



Mr. Beedé's *Oration,*

DELIVERED AT

ROXBURY,

JULY 4, 1799.

AN  
ORATION,

DELIVERED AT

ROXBURY,

JULY 4, 1799,

IN COMMEMORATION

OF

American Independence.

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BY THOMAS BEEDÉ.

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“ Immoderate valor swells into a fault ;  
“ And fear, admitted into public councils,  
“ Betrays like treason. Let us shun them both. .

.....  
“ — Let us draw our term of freedom out  
“ To its full length, and spin it to the last.”

ADDISON.

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1799.

AN

O R A T I O N.

*Citizens and Fellow Countrymen,*

I ADVANCE to address you on the subject of our national freedom. A subject as dear as happiness; as important, as existence itself.

This gladsome day announces the twenty-third Anniversary of our political Independence. This is our birth day. If at any time we have thought it worthy our attention to celebrate with festive joy the birth of one man, how much more shall we deem it so, to celebrate the birth of six millions of people\*!

On an occasion like the present, you cannot but be filled with sentiments the most magnanimous and interesting. To enliven your conceptions, and to fan the flame of pure patriotism in your bosoms, is the design of the present address.

Patriotism

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\* In 1783 the number of inhabitants in the United States was computed at 2,389,300; and according to the census in 1791 the number was 4,131,616: if they have continued to increase in the same proportion as they did from 1783 to 1791, the present number exceeds 7,000,000.

Patriotism is a noble and a powerful virtue. It has resisted the rod of oppression, and quelled the rage of tyrants. It has freed captives, plead the cause of innocence, and broken the bands of slavery. Had not Americans at the commencement of the late revolution been inspired with this virtue, we had never seen this day, we had never sitten under our own vines and fig-trees unmolested, to enjoy the glorious light of liberty.

Such is the construction of our nature, that the meanest objects engross the greatest share of our attention. Self preservation is and ought to be our first care. When this is effected, the laws of benevolence require us to consult the interest of our dearest connections. To become patriots then, we must have a rational regard for ourselves; for the interest of our friends, and must delight in the prosperity and happiness of our native country.

Previously to the formation of civil society, the law of nature authorised men to defend themselves against the unjust attacks of enemies. In a civilized state the same law justifies the sovereign of a nation in collecting his forces to repel any combination of invaders. The sovereign has a right to compel his subjects to action whenever the public good renders it expedient. But, citizens, in the late contest with Great Britain you did not wait to be compelled to duty: you esteemed it your highest interest and your supreme delight to appear in the defence of your rights. No object was to you so noble; no cause so glorious, as the cause of justice and of national freedom.

We are not assembled to boast of our heroism, but we are assembled to show to the world that we prize our privileges; that in spite of opposition

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we are determined to preserve them, and to transmit them inviolate to our posterity.

At present we are independent. Thanks to our parent patriots, who exhausted the ardor of their lives to procure us this happiness. Thanks to our present illustrious statesmen, whose unwearied exertions have hitherto protected us from foreign intrigue, and from domestic violence.

No nation can be happy without freedom. But there is an essential difference between freedom and licentiousness. All men by the law of nature are free to do good actions, but none are free to do bad ones. An enthusiastic notion of liberty has induced some Americans in their most unguarded moments to suppose their rights infringed, because their liberty was limited to virtuous actions. But such limitation of liberty is the grand pillar of political safety. Remove this and the whole fabric will totter into promiscuous ruin.

Every man has a right to form his connexions and to educate his children in the principles of honesty and justice, but he has no right to use the insidious arts of seduction, nor to instruct his children in fraud and deceit. He has a right to obey the laws, and to revere the rulers of his choice: but he has no right to trample on authority, nor to reproach men grown grey in their country's service. He has a right to enjoy his religious opinion; but has no right either to profess or to practice a religion which interrupts the devotion of any worshipping assembly, or disturbs public peace and order. Finally, he has a right to be a good man, and a useful man; but he has no right, nor ever will have a right to be a villain.

From

From general principles we pass to a general survey of our natural and civil advantages.

We possess a vast tract of continent, computed at a million of square miles. This tract is bordered by an extensive sea-coast, and interspersed with numerous bays and harbours eminently commodious, and inviting to commerce.—A climate temperate and salubrious; a soil yielding to culture, and luxuriant in its productions.

With regard to civil liberty, we enjoy as much of it as is consistent with human nature. We have a happy constitution; framed by the hands of wisdom and experience, which guarantees the most sacred rights of the people. Our government is inferior to none on earth. It encourages sound morality and pure religion. It breathes compassion towards deluded offenders, while it punishes with rigorous severity the wilfully vicious. It has spirit to resent foreign impositions, and energy to suppress domestic outrage. It is administered by men whom the people can trust; men of sagacity and discretion; men of eminence and respectability; men of sound principle and of tried patriotism.

Are we not contented and happy with these distinguished privileges? Not perfectly so. Ambitious, unprincipled foreigners have viewed and envied our tranquility. These have injudiciously been invited to come and dwell among us. They have come, and have brought their vices and their prejudices with them. They have excited jealousy, and sown division and discord among our honest citizens. Through this medium has been introduced a licentious philosophy; the principles of which eventually tend to destroy social and individual happiness. A philosophy denying our holy religion; denying divine revelation,

lation, denying the existence of God and a future state. A philosophy dissolving the tenderest of human connections, breaking down family distinction; confounding systems; freeing men from the obligation of oaths, and reducing the beautiful inequality of nature to a dead level, whose loathsome exhalations are pregnant with pestilence and death.

These disorganizing principles in the vitals of our country are more to be dreaded, than millions of external open enemies.

We are happy to persuade ourselves that this philosophy is chiefly confined to a few paltry clubs of aliens. During the last year, however, either through ignorance or malice, it has wrongfully been imputed to our ancient and honourable Masonic fraternity. It therefore becomes you, gentlemen of that respected order; conscious of your own innocence; conscious of the purity of your intention, to exhibit on all suitable occasions your attachment to the government under which you live; and constantly to cause your light so to shine before others, that they seeing your laudable actions may be influenced to reverence law, and to maintain due subordination.

Our greatest enemies have ever appeared amongst those, whom we had reason to expect would be our best friends. An unnatural mother in a fit of phrenzy banished us from her presence; persecuted us in exile, and sought to bind us in servitude. But her severity provoked resentment. We resisted: we looked to Heaven. Propitious Heaven smiled approbation and crowned our struggle with success.

Our maternal affection being alienated, we pressed to our bosoms a beloved sister. With her we entered into the strongest bonds of alliance

liance and friendship, and unreservedly trusted her with the secrets of our own breasts. This beloved sister, this intrusted, and as we thought, confidential friend, betrayed us.

Having been thus treated, shall we again seek friendship? If so, with whom shall we form the desired connexion? Shall we return to our parent Britain, who has striven to reduce us to slavery? Shall we again court the pestilential embraces of sister France, who under the garb of friendship has meditated our ruin? Or shall we trust to strangers, and hazard the chance of being again betrayed? Shall we not rather be a nation by ourselves, subject to our own laws, ruled by our own magistrates, and under the Great Supreme, rely on our own strength for protection? You cannot hesitate to answer these interrogations. By celebrating this day you declare your sentiments. You show that you are decided in your politics; that you understand your rights; and that you are determined independently to enjoy them.

The manly exertions of the military department of this place have extorted praise even from their enemies, and have demonstrated that they are actuated by noble motives. The uniformity, discipline, and public spirit, which you this day exhibit, Soldiers, not only do honor to yourselves and to your patriotic commanders, but also furnish us with a fresh testimony that you are determined to maintain the constitution, and to preserve the freedom and independence of your country.

Much of the public safety depends on you.--- Much also, depends on our naval forces. They are our outer guards. They protect our commerce, which is the staple commodity of national wealth.

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We ardently wish them success. until they have freed our coasts from infesting pirates ; until they have exterminated those blood-thirsty cannibals, who feed on murder, and fatten on human misery.

A standing army in time of peace has long since been the subject of popular declamation.--- It has been represented as a national curse.--- It has been considered, as destructive to morality ; and to military discipline among the yeomanry.

Undoubtedly the standing army of an enemy is a national curse ; and to be compelled to maintain an unnecessary body of troops in time of peace, we grant, is a national grievance. But every judicious man knows, that the surest method to continue peace, is to prepare for war.--- If then we may not have a standing army, bred to war as a profession ; still in case of imminent danger, we may have a provisional army, composed of volunteers from our militia. Otherwise how can we prepare for war ? Our forts and garrisons, unless properly manned, can afford us no protection. The militia in the interior of our country unquestionably constitute our defensive strength. But their business is at home.--- They are engaged in secular employments ; and cannot, therefore, be constantly in arms. Is it not necessary then, to have certain detachments from the body of our militia, so stationed, as to be able to watch, and warn us of approaching danger ? Suppose twenty thousand men are raised. Is it extravagant to employ twenty thousand men to guard nineteen hundred miles of sea-coast and frontier, when threatened by rebels, Savages and Frenchmen ? Is it extravagant also, to arm merchantmen ; and to prepare a navy, when the ocean is covered with the pirate ships of our enemies, ready to plunder our property, and to  
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sport with the precious lives of our brethren ?--- It may perhaps be thought extravagant. But, I believe it would be thought more extravagant, if an enlightened, powerful, and independent nation should, like unhappy Switzerland, be lulled into security, until the enemy had advanced into the very bowels of their country. May the fate of Switzerland never be the fate of America. May we ever be furnished with able and faithful watchmen, to guard our liberty. That, should our enemies approach at evening, at midnight, or in the morning, our cannon may be prepared to give them a volley of death.

Citizens, you are once more invited to revert your attention to the distressing scenes of Seventy-Five. The particulars of that Crisis need not be related. You yourselves know them. The unbounded prospect of war and blood, was then before you. You hurried from your embraces the fair partners of your joys ; and converted your houses and your temples into barracks and garrisons. You exchanged the plough and the hoe, for the sword and the musket. Amid perplexity and consternation, however you dared assert your rights ; and in the memorable epoch of Seventy-Six, to declare yourselves *Independent*. Fired with indignation for the injuries done you ; and inspired with genuine love of your country, you, in conjunction with your patriotic brethren, assumed the armour of war ; and under GOD, and WASHINGTON, vanquished the foe ; and left the field victorious.

Great have been your efforts. The advantages, you now enjoy, have been bought with blood. Much has been done. But does there nothing yet remain for us to do ? Have we no part yet to perform in the grand political Drama ?----

Because

Because we are now Free and Independent, may we flatter ourselves, that we shall always remain so, without any further exertion? Can we behold other free and independent Republics, ravaged, plundered, and enslaved by a rapacious monster in Europe, and not tremble for our safety?--- Can we behold the Terrible Republic of France blaspheming GOD; voting him out of existence; dissolving treaties; trampling on the sacred law of nations; and not be admonished to be on our guard? Can we behold this same Terrible Nation capturing our vessels; imprisoning our seamen; rejecting our Ambassadors; vilifying the character of our venerable PRESIDENT; and insulting our Government by seditious appeals to the People, and not burn with indignation? Can we hear them demanding Tribute; threatening us with the fate of Venice and Switzerland, in case of refusal; and not think it our duty to be in a posture of defence? If we can, we deserve not the advantages of Freemen. No man deserves the protection of a Government, which he attempts to destroy; nor does any nation deserve liberty, who will not contribute to its support.

Shall it be said of us, that we are unwilling to support our Liberty? Shall it be said that we are a nation divided against ourselves, mutually endeavoring to destroy that Government, which protects our lives and our property? Is this our national character? No; the late numerous addresses to the President from every quarter of the Union, have declared the contrary. These have expressed the sentiments, and the dispositions of a great majority of the people; and proved, that they are satisfied with the present administration; that they are opposed to party and cabal; that they will join heart and hand, in rallying

rallying around the Standard of our Independence; and will sacrifice existence, rather than crouch to foreign subjugation.

Yes, Americans, you have proved, that no flattery can pervert your resolution; nor peril daunt your courage. You have declared, that you prefer honorable war to dishonorable peace; and that you will again haste to the field of battle, if your country be again invaded, and administer vengeance to its foes.

The spirited answers also, of our beloved **PRESIDENT**, not only show his fidelity, integrity and firmness; but also exhibit his watchful zeal for our preservation. Dignified Sage! He has spent the morning and the meridian of his life in our service; and shall we in return load him with reproach and ingratitude, and denominate ourselves patriots? God forbid, that such patriots should enjoy the blessings they thus despise. No; while we live, we will respect and honor him; and when we are dead, future generations shall bless his memory.

While we bear in grateful recollection our illustrious heroes and statesmen, we pause to shed a tear on the tomb of our late Excellent Governor. The remembrance of **SUMNER** spreads a gloom o'er the joys of this festive day. For him we weep. But why should we weep? Heaven knew his goodness; and seeing he could not be better beloved, nor farther promoted on earth, received him; and he has rewarded him according to his merit.

May we, his fellow-citizens, while we lament his death, imitate his patriotic virtues. Let us cherish the same principles of rectitude, which he cherished. Let us exhibit the same firmness and intrepidity, which ever dignified his character.

rafter. Divesting ourselves of narrow prejudice, and of lawless ambition, let us be actuated by the same generous motives, which marked all his public actions ; that should we fail of human promotion ; should we not be thought qualified for Judges and Governors here ; we may become qualified for Kings and Priests in a better world.

Citizens, if you regard your present happiness ; if you regard the future welfare of your nation ; show your detestation of seditious practices, whether from the press, or the pen. Instruct your children not only in their right ; but also in their duty. By your own example teach them submission to constituted authority. Teach them to despise factious demagogues, who mistake popularity for patriotism. Show them how dearly you prize civil liberty by your exertion in its support. Teach them veneration for religious liberty by your devout attention to the worship of GOD. That, when you shall have paid the debt of nature ; when ADAMS and WASHINGTON shall be no more ; and when the despotisms, and republics of the ancient world shall be corrupted, and crumble into ruin,— America may flourish in untainted youth, in the full enjoyment of her *Liberty*, her *Independence*, and her *GLORY*.

