

AN  
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DELIVERED AT

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MINISTER OF MERRIMAC.

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# ORATION.

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**S**UCH are the natural propensities, the elevated powers, the noble capacities and sublime affections implanted in man, that a state of solitude is incompatible with his dignity and felicity. A solitary individual, whose affections and exertions terminate in his own person, is an object of disgust and contempt; but where the selfish desires and passions are suppressed or regulated, where the soul is expanded and the affections extended, where there is an hearty desire, an ardent zeal, and diligent and strenuous exertions to promote social and public felicity—such a character is honorable in the eyes of all men, and approved in the sight of God.

Happy is it for society, where a spirit of patriotism pervades all ranks and classes of men; where the affection and zeal of individuals prompt them to promote the public good, and to assert and maintain the dignity and independence of the nation. Any insult offered to the nation excites their resentment and indignation. They regret public adversity; but the prosperity of their country inspires them with sensations of joy and sentiments of gratitude.

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Where such sentiments of patriotism and gratitude pervade a nation, when they have been rescued from any grievous calamity, the time of their deliverance will form an epoch in their history; and the happy day, at the return of every annual period, will be celebrated with joy and gladness. Such annual festivals, such commemorations of their escape from evils, have been a means of continuing a sense of the divine goodness and benignity, and of renewing sensations of gratitude, which might otherwise have been effaced. Such an annual remembrance of past benefits and blessings is agreeable to reason, is adapted to the nature of man, and calculated to promote the most salutary purposes. It is also agreeable to divine institutions; as the nation of Israel, according to divine appointment, by an annual festival celebrated the day of their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. Thus also that nation, after their deliverance from the destruction meditated by Haman, kept the days of Purim, with festivity, joy and rejoicing.

Upon this principle, may the inhabitants of these United States, with gladness and gratitude, celebrate this anniversary to perpetuate the memory of the happy day, in which the sages of the nation, assembled in Congress, asserted and proclaimed our Independence. The bands of our civil connection with Great Britain were then burst asunder, that they might no longer be used as chains to bind us and subject us to lawless domination.

On this happy occasion let the *dignity, privileges and character of American citizens* be the subject of our animadversion.

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The first planters of New England, from whom we claim our descent, were men of piety, learning and integrity—men of firmness and independence of character. They had juster ideas of civil and religious liberty than were generally entertained at that period. Ignorance, bigotry, superstition, and a fiery zeal for uniformity in divine worship, exiled our ancestors from the land of their nativity. Their refusal to submit to the tyrannical domination of arbitrary kings, and to the superstitious ecclesiastical regulations of bigotted prelates, was an ample testimony of their worth. They were heroes, whom neither the perils of the sea, nor the horrors of the wilderness, nor the fierceness of the savages that inhabited it, could terrify or dismay. With incessant toil, and indefatigable industry, they subdued the wilderness, cultivated the soil, and provided for their subsistence and accommodation, amidst innumerable difficulties and dangers. God, in whom they trusted, succeeded their exertions, and made bare his arm for their safety and succor. Notwithstanding all attempts to depress and exterminate them, through the blessing of God, they increased in number and strength, and arose to a considerable degree of respectability. Their settlements extended, towns were incorporated, temples were erected, churches were gathered, pastors were ordained, the duties of the christian sabbath, and public institutions of religion were observed, schools for the instruction of youth were maintained, and colleges to promote the higher branches of literature were founded. Great were their care and exertions that the generations to succeed them might form their religious sentiments and practice, their morals and habits pure and regular, that the blessings and privileges they so dearly purchased and highly valued might

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be transmitted unimpaired to posterity. Their frequent wars with the savages and with the adjacent colonies of France kept alive a martial spirit and discipline among them. And the attempts of the parent state to wrest from them their chartered rights made them vigilant and active to prevent any encroachments on their civil liberties.

But when the British Parliament attempted to tax the colonies without their consent, and claimed authority to enact laws to bind us in all cases whatever ; when our right to trial by juries was infringed, and our citizens subjected to trials beyond seas for pretended offences, and fleets and armies were sent over to complete our subjugation ; the colonies united, and, after their repeated petitions and remonstrances proved fruitless, unsheathed the sword, and appealed to the God of armies to decide the contest.

Long, tedious and bloody was the conflict. Severe were the hardships endured by the soldiers and inhabitants. But assisted by the Lord of Hosts, the armies of the Union proved victorious. Peace was restored upon honorable terms, and our independence acknowledged by the powers of Europe,

Constitutions of government for each state, and one for the union to concentrate and consolidate the energy of the whole, were formed with advantages which few nations ever enjoyed ; planned by the wisdom of sages, and freely and deliberately adopted. The Constitution of the General Government may be considered as a monument of the wisdom of the sages who formed it, and of the magnanimity of the nation that adopted it ; and ought to be highly esteemed and vigilantly guarded by every American citizen.

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After the organization of the general government, by the wisdom and sound policy of the administration, and by the smiles of Providence, the nation arose with unexampled rapidity to power, wealth and respectability. Industry found encouragement and reward. Our ships traversed all seas; our commerce extended to every quarter of the globe. Our settlements were widely extended, and deserts were soon converted into populous towns. The face of the country was changed, and many places exhibit a pleasing and magnificent appearance from the application of art and labor. For years past the condition of American citizens has been the most eligible, and might be envied by every nation of the earth.

Happy Americans! enjoying blessings, privileges and advantages, more than can be numbered, and greater than can be described—descended from a race of illustrious heroes—a people highly favored of Heaven, dwelling under the shadow of the Almighty—each citizen by his suffrage a sharer in the sovereign power—their rulers proceeding from themselves, appointed by their free choice—possessing constitutions of government, in which the privileges of the people, and the relative powers of each branch of the legislature, and of the legislative, executive, and judicial departments, are accurately delineated, described and defined—by the multiplicity of presses, by schools, academies, colleges, and universities, having the advantage of diffusing useful knowledge among the people, and of educating of their sons for the learned professions, or qualifying them for the most important offices in the government—inheriting a fertile soil, and territory widely extended, and embracing differing climates, yielding a variety of pro-

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ductions, not only sufficient to supply the wants of the inhabitants, but affording an ample surplus for exportation. Besides these, the productions of the adjacent seas make great addition to the emolument and wealth of the country. What great advantages are also derived from the great extent of our sea coast, from our numerous harbors and navigable rivers, and from our extensive forests and fields that abound with materials for ship-building and navigation? The ingenuity, dexterity, industry, and enterprize displayed by the inhabitants of these States of late years must have been pleasing to every one, who delights in the honor, safety and prosperity of the nation. On a view of our happy situation, we may rejoice in the divine benignity, that *the lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places, and that we have a goodly heritage.*

How great, how inestimable are our religious privileges and advantages! The sun of righteousness hath shined upon us. The gospel with all its rich blessings hath been unfolded. A dispensation of love and goodness, of grace and justice, the most glorious the world ever beheld!—a dispensation, teaching all truths necessary to be known, all duties necessary to be done, to render us good citizens, or members of any community on earth, and meet subjects of eternal glory and blessedness in Heaven! By believing its doctrines and obeying its precepts, men become assimilated to angels, likened unto God, and bear his image! Into the sacred volume we may look, and make the most free enquiry, and form our creed, our morals and habits, our hopes and expectations, by its sublime doctrines and holy precepts. Highly favored, especially in these North-

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ern States, with a pious and learned ministry, and the sacred institutions of the gospel maintained in our churches.

A people so highly favored of God, are their conduct and character correspondent to their inestimable blessings and exalted privileges, will be a religious, *wise and understanding people*, superior to any other nation of the earth. A sense of the distinguished favors they receive from the Most High will inspire them with gladness and gratitude, and engage them to glorify his name by obedience to his will. Their services of devotion will be frequent and fervent. They will carefully observe the institution of the christian sabbath, and reverence the sanctuary, frequent the temples of God, and tread his courts with gladness, to perform the sacred solemnities of divine worship. Every family will be a house of prayer, and every heart as a temple of God, a residence for the holy spirit. Their religious principles will pervade their whole conduct, and influence them in all stations and relations in life. Benevolence, charity, humanity, justice, truth, sobriety, diligence in business, peaceableness of behavior, all virtues useful and ornamental to society, will be encouraged and practised. All vices that degrade the man, or are detrimental, injurious or destructive to society, will be unknown. They will love their country, and use their utmost endeavors to transmit the privileges and blessings they enjoy to posterity. They will faithfully discharge every duty incumbent on them as citizens, and cheerfully sustain the burthens which the exigencies of the state impose.



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On days of public rejoicing they will avoid all excess; nothing will be transacted unbecoming the man, the gentleman, the christian.

In times of danger they will not be dismayed; they will have confidence in God, who ruleth among the nations. They will seek his favor and protection; and use those means of safety and defence, which his word permits and his providence furnishes them.

They will select their rulers by open consultation and manly deliberation. Men of the best talents and most approved fidelity, men that *fear God and know the times*; will be preferred to fill offices of power and responsibility. And have they erred in their choice, and are the measures of their administration improvident, weak, pusillanimous, unjust or oppressive, at the ensuing election they must give place to successors of more wisdom and magnanimity. Unprincipled men, seeking offices by flandering their rivals, imposing on the ignorance, or flattering the prejudices, passions, and vices of men, will be spurned and rejected.—A wise and free people, while they submit to lawful authority, and look with candor on the measures of government, will exercise vigilance in respect to the proceedings and conduct of their rulers; especially they will view with a jealous eye any attempt to alter the constitution of their government, lest those who are appointed to guard and defend the bulwark of their liberties, under the specious pretence of ameliorating the structure, aided by the blind confidence of their constituents, sap its foundations.

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Among a free, wise and understanding people great care and attention will be paid to the education of the rising generation. Their young men will be instructed in the principles of religion, and inured to sober habits and good discipline. Those, of whom their fleets and armies will be composed in times of war and invasion, will be men who have been taught to regard their own character and the honor of the nation, to do *violence to no man, to accuse none falsely, and to be content with their wages, that is, to protect the persons and property of their countrymen, whom they have taken arms to defend—to suffer any hardships rather than be guilty of any actions that shall stain their own character, or sully the honor and reputation of the nation—to fear no danger in the discharge of their duty—to fall in battle, rather than desert the post assigned them.* Their bravery will not be like that of the robber or assassin, who fears no danger in executing purposes of revenge, avarice and ambition; but love for their country, and zeal to defend it, and to maintain its honor and independence, will stimulate them to the most strenuous exertions, and render them undaunted in the hour of danger.

What perfection of military discipline was attained in the family of Abraham, who by the valor and exertion of three hundred and eighteen men, born in his house and trained under his inspection, vanquished confederate Kings, and conquered an army, that had subdued kingdoms, taken cities, and desolated countries? Such were the honesty and integrity of his men, that the rich treasures and valuable spoils they had recaptured were restored to the original proprietors, without the least embezzlement. They par-

took of the spirit, generosity, and magnanimity of their leader, who said to the king of Sodom, *I have lifted up mine hand unto the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not, from a thread to a shoe latchet, take any thing that is thine.* David was the most approved and most valiant of the kings of Israel, who subdued the cruel enemies of that nation.— What strictness of discipline he maintained in his army we may learn from the testimony of the servants of Nabal, who said concerning them, *The men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields. They were a wall unto us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.* Cannot equal perfection of discipline be accomplished in armies composed of young men, that are brought up in families of christians, who are children of Abraham, and who profess to be subject to the Son and Lord of David, to imbibe his spirit and to follow his example, who hath taught his disciples, when called, to *lay down their lives for the brethren?* A nation, whose lives, liberties, property and territory were defended by an army of such principles and bravery, would be safe from the oppression of tyrants, and the invasion of a foreign enemy.

In a time of persecution, a king of France sent orders to one of his generals to massacre all the protestants that should be found in the department where he commanded : the humane general returned answer to his sovereign, that in that place there were none but *honest citizens, and brave soldiers,* and therefore it was impossible to execute his orders ; intimating that brave and honest men could not per-



petrate deeds so atrocious and inhuman. In modern times had France have contained none but *honest citizens and brave soldiers*, what dire calamities that nation would have avoided! A Marat and Robespierre, and their bloodthirsty coadjutors and successors, instead of immolating victims taken from cities and palaces, would have been confined to those from the fold and stall! Had the inhabitants of Europe have consisted only of *honest citizens and brave soldiers*, they would not have experienced those convulsive revolutions, nor have witnessed those scenes of horror, which have astonished the world.

The Lacedemonians, a Commonwealth of the ancient Grecians, in times of peace were employed in disciplining their young men, training them to martial exercises. The youth thus trained and disciplined, they considered as their wall of defence. Hence by a proverbial expression a well disciplined army has been termed the *Spartan Wall*. An army composed of men educated in christian families, accustomed to sober habits, animated by love for their country, actuated by the principles of christianity, led by skilful commanders, protected by the Lord of Hosts, would be as a WALL OF FIRE around a nation to defend them; and the religion of the gospel, influencing the hearts and lives of the citizens, would be the GLORY OF GOD in the midst of them.