in the character of free-

men, and on that right of opinion, which it is ever their duty to exercise. The independence of the Judiciary, one of the most valuable provisions of the constitution, so essential to the pure impartial administration of justice, has been destroyed. Fifteen millions of dollars have been expended for the ostensible purpose of purchasing a territory, uncertain in its boundaries, doubtful in its title, fruitful in controversy, of no possible advantage, beyond that which, anterior to the purchase, was secured by treaty, unless as the theatre for the display of arbitrary power, it may prepare us for the reception of despotism. In our foreign negotiations, a partial, illiberal and wavering policy has been adopted. By disingenuous and paltry artifice, a treaty has been evaded, with that nation, with whom it is our highest interest to be at peace ; to whose attacks we are the most immediately vulnerable ; and who in contending for her very existence, fights our battles, and the battles of civilized man, against a fiend-like despotism, whose very being is at war with the liberties of the world. While every circumstance has been artfully improved, and exaggerated, to excite our resentment, and enlist our prejudices against Great Britain,—while taking advantage of her situation, an ungenerous attempt is made, to extort from her necessity concessions, which she cannot make consistently with her safety, the most tame, humble, and prostrate spirit is manifested

under the wrongs, and injuries, and insults heaped upon us by France. Her numerous, and wanton violations of our rights, and infractions of her treaty are palliated—the eloquence of the *Senate*, bedecked with glittering fallacy, is put in requisition to furnish apologies for her infamous conduct—all evidence of her insulting demands, and degrading proposals, is studiously suppressed, or extorted from the executive by zealous and persevering importunity—and two millions of dollars (it is said on high authority) were placed in his hands for the purpose of being yielded, *as tribute*, to the *Gallic Usurper*.

While a solicitude for war, and an expectation of it are indicated, no adequate system of defence is adopted. Our extensive sea-coast, our commercial towns, and opulent cities, are exposed to the depredations of every invading enemy---they are abandoned to the protection of a few pitiful *gun-boats*, to which our naval establishment has degenerated. By an **EMBARGO**, unprecedented in its extent, and unlimited in its duration," precipitately and blindly imposed, our foreign and inland Commerce are annihilated at a blow---our coasting-trade subjected to illegal and arbitrary restrictions----and our citizens degraded to the condition of Roman slaves, by being made dependent for their bread on the bounty of their Governors. Yes! at the very time that the spirit of the peo-

ple should have been awakened, and invigorated by a manly appeal to their pride, and to their patriotism.---Could you have thought of the unnatural deed!---the cold, merciless hand of government is laid upon the energies of our country---its very life blood is congealed---the very sinews of its strength are paralyzed by the deadly grasp. I would not speak in the intemperate language of party ; I would, and I trust in God, I do, speak, and feel as an American. By perverse and feeble councils, we are reduced, I fear, to that situation, from which none but our enemies can derive consolation. To shut our eyes to the dangers that thicken around us would be an act of treachery ; it would be to hush ourselves to sleep on the giddy height of the precipice, or even in the " arms of death." To meet, in a becoming manner, the events, which may yet await us, it is necessary that we should make them the subjects of frequent contemplation---that we should fortify our minds, and elevate them to that " crisis of the times," in which we may be called to act. The *public safety* is not to be despaired of. " We are never authorised, (it is the sentiment and language of EDMUND BURKE) we are never authorised to abandon our country to its fate, or to act or advise, as if it had no resource ; whilst our heart is sound, it will find means or make them. The heart of the citizen is a perennial spring of energy to the state." Under the direction of an

administration, possessing and deserving our confidence, the ability and resources of this country will prove equal to any exigency. To doubt it is a libel upon the spirit of the people. Look back to the 4th of July, 1776. We were then a nation but in the cradle of existence. Our population was small. Our army undisciplined. No wealth. No allies. No name, but on the map of the world. Yet did our country, impelled by an unconquerable spirit of liberty, cast from her these incumbrances "like dew drops from a lion's mane," and rise up with undaunted resolution to resist the tyrannical encroachments of Great Britain—Great Britain, whose name was a terror to the world—whose military genius "soared with a proud pre-eminence," over the nations of Europe. Her armies had gathered laurels in every clime. Empress of the ocean, her navies rode triumphant, "wherever waves could roll, or winds could waft them."

The recollection of our successful efforts in this disastrous period of the history of our country, should animate us to encounter, with unshaken fortitude, every scene of distress and horror which may yet await us, in that variety of political changes, through which we may be destined to pass.

Our interests, my Fellow Citizens, are the same. Let us have but one and the same object, and let that object be the good of our coun-

try. Our situation imperiously requires of us the performance of all our duties as citizens. Subduing that intemperate spirit of party, which by creating amongst us dissention and division, paralyzes our energies ; let us unite and embody our exertions to preserve the rich blessings transmitted to us by our illustrious progenitors. Let us reverence the institutions of our ancestors. Let us inscribe on our hearts the principles of our revolution : and may they never cease to influence them but with their last pulsation. Having made every sacrifice—Having cheerfully submitted to every privation to resist the claims of Great Britain—Having put all at hazard to acquire our Independence, let us indignantly spurn the idea, of surrendering one particle or tittle of it to purchase a degrading and precarious security in the dangerous and treacherous friendship of France, the bloody and perfidious regicide. Let us not suffer ourselves to be duped, by the professions of artful and designing men, whatever political character they may assume, who have no fixed principle of action, but their own personal aggrandizement ;—they will abuse our confidence to our ruin. Let us put our trust in those, and those only, who will bring back our government to its original principles :—Men of erect and independent minds, too *proud to flatter the people, and too honest to deceive them*. Above all, let us guard, as we would the life-blood that revels at the heart, our National Constitution, the

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**Charter of our Rights--the Bond of our Union---  
the Bulwark of our Liberty and Independence.  
Should active and unprincipled ambition, in its  
desolating course, threaten its subversion, let us  
oppose our breasts as shields in its defence, let  
us exert ourselves, at whatever hazard, to repel  
every aggression, and transmit it unimpaired to  
posterity as the most valuable inheritance.**

