

AN
ORATION,
DELIVERED AT
MONTGOMERY, ORANGE COUNTY, (N. E.)
ON THE
FOURTH OF JULY, 1814,
BEING THE
THIRTY-NINTH ANNIVERSARY
OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY WILLIAM SAMUEL BUELI.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY VAN WINKLE AND WILEY,

Corner of Wall and New-streets.

.....
1814.

Montgomery, 9th of July, 1814.

Sir,

The Committee appointed on the 4th instant, at Mr. Felter's Hotel, impressed with a due sense of the merits of your address, delivered that day, and desirous that the excellent sentiments expressed in it may be more generally disseminated, request the favour of a copy for publication.

Be assured, Sir, we are very
respectfully yours,

JOHANNES MILLER,
MOSES CRAWFORD,
THOMAS DUSINBERRY,
JASON W. ROGERS,
JOHN B. WILKIN,
LEMUEL W. RUGGLES,
ROBERT I. M'CURDY,
WALTER BROWNSON.

William Samuel Buell, Esq.



July 10th, 1814.

Gentlemen,

The copy of the Oration, which you have done me the honour to request for publication, is submitted to your disposal; not, however, without expressing gratitude to the audience, and particularly to the gentlemen composing the Committee, for the flattering marks of approbation they have been pleased to bestow on the performance of a few hours; and a sincere regret, that the short time allowed for preparation did not permit me in a greater degree to deserve them.

I am, Gentlemen, with sincere respect,
Your obedient servant,

WILLIAM SAMUEL BUELL.

Johannes Miller, Esq. and others,
Committee.

ORATION.

IN the annals of immortal fame, consecrated be the memory of the day which gave existence to a new nation: whose genial and vivifying sun smiled on the child of liberty, struggling, victorious, against the giant hand of tyranny, like the infant Hercules with the monster; and which saw it rise and shake off the disgraceful chain with which it was enthralled. Then, love of country, and a solemn detestation of arrogant and lawless power, excited to opposition; opposition was ripened into revolt; and a dread of oppression, unqualified as it was wounding to the pride of our fathers, stimulated them to open resistance, to the accomplishment of their freedom. And would to God, some guardian spirit, hovering over the destiny of nations, would point us to a second emancipation from the claims of arbitrary and tyrannical power.

The grand era of the American revolution found our country in debt, and depressed by the war in which it had been engaged. But patriotism rose superior to obstacles. A constitution was formed, and the confederated states more closely leagued for mutual safety and protection. Immortal patriots and statesmen, whose best days had been spent

in their country's service, were called to exercise its legislative functions; and to chaos, confusion, and despair, order and mutual confidence succeeded. Prosperity crowned their efforts, and happiness was the joy of the land. Commerce flourished, and the husbandman reaped the reward of his toil. American ships whitened every ocean, the mechanic arts prospered, and the country "blossomed as the rose." Scarcely in the annals of nations had any country experienced so rapid a rise. But the demon of party reared its factious head, and stalked forth through the land. Those ever to be venerated patriots, who had consecrated with their blood the sacred purchase of independence; who had reared from confusion and discord the "most stupendous fabric of human invention," a government as pure and perfect as the frailties of human nature would permit; who had raised their country to an exalted rank among the nations of the earth; were pronounced unworthy to partake of its honours. Infamous slanders were circulated by ambitious and designing men, and even the father of his country escaped not the polluted breath of detraction.*

* Any further remarks, in support of this assertion, may be considered superfluous. The newspaper files of that day, without recurring to the host of pamphlets issued about the same period, furnish ample evidence that the most violent abuse that ambition, jealousy, envy, and even *democracy* could invent, was heaped on the father of his country. The slander of Jefferson, Callender, and others, and the vilifying attacks of the *Aurora*, must have been too prominent to have escaped the notice of men of observation at the time in which they were published. In the *Aurora*, printed during the presidency of General Washington, is the following in an address to him: "If you would but for a moment put off your suit of buck-

A party then succeeded to power, and a new order of things was established. They found the country prosperous and happy ; and, as an enemy to her peace has proclaimed, she “ was in the full tide of successful experiment.” But where are we now ? Where are all those pleasing considerations, which delighted the hero, after returning from the toil of battle ? Alas ! they have disappeared ; as a visionary phantom they have glided from the view. We have had embargo and non-intercourse, and the most oppressive restrictions, to assist the policy of the Continental System of Europe ; restrictions, which, even when operating on the victims of governmental vengeance, were still more ruinous to our own country !

The inefficiency of these measures has been acknowledged by their authors. And thus, after pursuing a system of policy highly aggravating and destructive to our own citizens ; after having organized and set in motion, a host of presumptive, self-sufficient officers, with a long train of spies, pimps, and informers, to assist in forcing these bantlings of democracy into the bosoms and affections of the American people ; after having tram-

ram, and descend to that state of humility in which you might hear the real sentiments of your fellow citizens, your next levee would be the last. You would save the wreck of character now crumbling to pieces under the tempest of a universal irritation not to be resisted.” And yet these are the men, who, with their party, have filched into their service the name of Washington ; and who, at his death, shed hypocritical tears over his tomb !

pled on the rights of our citizens, and prostrated in the dust privileges sanctioned by the Constitution, and seized and imprisoned the innocent without the least probability of their subsequent conviction; after all these schemes of democratic experiment had been abandoned, as not sufficient entirely to ruin the people; behold! the grand tragedy of war is ushered upon the stage. A war, commenced in impolicy and injustice, and which must inevitably end in disgrace; continued after the ostensible cause of it was removed; after the Orders in Council were repealed; and a new pretext was established for the protection of foreigners from their native allegiance, contrary to the principles adhered to by every other nation on earth. It is thus we are involved in a war of destruction, without the means of prosecuting it; commenced without the necessary preparation, and enforced by weakness and pusillanimity. And where is our reward? Or where is the honour we have reaped from the contest? In the surrender of Hull and Winchester; or in the fulsome proclamations of Smyth? In the Quixotic attacks of Wilkinson; or in the wicked conflagration of Newark? The natural inheritors of the soil, in a neighbouring province, have been threatened with general extermination, because they resorted to arms in its defence; and that, too, by a christian nation.

The impropriety of a war, commenced under such circumstances, cannot be denied by any rea-

sonable man, even among the party who have been the authors. Without the necessary preparations even for our own defence, an army was despatched to the Canadian frontier, to fall, in a cowardly manner, on the inhabitants of a British territory. Instead of protecting sailors' rights, and advocating the principles of free trade, they were perverted to the purposes of conquest and ambition; to further the views of a tyrant, and assist in establishing his tottering power.

The question of success, when war subsists between two nations, depends on their relative numbers, their political institutions, their experience in the art of war, and their pecuniary resources. When all these considerations are taken into view, no doubt can be entertained of the fallacy of entering into a war, for the purpose of wresting from Great Britain her lawful subjects, and to protect renegadoes and deserters from their natural allegiance! For this purpose, the blood of thousands of native Americans has been offered up as a sacrifice; and all without effect, except to precipitate us nearer the vortex of ruin. For this purpose, the property of the nation has been expended, and the contents of the national purse profusely lavished on the worshippers of the Baal of power!

The democratic administrations, after years of persecuting the people; after hunting to cottages of penury and want the heroes of the revolution;

after slandering from their posts the sages who formed our excellent constitution; after having squandered in profligacy, dissipation and vice, the hard-earned treasures of our country;* after having, by a cowardly adherence to a terrapin policy, and the observance of a system of retaliation, more injurious to our own country than to any other; after having plunged us into a destructive and ruinous war, and with no possible means of continuing it; after having been guilty of such manifest impolicy, and shown so much disregard to the interests and happiness of the people, they wish to overflow the cup of their misery, by denying them the discussion of the motives of such palpable and glaring abuse of the powers with which they are intrusted! They wish to deny them the inestimable privilege of free and liberal discussion! They wish to deprive them of a right, which the constitution declares one of the most valuable prerogatives in a republican government; its necessary safeguard.

* The generosity with which the treasures of the country have been bestowed on the parasites of power, shows how far the interests of the people are respected. The wisdom and prudence of the administration are evinced in their barter with John Henry, the story of the secret service money, and the purchase from France of a part of the territories of Spain, the right to which we have yet to contest! They also bought Louisiana, in order to obtain the navigation of a river, *which had been guaranteed to us by treaty!* But it was then declared to John Randolph, by a person high in office, and by him told on the floor of congress, that "France wanted money and *must* have it!" While millions were thus expended, to gratify the partiality and passion of the men in power, behold the Browns, and Skinners, and Bidwells, purloining the treasury, and escaping the hand of justice! Glorious administration! Sing psalms to its praise, ye worshippers of democratic management!

and intimately connected with its existence and happiness! They say, war is now declared. We have passed the Rubicon. The die is cast. It is too late to recede. It is our duty to support the war, and not question its policy or justice; to assist in its prosecution, although we believe it will be the ruin of our country! Is this the liberty of Republicans, or the infuriate and wicked spirit that consigned the unfortunate Palm to an ignominious death?

This immoral and disgraceful sentiment is maintained by those who formerly clamoured against any thing like restriction of speech; and with whom liberty of the press extended to licentiousness. In this, they are exceeded by nothing but the edicts of the late Emperor of France. It is a war, they say, for principle:—But why destroy the nation, to gratify the principles of the men in power? It is a war, they say, for honour—for the defence of the rights of sailors; whose protection they are endeavouring to effect in the Canadian forests; and are asserting the rights of trade, in the conflagration of Indian wigwams!

It is a virtue to oppose a war, that appears to have no definite object. It is our duty to evince our hatred of a war, commenced for the purposes of devastation and conquest; and “to resist oppression, is a duty to God!” The fathers of American liberty were the advocates of this principle. They shed their blood in its defence. They did not ad-

here to the slavish doctrine of "passive obedience and non-resistance." They would not offer up sacrifices to the Moloch of abused power. But now, those who do not implicitly follow their rulers wherever their prejudices may lead them, are made the subjects of detraction, and meet with the threatening emanations of democratic malignity !

But war and taxes, loans and conscriptions, are the order of the day ! The grinding influence of oppression and poverty are every where seen. The miserable fanaticism, which leads men to follow, with alacrity, the path of self destruction, has votaries in abundance ; and, unless arrested by the hand of Providence, will ultimately lead us to the general vortex, which has been the burying place of all republics. A solemn beacon is presented in the fate of former governments resembling our own. The page of history affords an awful warning. And it is a maxim worthy of observation, that "history is philosophy teaching by example."

In exalting to posts of honour and responsibility weak and wicked men, have republics found their destruction. Look at Rome, once the mistress of the world ! She gave laws to empires. She was once invincible. She was unconquerable, while she preserved the purity and sanctity of her manners. She was prosperous, as long as she raised to power virtue and talents. Her name was glorious, while she spurned at the dissimulating demagogue, and smiled on the disinterested and worthy citizen.

Look at France! It was the debasement of the public mind, a depravity and licentiousness, perhaps never before witnessed in any people, that exalted a Danton, a Marat, a Robespierre, to power. And it was a lamentable, a horrid abandonment of religious sentiment, that erected the standard of infidelity in the place of the temple of the most high God! A destitution of religion and morality produced anarchy and confusion; and from these arose the most iron-handed tyranny the world has ever witnessed!*

On the preservation of the public morals depends the safety of the republic. On that rests our happiness and our glory. Those principles of philosophy, so industriously disseminated by the profligate illuminati of France, never can impart a salutary influence. Nor can that sense of discernment, which recognises no essential difference between "*twenty Gods or no God,*" add to the preservation of nations!

* The French revolution did not take place from love of country, but from the evil influence of a mistaken philosophy, which had insinuated itself into the minds of the people. It was the sect called the illuminati, who caused that event. They formed themselves into societies, and France was filled with their publications, which were circulated gratuitously. They tended to demoralize the mind, and lead the subject to believe himself absolved from all allegiance to his sovereign, and obligation to his God. This destructive principle, set forth and advocated by the talents of D'Alembert, Condorcet, Turgot, Voltaire, and others, crept, almost imperceptibly, into the inmost recesses of the heart. The great and astonishing, but lamentable events, introduced from these proceedings, are too well known. The royal family were murdered, and the philosophers themselves fell victims to the rabble, into whom they had diffused the spirit of disorganization, and a contempt of religion and government!

Great and auspicious were the circumstances of the French Revolution. Twenty-four millions of people burst the bands of royalty. They professed a solemn detestation of the gilded trappings of power, and clad themselves in the robes of republicanism. The world beheld, with wonder and astonishment, this awful change! But no sooner was this done, than the wicked spirit, that brought the unfortunate and amiable Louis to the scaffold, poured upon the guilty and infamous heads of his murderers the vial of destruction. The cloven foot of jacobinism emerged from the sickly gloom of its native hell. All, all was murder, devastation, and death! The morning sun arose to witness scenes of blackest hue, and returned to Tithonus' bed with tidings of "dreadful note!" Sanguinary scenes! Awful monuments of the dangers of revolution, and a salutary lesson to republics! It speaks a caution louder than thunder in our ears. It says, "Beware of factious demagogues. They call themselves the exclusive friends of the rights of the people. They profess to be the only disinterested defenders of the liberties of the country. They assail the character of their superiors. They circulate, with unremitting assiduity and zeal, the poison of detraction. It insinuates itself into the minds of the people, and patriotism, wisdom and virtue, fall prostrate at its influence." And such have been the lamentable effects of the intrigue and ambition of demagogues in our own country!

Although the awful clouds of adversity over-

shadow our land, we are not wholly destitute of causes of thankfulness and joy. On this memorable day, gratitude should fill every breast; for it is the birth-day of American liberty! We have also another cause of rejoicing. The Independence of Europe, one of the most important epochs in modern times, has in some measure chased the gloom of despondency from the breast of patriotism; from those, whose congenial souls can sympathize with the miseries, and be elated with the happiness of their fellow men; whose generous sympathy is not confined within the narrow bounds of a selfish and contracted sphere; but, expanding its influence, softens the terrors of adversity, and imparts to prosperity a more full and exquisite delight. Whole nations, who were compelled to bow at the footstool of the oppressor, borne down to the dust by the iron hand of a tyrant's power, have risen into new existence! And what heart, capable of realizing the blessings of peace, and feeling the importance of domestic tranquillity, does not glow with exultation at the fall of a tyrant? What breast, not exclusively the repository of vice and corruption, has not a proud ascendancy of feeling; a sacred impulse of satisfaction and delight? The feeble youth, not arrived to years of maturity, is no longer dragged without mercy from his friends and scenes of domestic peace, to hear the din of arms, and meet an untimely grave! No longer is the fond parent precipitated from all he holds dear on earth, to meet the dangers of war, and advance the spirit of ambition and conquest! The tyrant has fallen, and whole nations rise from his destruction!

France has now returned to her former allegiance. With open arms she again receives the family whom she had persecuted, and on whose innocent and virtuous heads had fallen the whole vengeance of an ambitious and wicked faction. They look, with anxious eyes, towards the deliverer of nations, and bless his holy efforts. They offer up benedictions to that great and good spirit, who, in the time of their trouble, had "whispered peace" to the conflicting elements of war. They meet each other with the smile of love, and with mutual congratulations of future felicity. Happy scenes! Thrice happy nation! Thy bliss is rendered the more exquisite, from the late experience of unparalleled oppression. The monster has fallen, and the virtuous Louis is seated on the throne of his ancestors!

To those, whose breasts are susceptible of a spark of philanthropy; to those, who value our own independence, it cannot but be a subject of joy; an event deservedly ranked among the most important occurrences of modern times. It has emancipated from the horrors of a most despotic slavery, millions of degraded and unfortunate beings. It has ceased the flow of blood in Europe, and diffused an universal joy. The sword of the allies has cut the gordian knot that bound *us* to the once mighty Napoleon!

How are the mighty fallen! He, that a short time since was so powerful as to aim at universal domi-

nion; who carried in his train, pestilence, devastation, and blood, is no longer powerful! He, who directed the destinies of a great portion of Europe, and at whose nod thousands of his miserable subjects have been doomed to suffer the disgrace of the scaffold, the torture of the rack, or the deadly infusion of poison, possesses not even the privileges of a common peasant! The hand of God has plucked whole nations from his destroying grasp, and the name of Alexander the Deliverer will be resounded as one of the greatest ornaments of the present age!

And shall *we* not rejoice, when the enemy of nations is rendered harmless? when he can no longer carry terror and destruction through the world? Unfeeling souls, who feel not sacred emotions! Profane not the name of liberty, by celebrating this day, you who cannot rejoice at the fall of a tyrant; and let not those who mourn, pollute the name of Independence, by hypocritical pretensions!* It is not that philanthropy which extends to a single individual, but a holy expansion of soul, known only to those who can realize their

* The conduct of the administration and their friends, since the fall of Bonaparte, shows that they were not attached to the people of France, but that their love was exclusively devoted to the tyrant. Their feelings were so unalterably bent to his views of ambition and conquest, and to the continental policy of Europe, that now, although millions of people are raised from abject slavery to liberty and happiness, they cannot rejoice! And let *them* put on their sable weeds of sorrow, while the friends of liberty and peace exult that the power of the usurper has been prostrated to the dust!

own blessings of liberty, and know how to estimate the happiness of others.

Although our country is involved in a disastrous war, and feels the load of oppressive taxation ; although “ shadows, clouds, and darkness rest upon it ;” yet hope is left to solace our sufferings, and cast its deceitful light before our path. We look around us, but in vain, for a proper solicitude and anxiety for our distressed situation. We find none in those who administer the government. Instead of stretching out an assuaging hand, and sympathizing in the afflictions it has created, the American government looks with contempt on the misery of its citizens, and mocks the power of solicitation ! We find nothing but a perfect indifference to the wrongs of the people ; a haughty and supercilious behaviour in regard to their deprivations. A cold and sullen apathy prevails in the cabinet ; all is indifference, except an anxiety to preserve their power, and save their fleeting popularity.

It is said the minority have conspired to ruin the country, and prostrate her at the feet of our enemy. But when did a minority destroy a state ? It is the majority that have uniformly been the destruction of nations—and our own country bids fair to furnish an example of the wickedness and depravity of majorities. The exertions of a virtuous and active minority have alone saved us from an early and untimely destruction. And thanks be to God, there are yet those in our country, who filled posts of honour “ in the times

which tried men's souls;" whose snowy locks, implated with immortal laurels, command the smile of heaven; and whose talents and virtues have long warded from our country the uplifted blow of the destroying angel! On them and on the exertions of the friends of peace, must depend the safety and prosperity of the Union. We have no Washington, or Hamilton; no Ames to weep the loss of his country's liberties! But we have a King and a Pickering, a Hanson and a Grosvenor, to oppose its fall; to interpose their talents and their virtues between their injured country and the gulf ready for its reception! Let the friends of peace present a phalanx to the party in power, calculated to deter them from the accomplishment of the nation's ruin; and if victory should not crown their efforts, let them at least have the consolation of reflecting, if she "*must* fall, that they are innocent." The power of the ancients did not consist in numbers, but in personal valour and virtue. Brutus sleeps in the ashes of his country! But there may be another Brutus, another Cincinnatus, to espouse the cause of patriotism! In former times, the mere words of Plato performed wonders. They achieved in one age what the Orphean lyre did in another. But "the school of Plato has crumbled to ruins! and the lyre of Orpheus is silent on the willows of Libethra!" Some future traveller, while straying thoughtfully over the desolated waste, and viewing the monuments of our country's glory, may apostrophize the objects that surround him: Here

20

once was the seat of a mighty empire ! Here commerce flourished, manufactures increased, and the arts and sciences were nourished ! Here government, wholesome and pure, was once established. Here life and liberty were preserved, and the rights of the people respected. Here virtue and ability were the indispensable qualifications for office. Here happiness and joy reigned in every breast. But parties arose ; discord and jealousies increased ; and it fell ! And these are the silent monuments of a great and once happy nation !”

Such may be its fate ; and such was the fate of Greece and Rome. They once shone the brightest stars in the firmament of the world. They once were the great repositories of the arts, the seats of science and of arms, and the most diligent observers of republican freedom. But they at last yielded to the turbulence of faction ; and the majority themselves determined their destruction ! The great number of wicked, fraudulent men, that have been lately intrusted with office, afford but a discouraging prospect of the stability of a free government in the United States. The body politic appears to be surcharged with weakness, ignorance and villany. The populace, as in Rome, have become a faction, and a Cæsar may make his way to usurpation and tyranny. We have more to fear than we have to expect. But, “relying on the justice of a cause of so great magnitude as the salvation of our country, we cannot but be impressed with the idea, that it is likewise the cause of heaven !”