

AN
ORATION
PRONOUNCED
JULY 4th, 1795.

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AT THE
REQUEST OF THE INHABITANTS

OF THE
TOWN OF BOSTON,
IN COMMEMORATION

OF THE
ANNIVERSARY OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

BY GEORGE BLAKE.



Huic enim populo ita fuerat libertas insita, ut emori potius
quam servire prestaret.



BOSTON.

PRINTED AND SOLD BY BENJAMIN EDES,
Kilby Street.—1795.

ner Inhabitants of the
ified and legally warned, in
at Faneuil-Hall, on Saturday

1795.

E D,

TH A T the SELECTMEN be and hereby :
pointed a Committee to wait on GEORGE BLAKE
and in the Name of the Town to thank him for the
and elegant ORATION this Day delivered by him,
Request of the Town, upon the ANNIVERSARY C
INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMER
in which, according to the Institution of the Town,
sidered the Feelings, Manners, and Principles which
that great National Event—and to request of him
thereof for the Press.

Attest.

WILLIAM COOPER, Town-Clerk,



GENTLEMEN,

A Request from the Selectmen of BOSTON, altho
it were at the hazard of my reputation, I could not fail to
gratify.—The ORATION of the 4th Instant is therefore
humbly submitted to their disposal—by

their obedient, and

very respectful Servant,

GEORGE BLAKE:

BOSTON, JULY 4th, 1795.

The Gentlemen SELECTMEN,

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A N
O R A T I O N.



ON this day, LIBERTY, the offspring of America, is Nineteen years old; and since the earliest moment of her existence, not one year has yet elapsed without bearing with it this customary testimonial of joy, this sacred offering of gratitude to that divine Being, from whose pure essence she at first emanated.

THE occasion is solemn, and joyous! solemn, because it conducts our reflections to a period most anxious and awful in the history of our country; joyous, because it renews in our imagination the scenes which were a preface to our freedom, our happiness—An occasion so deeply expressive of the sorrows, the joys, the distresses and the glory of a nation, can never cease to be interesting and affecting.

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THE heart that trembled with anxiety when the dubious scheme of our Independence was first projected, and which leap'd with exultation when our freedom was eventually announced, cannot on this day stand still, as if pass'd with indifference—The zeal, the fervour which we have felt for the acquisition, has not, and I trust, cannot become stale by the calm quietude of possession.

LIBERTY needs not the aid of novelty to excite the enthusiasm of its friends ; its value must increase with duration ; its adherents will multiply with the number of its years.

THE event which happened on this day, the feelings, manners and principles which led to it, are the subject of our present contemplation—A subject in which is involved a history not more glorious to America, than it is humiliating and disgraceful to the proud nation with whom she contended—The same feelings which are agitated by the first impression of injury, which are heightened by an unwarrantable increase of the imposition, and which are turned to desperation when the injury becomes cruelty insufferable ; such were the emotions which first propelled Americans to a contest with Britain.

THAT

AN O R A T I O N.

THAT man has an unalienable claim to freedom, which neither time or circumstance can affect; that Americans were early educated to a knowledge of this right, and had courage to assert it in the face of tyranny itself; such were the manners, such the principles which urged and sanctioned their conduct.

HAD the people of America been made up of that stupid, obedient clay, of which the human machinery of kings is sometimes composed; had they been content to have trudged with patient endurance beneath a burthen of injury which an unfeeling monarch would have imposed—or had they not boldly refused to yield their liberty and happiness, to the requisition of an audacious sovereign, the event we this day commemorate, never had been recorded in the history of the world.

AMERICA, now a nation of freedom, of honor, then would only have served to lengthen the map of a monarch's territory.—Americans now, the illustrious progenitors of liberty, then would have been but as mere numbers of arithmetic to swell the aggregate of his miserable servile dependents.—Indeed that very nation, so renown'd for having been first to liberate al-
most

most a world from slavery, then would have been quoted by Tyrants as a new memorable precedent on which to sanction their oppression of mankind.

THE new world and the old, would perhaps at this day, have been formed in one indissoluble junction, for the fatal purpose to render slavery perpetual, and to support forever that imperious authority by which they were both subjugated.—But I cannot dwell with patience on the hateful consequences which might have happened to the world, had not the people of America been bold to repel the very first advances of arbitrary power.

UNTIL the close of our late revolution, the true character of Americans, in Europe, was almost unnoticed and unknown.—That they were the descendants of Britain, seems to have been their only acknowledged claim to the little honor or distinction which they enjoyed among the nations of the earth.—But the dignity of their origin was supposed to have become debased, the virtues of their illustrious ancestry were not yet recognized in the character of their posterity.—Affected with this illiberal prejudice, even the historians and philosophers

of the elder world, did not hesitate to pronounce, that on this side the atlantic, the soil and climate were unfriendly to the growth of European virtues.—That the sturdy Briton, since he was transplanted to America, through a number of successive generations; had pined, like a sickly exotic had withered and languish'd at the loss of his native soil.

ON this mistaken estimate of the American character, may we account for the scheme which was first projected to reduce our nation to the dominion of Britain.

THE pride of Englishmen, which had ever before been proverbial, was at this period swoln to a degree of actual infatuation.—Their armies had lately gathered in the field, a little transitory short-lived glory—Transitory I say, because but a short time elapsed, e'r they were compelled to strew their laurels, to prostrate their glory at the foot of injured America.

THE pride of their recent victories was now divided between military arrogance and parliamentary presumption.

THEIR statesmen and their soldiers were alike confirmed in the belief that in policy or arms

Britain was invincible—Such was the vain confidence in their own imagined superiority, and such their contemptuous opinion of our ability, when a misruling ministry first proposed a system of tax on our nation which was to render us forever tributary and subservient to the purpose of their own dignity—A system whose object was to delegate to the colonies, as their only privilege in a Government, almost the exclusive right, and absolute necessity to support the burthen of its expences.

INDEED the whole continent of America according to ministerial calculations, was destined to become a mere appendage to the patrimonial inheritance of George the third—and the people of America like the dragon of Hesperides, would have been allowed the honor to cherish and protect the fruit, of which they were refused the power to participate.

A PROJECT so infernal in its design, at the same time so uncertain in its event, could have been generated but by a ministry in the very dotage of wickedness, approved but by a monarch in leading strings, and seconded only by the unthinking automatons, who never move or act but from the impulse of their sovereign—In
justice

justice however to the more rational part of that deluded people, we shall not forget the feeling remonstrances which were poured forth by the purer spirits of the Kingdom—But in vain—In vain did a Chatham and a Cambden, like the oracles of old, foresee and pronounce the fatal issue that awaited the measures of their Government.

THE season had now arrived when the iniquitous schemes of parliament had reached their crisis, when their vile production was to stand display'd in its nakedness to the world.

AT this period, the first offspring of their labours, was exhibited in an act which carried with it the stamp of the crown, and the eternal seal of its disgrace—Every artifice was applied, every species of ministerial magic was exercised to conjure away the imposition, and to render the act less obnoxious to America—But art served only to enliven suspicion, terror but to strengthen courage—The evasions of law, the delusions of ministry, were too transparent to darken the radiance of truth—Americans were too sagacious to be duped, too intrepid to be alarmed into approbation of a measure, which was intended to destroy the very essence of their liberty.

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THEY felt the first impression of the iniquity and with the resolute voice of millions, with a voice that rent the veil of the throne in twain, they demanded its removal in terms that could not & did not fail of success*—But in the language of a Republican, Tyranny seldom commits an outrage without seeking some positive law from, whence, to borrow an apparent authority, on which to sanctify its pretensions, and legalize its crimes.

SUCH was the wretched alternative of Britain, when her real designs on America had become too flagrant for concealment—when the mere affectation of attachment to her colonies would have demanded a firmness more inflexible, a consistency more undeviating than the most practised hypocrisy had power to display—Such, I say, was the contemptible apology of Britain, when her parliament in an audacious mimicry of omnipotence pronounced its authority to bind us forever—In the usual tone of their arrogance, the decree was promulged, and as if a law from heaven had been revealed, the roaring of their cannon seemed to mock the thunders on Sinai, and commanded us to listen, tremble, and obey—But from the first appearance of this
hateful

* Stamp Act repealed.

hateful presumptuous act, the doom of Britain was settled, and the last closing catastrophe of her schemes hastened its approach; deception was worn out, and was now divested of its power to deceive—The king that professed defender of the faith, who amid the splendor of a throne, had been view'd as a gracious affectionate sovereign, was now stripped of his courtly disguise, and exhibited a monster of perfidy, of cruelty.

PARLIAMENT by their usual sanctity of pretension, could no longer conceal the real malignancy of their designs—That secret cabinet of iniquity was now thrown open and behold like the den of the Cyclops, it exhibited a group of demons busied in forging engines of destruction;—in fabricating chains, daggers and fetters, to enslave or destroy her devoted colonies.

SUCH was the frightful picture of Britain, when Americans, once the most loyal of her subjects, turned from her with abhorrence;—when attachment the most cordial, was converted to hatred most inveterate—when their courage was summoned to contend against that very nation, whose honors, whose glory it had often been conspicuous to defend.—Such I say was the hostile picture of Britain, when an intrepid

crepid band of Patriots, undismayed by the clangor of arms, or the rocking of battlements, pronounced the Independence of our nation.

At this period, how awful, yet how sublime must have been the emotions of my countrymen?—On that eventful moment, when the existence of their country was suspended in the dreadful balance of uncertainty—when even the destinies of America were appalled at the dreary questionable aspect, and alarmed at the magnitude of the work before them, seemed to stand in solemn dilemma, whether to support or renounce the cause of Freedom for ever.

BUT—The sentiments of the colonists, which had so long been balancing between a loyal respect for their sovereign, and a manly resentment of his injuries, were ultimately fixed & resolved. The issue which had been so long tendered to the colonists, & appeared insultingly to challenge their resentment;—the alarming issue on which their life and liberty were involved, was now boldly accepted—From national tribunals, the justice of our claims was appealed to the judgment of heaven, and the fortunes of our contest submitted to the God of battles.

To pursue the details of heroism on the one part, and to mark the ravages of cruelty on the other, during a war which ensued, would demand a language of eulogium and reproach, more powerful than I have talents to bestow— Yet let me ask what favoured portion of this now peaceful continent, but was at some time in the contest desolated by the merciless hand of a base perfidious enemy?—Even the muses were routed from their abode; and this very sanctuary, dedicated to the peaceful services of God, was converted to an hostile parade; to a vile nursery where a band of Russians were instructed in the infernal rudiments of murdering mankind.—Tyranny! cannot we trace its footsteps in blood, from the nether shores of our ocean, almost to the western boundary of our wilderness?

YET dreadful as were the scenes of our distress, vengeance is appeased by the reflection, that the injuries we suffered were not inflicted with impunity—That hardly an inch of our soil was embraced by the victories, which was not at the same time fertilized by the blood of the invaders.—The height of BUNKER, so long as the earth that sustains it endures, will stand an unshaken monument to the honor of American bravery—!

YE deluded victims, who on the day that distinguished that memorable spot, were compelled to bite the ground ye profaned, ye whose enemies are now buried in the dust that covers you, could ye speak from your graves, what solemn testimony would be given that ye were victims of no ignoble foe! That the arm which slew you, was stretched in the cause of freedom, and dealt a blow which justice demanded.

BUT I need not invoke the slumbering tenants of the grave to confirm the honor of an army, whose actions have drawn many an acknowledgment from the unwilling mouths of their bitterest adversaries—whose valor has often extorted a confession from that very nation, which it had scourged and vanquished.

BUT if the revival of the sanguinary scenes of our war, may have touched a chord of sensibility which had long since ceased to vibrate for the death of a friend, a brother, or a father that were slain, may our sorrows for their loss, be soothed by the remembrance of the glory they have gained—Their deaths were revenged, their memories have been attended with pity and with honor.

BUT for the last, the most conclusive proof that Americans were brave, we need only proclaim
claim

claim that their country is free. That a nation whose power had hitherto proudly stalked beyond every boundary assigned to it, was compelled to acknowledge the shores of America, as the insurmountable limits of its victories; and to retreat in confusion and disgrace, from that country it had menaced and invaded with triumph.

A WAR which had been not less distressing in its progress, than it was cruel and iniquitous in its origin;—which for seven long years had been feeding on the very vitals of our nation, must necessarily have consumed most of those resources, which even at its commencement were much too narrow.—The expence of our army, that severest pressure of the revolution, was to be born at a time when those very energies which had been so gallantly displayed in the field, were now most wanted to alleviate or support the burthen.—In the determinate language of justice, the soldier now demanded, of his country, a recompence for his services, which in the piteous tone of poverty, his country could but refuse to bestow.—To rectify difficulties of this magnitude, at the same time to provide for the multiplied concerns of the states, it cannot be surprising that our old constitution

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was wholly incompetent—A constitution, whose very basis was confusion, whose incongruous materials were hastily thrown together, when the deliberations of the cabinet were continually disturbed by the noise of arms.

INDEED at this period, such was the debilitated, unquiet state of our country, that it is less derogatory to the American character, that a temporary discord prevailed, than it is honorable and felicitating, that general distraction did not ensue.

BUT my friends ! when the disorderly fabric of our old government was pulled down, and on its ruins erected the present admirable system of state, then, and not till then, could we boast that our work was complete, freedom secure, our nation triumphant !

AN attempt to display the virtues of our present government ; to do justice to the characters of those eminent men who formed, and who who now administer it, would be but a feeble echo of that sublimer eulogium, which has so often and so justly been conferred.

In general however I may remark, that for wisdom in its plan, for harmony and concord

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ance in its operation, the Federal Government has never been rivalled since the first association of mankind.

BUT panegyric unqualified, is little less obnoxious than censure undeserved; that the present system, perfect as it is, has still some faults, even the most enthusiastic of its admirers cannot & will not deny.—Far, very far is it from my intention to criminate the measures of our rulers, or to question the purity of the motives on which they are bottomed—But on this subject I cannot refrain to express a belief that our system of finance, whatever may be its present operation, will hereafter become a dangerous, perhaps fatal principle in the constitution of our government.—It is a system which seems to be established rather on the narrow, mercenary calculations of arithmetic, than on the broad basis of justice—which may perhaps enrich a small, very small portion of the present generation, but will it not diminish and incumber the legacy that must descend to our posterity? An institution which I apprehend is at this moment more admired for ingenuity, than it ever has, or ever will be esteemed for its justice or utility.

* A national debt funded on the fashionable principles of the age, has been justly compared to a worm that never dies, that never will cease to prey on the very stamina of our constitution. —But in justice to the distinguished talents of the man who projected it, we must presume his system to be as perfect as it could have been, and we have then but to lament the impracticability of a measure, which would have relieved from beggary the protectors of our country, and silenced for ever the voice of complaint.

CITIZENS ! The courage of soldiers is not more necessary for conquest, than their prudence and firmness to protect, the victories they have gained.

At a moment of the most confident security, it behoves you still to remember, that fugitive and transitory, are the motto, which the finger of Deity has inscribed on the very firmest of his earthly productions ; that our own government, substantial as it is, cannot be privileged from that common catastrophe which has hitherto
closed

* It is a question for intelligent politicians to decide, whether our Funding System was not originally intended rather to perpetuate than to extinguish the national debt? —But whether it was productive of complete justice, to all who had claims (the most sacred) on Government, has, I believe, already been resolved.

closed the acts of other nations and empires.—
But although no human application can remove the principles of its mortality, it is within the reach of your exertions to interdict a premature unnatural dissolution.

THE same vigilance which led you to detect the first attempts on your rights, even in times the most prosperous and peaceful, should not be suffered to sleep in profound security.

THE same firmness which induced you to resist the first incursion of arbitrary power, should ever be prompt and ready to repel the future efforts of tyrants.

FROM the late inhuman outrages on our commerce, we have a most unquestionable proof, that our former enemies have not yet become our friends.—That their fall (terrible as it was!) did only for a time choke the respiration of vengeance, and interrupt the prosecution of their designs.

THE old adversary of America, stung by the tortures of disgrace, like Beelzebub in his exile from heaven, in the abyss of infamy, still broods on mischief, and meditates our destruction.—
But may the conduct of our government announce to Britain, may it proclaim to the world,
that

that America is too watchful to be surpris'd, even in the arms of victory and peace—That her people are as little disposed to be the sufferers as the authors of an injury.

An example like this must discourage the attempts of our enemies, and secure to us a long, a peaceful enjoyment of our freedom.*

Yet it is not more important that our country be protected from external violence, than secured against internal corruption.

NEVER should we forget, that tho' wisdom and virtue at this time preside in our councils, folly and vice may e'er long become their successors—But it is the pride, the boast of Americans, that they are inhabitants of a country where freedom of opinion, where unbiass'd liberty of discussion are authorized in the fundamentals of our government—where no department is too high or too low for inspection—where neither splendor of title, nor the ostensible dignity of office, can for a long time protect a bad character from scrutiny or censure—In a country where the very smallest individual of

community

* It must surely be a subject of regret, that our late Treaty with Britain appears as little calculated to defend us from the future aggressions of that nation, as to retribute us for those which have already been committed.

community would be applauded for his boldness, should he dare to mount to the very chair of magistracy, to strip off the mask of wickedness from the most exalted hypocrite of our nation.

On this privilege your rights are secure, and this privilege it is your duty to protect not less from the abuses of faction, than the infringements of prerogative.

But for the more surprising, the more wonderful scenes which have followed from the event we contemplate, we must turn our reflections to that nation, who are now boldly contending in the cause of freedom.

The exertions of our own country, heroic as they were in defence of Liberty, when compared to the present desperate struggles of France, were but as the first achievement of Hercules in his cradle to the wonderful labours that were reserved for his manhood.

On an occasion like this, it cannot be expected that we dwell with particular emphasis on the various causes which gradually terminated in the late convulsions of Europe. An attempt of that kind, would be to compress within the limits of a few pages, within the narrow compass of a
single

single moment, a series of cruelties which the voluminous history of ages is almost too small to contain, and which a long line of successive tyrants, most industrious in the business of iniquity, within the lengthened period of centuries, hardly had time to inflict.—But severe as was the oppression of France, it was the example of America, which roused the virtues of her people into action.—But for that example, France might still have continued a most singular and distressing phenomenon in the regions of tyranny.—A nation the most enlightened, and yet the most oppressed.—A people who had sensibility to feel, courage and power to repel, and yet for ages tamely tolerating all the complicated horrors of the most abject servitude.

THAT tyranny in the extreme is usually productive of Liberty, has been often asserted, but never yet substantiated.—Happy would it be for mankind were oppression & its antidote so nearly allied—were the blessings of freedom the certain recompence for the sufferings of slavery, and the death of Tyrants the never-failing penalty for their cruelty and crimes.

FROM the fatal experience of almost every nation on earth, the truth of that principle has become too doubtful, too uncertain.

BUT

Yet whatever may have been the more distant causes of the French revolution, its effects will be most serious & interesting to the world— It is a warfare not of men, not of nations only, it is a conflict of principles—An impious effort of vice, to usurp the dominion of virtue— Of tyranny to overwhelm and destroy the empire of reason and justice.—It is a contest, in which (to the shame of tyrants be it spoken) we behold a single nation advanced as a champion for the rights of humanity ; while on the other hand, half a world is engaged to oppose and destroy them.

AMERICANS ! ! The question serious as it is to Europe, is still more serious and important to America—If tyranny is victorious, France and other nations must lament the loss of that freedom which they had tasted in prospect, but had never fully realized in possession.—A relapse to slavery would indeed be more intolerable, than had been an eternal continuance of their bondage.

But for America—How dreadful to be compelled to abandon the Liberty which was dear indeed, for the blood that purchased it, but is deemed dear for the enjoyments it has yielded.

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How dishonorable! how humiliating to posterity, should they be compelled to bend a knee of obedience to that imperious monarch, whom their fathers had humbled and vanquished.

BUT I will not rest on the contemplation of events which the present appearances of Europe will hardly suffer to exist even in the airy visions of fancy. France, environed, unaided, alone, like Sampson of old, has already nearly vanquished the whole collected host of its enemies.—Her adversaries are too numerous for computation, and yet her victories have been too splendid for description.—To her allies she beckons for friendship, but requires as little of their services as they can have the power or disposition to bestow.—Neither our blood nor our treasure are wanted to compleat their success.—But in the name of honor! of humanity! can we refuse to yield her the sanction of our warmest approbation?

THE feelings of Americans cannot dwell with uncommon anguish on the melancholy catastrophe of a fallen monarch, while millions of his brave injured subjects invite our joy and our enthusiasm to the fields of their conquests.—Nor can the zeal of chivalry so far controul the emotions

sions of patriotism, that our sympathy for the sufferings of a single woman (peerless illustrious as she was) can diminish our friendship for a nation, or lessen our wishes for the happiness of more than twenty millions of mankind.

SCENES like these may cast a temporary gloom on our minds, but the very thickest cloud which the furies of faction or despotism can conjure up, will not darken the splendor of their cause.

AMERICANS ! the cause is half our own, and does not our policy and our honor urge us most forcibly to cherish it ? Can it be dishonorable or hazardous to America to confirm an alliance with a nation, which the combined despots of Europe are on the point to pronounce invincible.—A nation by whose armies Liberty has been escorted in triumph to the ocean, whose navies will waft her in glory to the utmost boundaries of the earth—a nation before whose tremendous artillery even Neptune himself, that fabled monarch of the ocean, will e'er long abandon his dominion, and yield his Trident to the management of Republican hands.

WITH a nation like this for your foe—Ty-
rants ! how dreadful, how threatening is the
prospect

prospect before you? Your fates are already begun; the seventh viol of your destinies will e'er long be emptied.—The period is fast approaching, when your honors and your titles which have so long dazzled the world with their splendor, like the dreary lamps of a sepulchre, will but light us to the spot where lie the mouldering relicks of your departed greatness.—When the earth itself, which has so often been deluged by the blood of your cruelties, shall gape wider and wider to receive you; when tyranny shall be extinct, Liberty triumphant!

F I N I S.

