



# ORATION.

---

THE connexion of remarkable events with the scene of their accomplishment, gives importance and sanctity to many places, which offer nothing to attract the eye. The benevolent weep over the spot which has been moistened with human blood, and patriotism burns with fresh ardour on the battle-ground where the liberty of its country was achieved. Amidst the ruins of Greece, or the deserted fields where her temples once exhibited magnificence and art, which modern skill is proud to imitate, the traveller is lost in the mingled recollections of classic fable and historick truth. To his romantick view, the dim forms of twilight present the dance of the Muses. Melancholy and slow, the breeze passes over broken arches and fallen columns, but it bears to his ear the strains of Orpheus. Along the margin of the Piræus, he bends his course towards degraded Athens. Suddenly his steps are arrested;—he remains in breathless attention,

for the rising wind dashes the waves against the beach, and he hears the declamations of Demosthenes.

The pious, but mistaken, monk fixes his residence near the tomb of his Saviour. On the summit of Calvary, the wonders of the Cross rise in vision to his soul. He sees the sun hiding his face from the iniquity of man, and the sufferings of the Redeemer, and the graves opening at the voice of Him, who is “the resurrection and the life.” Under a cruel and remorseless despotism, his mode of existence is a continued martyrdom; he is insulted, and robbed, and threatened with death, but he will not forsake the place where his salvation was accomplished.\*

*As the association of thoughts* thus connects memorable transactions with a particular spot, it also gives peculiar interest to the terminations of successive periods of time. The weeks and months of an infant’s life are regularly numbered, and when they are exchanged for years, the day of its birth is never forgotten. As he advances, gloomy and solitary, to the tomb, the anguish of

\* This passage was written under the impression produced by M. de Chateaubriand’s account of Jerusalem.—The representation of Dr. Clarke is very different from that of his eloquent, but romantick rival.

a bereaved father is yearly renewed, by the return of the season that left him childless.

*This association* is useful as well as natural. Much of the knowledge, and of the practical wisdom of mankind is derived from experience; and the stated review of past occurrences, repeats and enforces the instruction which they furnish. This subject is one of the small number, on which men of all ages and countries have agreed. They have every where marked the time of interesting facts, and thought it wise to transmit the memory of great events, by yearly celebrations.

In accordance with this just and universal sentiment, the people of the United States annually commemorate the day, on which they declared themselves independent. It would be a tedious and useless labour, to recount the benefits which have resulted from this decisive act. They are familiar to our thoughts, and may be perceived in the daily course of our lives. The topick, however, ought not, on this occasion, to be entirely omitted, and a slight reference to it may be useful as a guide to reflection, though it convey no knowledge.

It is hardly necessary to say, that in the latter years of our colonial state, the conduct of the parent country was tyrannical;—that it was

founded on a false principle, and calculated to reduce us to complete dependence. But the attempts of the British ministry to regulate our affairs by the representatives of others, and to subject us to taxes for the support of a government in which we had no share, were firmly and successfully resisted. We threw off their authority; and, under the guidance of a just and merciful Providence, took the direction of our interests into our own hands. After the contest which followed this bold measure had been finished, and experience had taught us the necessity of union among ourselves, an assembly of venerable men, conspicuous for great talents and virtues, was delegated to frame a national constitution. The result of their deliberations was a form of government more free, more rational, and better calculated to promote common and individual prosperity, than any which the wisdom of the old world had ever produced. It has been tried, and, though in later times it has fallen under the direction of incompetent men, its excellence is proved, by our abundant enjoyments. Long may it last to bless our country, and long may we celebrate the event that led to its adoption!

We are now assembled for this purpose, under circumstances which are peculiarly favourable. Since the last anniversary of our Independence we have been again delivered from the danger

foreign control;—our liberty has been established a second time. I speak not of an escape from the terrour of British arms.—The *man* has little to fear from the power which assailed the *child* in vain. Our gallant countrymen have gloriously shown their ability to repel *invasion*.—I speak of the termination of *a war*, which associated us with a band of robbers;—*a war*, which involved us in the guilt, and threatened us with subjection to the control, of a conspiracy against the order, liberty, and happiness of the civilized world;—*a war*, which made us abettors in a plot, for the destruction of all that is valuable in the possessions, or the hopes of man.

In the latter half of the last century, a new order of men appeared, who derived their origin from the corruption of France. They called themselves *philosophers*, and denounced, as the offspring of delusion, all the opinions which mankind had before held sacred. They pretended to have discovered, that government was a usurpation, property a fraud, and religion a curse. They affected to pity the condition of man in society, and deplored his violated rights. They expressed a wish to release him from the shackles which superstition and tyranny had wound about him, and to advance him to absolute perfection. Immense exertions were used to diffuse their principles, and the contagion rapidly spread in a country, which had witnessed the debaucheries

of a luxurious court. Their disciples were numerous, and were joined by the ambitious and discontented, who were willing to become distinguished upon any terms, and whose situation might be improved by a change, though it could hardly be made worse. When the cabal became sufficiently numerous, the design was deliberately formed, of destroying the religion and governments, which, according to their doctrines, had so long enslaved mankind. The first attempt was made in their own country, and it was completely successful. The government was overthrown, and the king murdered. The worship of God was exchanged for that of a prostitute, and “eternal sleep” inscribed on the gate which leads to the mansions of the dead.—The consequences were such as might have been expected. France, the centre of elegance, and politeness, and refinement, became a living representation of Hell.—But the efforts of French philanthropy were never meant to be confined to its own country: its views extended to the regeneration of the whole human race. Religion was proscribed, and hostility to kings openly avowed; and the arts and the arms of the republick were soon turned against the surrounding nations. It was determined to destroy the established institutions of Europe, and to erect upon their ruins *the dominion of France*. This dazzling scheme, fostered by the successes of the republick, became a favourite with the nation, *and it has never been*

*abandoned.* Under every form of jacobin, consular, and imperial tyranny, *universal sway* has been the object of the French. For twenty years, their faithless rulers incessantly laboured, by every species of fraud and corruption, of treachery and violence, in peace, as well as in open war, to destroy the liberties of the world.—At length, the great question seemed about to be decided.—Napoleon assembled the most powerful army that has ever appeared to curse mankind. He prepared for the invasion of the only continental power that could offer resistance.—The contest was of no ordinary character. It was to determine, whether a large part of the human race should remain in their present condition, or be tortured into a new and tremendous engine of military despotism—whether the improvements of eighteen centuries should continue, or be lost in the atrocities of Gothick barbarism. The struggle was for the laws, religion, comforts, and freedom of man.—Trembling and aghast, the world awaited its issue.—At this moment—*the only republick on the globe* joined the cause of the invader! We, meanly and basely, declared war against his principal opponent!

Did I say *we*? I retract the foul aspersion. *The followers of Washington*, to a man, protested against this shameful deed. They acknowledged the injustice of England, but they knew that the injuries which France had committed



were much greater. They believed, that a sincere desire for peace, on our part, would have produced a settlement of differences with the former of these powers, on honourable terms. They urged the impolicy of making war without preparation; and they boldly declared, that the demands of the administration could not be enforced. The result has shown the justice of their predictions. Not one object, for which war was declared, has been obtained. Before that measure was known in England, the *orders in council* were removed, and the *impressment of seamen* was the only ostensible ground for prolonging the contest. Yet, on the conclusion of peace, no provision was made against the continuance of that practice.

If then, it be asked: “What has been gained by the war?” the plain answer is, *nothing!* For *nothing*, have thousands of our countrymen been cut off by the sword, and the hardships of military life! Our commerce has been interrupted;—our revenues wasted;—a long list of taxes imposed;—and an immense sum added to our national debt:—and all these calamities have been incurred for—*nothing!* Let not the partisans of the administration boast of the glorious efforts of our countrymen, in defending their soil. The honour belongs to the *people*, and to the *states*, and not to the national administration. *Their* war was an *offensive war*, waged for the purpose of compelling Great Britain to acknowledge, what they were pleased

to term,—our rights. They were unable to effect any thing more than their own disgrace. For *three campaigns*, they prosecuted the invasion of Canada, without gaining an inch of territory. But England in her turn became the invader, and our capital was disgracefully surrendered to a handful of men. It was now seen, that the people must defend themselves.—That our rulers could declare war, but were unable to carry it on.—That though they were bound by the constitution to protect the country, its deliverance was not to proceed from them.—The character of the war was evidently changed. It was no longer an attack upon a neighbouring province, against which we had not the shadow of complaint, and many of whose inhabitants had emigrated from our territory; but it was *for the protection of our own soil*.—Here was a cause in which our countrymen might *lawfully* display their courage. Numbers came forward, prepared to repel the enemy, and redeem the honour of the American name. Many who hear me, thus displayed their attachment to their country; and the name of “Washington Guards” was assumed by a band of men, who were ready to prove that they were worthy of that honourable title. When the spirit of the people was thus roused, their real character appeared.—They showed that they were true descendants of the men, who, in the revolution, foiled the efforts of Great Britain. From the tameness with which we had endured insults, and injuries,

and plunder, and confiscation from France, our character had miserably fallen: but it is now restored, and Americans are once more respected.

In rendering a just tribute to the heroism exhibited on the land, we ought not to forget the child and boast of federalism,—*Our Navy*. It was long thought, that British bravery and skill were unequalled on the ocean. That illusion has been dissipated, like a mist, by the thunder of our cannon. The mistress of the seas has trembled on her throne, for the trident has shrunk in her grasp.

A longer continuance of the war would, no doubt, have furnished new proofs of the courage and talent of our naval and military heroes. But who would wish it to last for such a purpose? It is the part of the bully to love fighting for the indulgence of pride or animosity, and a war for the display of valour, would be only an accumulation of murders.

We have, then, abundant reasons to rejoice, in the restoration of peace. Our countrymen are returning from captivity; and our soldiers are released from the hardships, and the physical and moral contagion of camps. Our seacoast is secure from marauders, and our towns from lawless conflagration. Our finances may be gradually restored to the flourishing condition produced by the wise plans of HAMILTON, and preparation

may be made for just and necessary war. The regular pursuits of useful industry are again resumed, and the *white* canvass announces to the distant sailor, that American ships are on the ocean. Blessed be that Providence, which, in the most threatening seasons, has ever preserved this favoured land!

When we look at the situation of our own country, we see much cause for gratitude in the return of peace; but, on extending the view to Europe, the reflecting mind gains new and powerful arguments of praise, for so great a mercy. After numerous and glorious efforts for their independence, the nations of Europe saw the head of the banditti of France forced into exile, and the legitimate monarch seated on the throne. It was now thought, that the balance of power might be once more adjusted, and provision be made, for the long continuance of peace.—But Napoleon has suddenly appeared, and, without the loss of a man advanced to his former station.—The world now sees, that its dangers, and distresses, and exertions must be repeated. Bonaparte has, indeed, sweetly sung the song of peace. He has affected a moderation utterly foreign from his nature. He has pretended, that his views would be confined to the happiness of the French, and that universal empire has no longer any charms for him. — But the discerning cannot be deluded by such

flimsy professions. He, long since, organized falsehood into a system, and he can employ every species of fraud, as readily as open warfare. The simple truth is obvious to even a common understanding;—he needs time to complete his preparations for war, and wishes to lull his enemies into security. His great talents have been always turned to the single purpose of acquiring power; and it is absurd to believe, that recent events have wholly changed the disposition of the man. The desire of conquest is not with him an occasional, transitory feeling, arising from particular conjunctures and favourable circumstances; but it is an essential part of his nature. If he lose it, he must lose his identity. Ask the eagle to cease from preying upon the weaker inhabitants of the air;—take from the hyena its relish for blood;—but expect not Napoleon to refrain from violence. On this subject, his acknowledged character furnishes a much surer criterion, than his language. The most authentick accounts represent him as a man of outrageous passions, and we must expect revenge from the murderer of Palm. Undoubtedly, he entertains the deepest animosity against those, who drove him in disgraceful flight from Russia; stripped him of his conquests and usurped authority; and sent him into ignominious exile.—But, if the character of the man were not a sufficient omen of the future troubles of Europe, the circumstances of his return

ought to convince incredulity itself. He was received with open arms by the French soldiery, and by them raised again to the throne. The fact speaks volumes;—that ferocious set of men cannot endure the insipidity of civil life. They are impatient to march again to conquest and to plunder, and they hail with joy a leader, in whose talents they confide, and whose disposition accords with their own. It has indeed been speciously argued, because no resistance was offered to his return, that he is beloved by the people, and that he is the man of their choice;—but the inference is false. Worn out with the various horrors of successive revolutions, the unarmed inhabitants of France are incapable of opposing any pretender, whom their military tyrants shall choose to elevate. They are ready to receive any government, and swear to any constitution, that may be imposed upon them. France is a military nation, wholly ruled by its armed force; and they, who do not compose a part of that force, are destitute of political weight. The contest, which is about to recommence, is not with the *people* of that country, but with the *army*, and its ambitious leader.—This contest cannot be avoided.—It must either begin immediately, or after some short interval, in which every spring of action under Napoleon's control shall be wound up, and every nerve newly braced. If the nations of Europe were so far deluded, as to suppose that peace could be main-

tained, they would only imitate the ostrich, which endeavours to escape from danger, by hiding its eyes.

Let us rejoice that we are removed by distance, and secured by peace, from the distressing conflict. Happy for us was the temporary depression of the usurper. But for that event, we might still be arrayed on his side. May we hereafter escape the guilt of aiding his nefarious schemes! May we never again raise our hands in favour of the power, which blotted every other republick from the map of the world!

After a long period of anxiety, privation, and danger, prosperity is again our lot. The thick smoke of a volcano lowers over the prospects of Europe, but ours are lighted by a cloudless sun. It is fervently hoped, that the calamities of the past war will prevent us from wantonly commencing another,—that we shall with firmness maintain a strict neutrality. If the wishes of rulers and people unitedly tend to this course, we may hope to witness a decrease of our domestick dissensions. The bitterness of party spirit, which has so long prevailed, is a most lamentable evil, and the present seems an auspicious period for attempting its diminution. Much of it arose from the different opinions entertained as to a war with England. That cause of dis-

pute is now removed. The restrictions upon our commerce, which excited such great and just complaint, are taken off; and the propriety of fostering a navy, so often urged by federalists, appears to be acknowledged. The true interests of the country may now be pursued, without endangering the places of men in power, and no obstacle to their consulting the general good is apparent. If this shall hereafter be their aim, and not the preservation of their own influence with a party, it is to be hoped that they will have general support, and that our present differences and animosities will be buried in oblivion. We have, indeed, reason to exercise constant watchfulness, and even to entertain a degree of suspicion, with respect to a set of men, whose policy, hitherto, has been insincere and ruinous. Yet we ought to remember, that measures and not men,—principles and not individuals,—are the proper objects of political attachment and aversion. To our principles let us ever be firm. The reflection of a moment will determine their nature, and stamp them with the character of truth;—THEY ARE THE PRINCIPLES OF WASHINGTON. Of Washington! and shall that venerated name call forth no tribute of affection and gratitude? It needs not my feeble voice,—for it has been repeated with admiration in every land. It needs no monument,—no graven brass;—no sculptured stone;—for it shall live, when *they* are buried in the ruins of



forgotten time.—But this is miserable praise.—To transmit a name to successive ages, is alike the achievement of magnanimous virtue, and of splendid guilt. The conquering hero wins together, the lasting admiration and abhorrence of the world.—The honour of our Washington is of another kind. His wonderful talents were devoted to noble purposes. He was great, but he was also beneficent. His worth is felt and admired by liberated millions. It is recorded in the freedom and happiness of a nation. To this bright example let us often look, and as far as feebler powers will permit, let us follow his steps. If we faithfully obey his maxims, and adhere to his principles, our political course *must* be right.

In considering the dissensions which exist in our own country, and the more lamentable disturbances of other portions of the globe, the patriot and philanthropist mourns for the infatuation of men. Yet, over the eastern hills, a line of light announces the approach of brilliant day. The firm and rapid advancement of *knowledge*, and of *morals*, assures us of the establishment of human liberty and happiness. They are the certain, and the only means, of accomplishing this great end. An ignorant and corrupt people are always *slaves*. A just God has so framed the constitution of things, that they *cannot be free*. Take off the shackles of organized despotism, and they fall

under the tenfold greater oppression of *anarchy*. Such a people is a passive mass, receiving form and motion from the arts of demagogues.

On the other hand, it is impossible that tyranny should long subsist, in a virtuous and enlightened nation. The just principles of rational government will extend to their rulers. The infrequency of crimes will occasion the repeal of severe laws, and the abolition of sanguinary punishments. There will be no stimulus to ferocity, and cruelty will expire for want of nourishment. If, unhappily, the highest authority shall fall into the hands of a man of different disposition from the mass of the people, he will find it difficult to procure agents to execute his oppressive measures. The knowledge of their rights, and the firmness of conscious rectitude, will support the subjects against his encroachments. There is a degree of courage, of fortitude, and of decision, arising from just principles and upright conduct, which nothing else can supply. The man who is characterized by such principles and conduct, is elevated to a holy superiority to oppression. His dignity is not the offspring of pride, but of the deepest humility. It proceeds from a conviction of the absolute weakness, of the utter meanness, of every thing which falls within the limits of time. He knows, that whatever may be the designs, the rage, or the violence of wicked men, they are under the control of a superiour power.

He is assured, that in the last extremity, there is a support which cannot fail.

Despising the dreams of theorists, we must then look for the freedom and happiness of the world, to the extension of useful knowledge and sound morality. In this view, we have the greatest encouragement from their present state, and progressive nature. *Learning* is carried to an extent hitherto unknown, and the acquisitions of one age are not, now, abandoned by the next. The *arts* which contribute to the convenience and comfort of man, are improved and multiplied. So great is the advancement of *science*, that we almost esteem it the product of modern times, and its application adds daily to the list of useful inventions. The *waters* are now traversed without the aid of the winds, and *lightning* and *pestilence* are disarmed of their powers. Under the magick of genius and benevolence, a new phenomenon has appeared, and *sand* and *stones* are turned to *the instruction of the poor*.

The progress of *morality* is equally remarkable with that of knowledge. The false philosophy, which robbing man of his future existence, changes him from a god to an insect, is sinking under the weight of its own absurdity. The only sound code of morals, is translated into various languages, and scattered over the world. The missionaries of the living God traverse every

ocean, and brave every climate. Their message is comfort to the afflicted, hope to the despairing, sight to the blind, and life to the dead. Already the degraded Hottentot rises from the pollution that ranked him below the brute, and puts on the decency of civilized life. The miserable Esquimaux, dwindled by cold and hunger to half the stature of his species, rejoices to know, that there is *a land* which famine, and tempests can never approach. Already the idols of heathen superstition totter, and the Crescent grows pale in the light of the Cross.

“The march of these events is irresistible.” Not, as they from whom the expression is borrowed, would profanely add, “because destiny has decreed them;” but, because their impulse proceeds from infinite wisdom, benevolence, and power. The same spirit which has commenced their career, will continue it;—*they cannot stop*. The errors, which, like parasitical plants, have wound about the fair form of Christianity, preventing its growth, consuming its substance, and hiding its beauty, will all be cut off. Released from the persecutions of ages, and collected from a thousand regions that have been wet with the blood of their race, the descendants of Jacob will march to *their inheritance* under the banners of the hated Cross, and find their Prince and Saviour in the despised “Galilean.” The impure code of Mohammed will be for-

gotten, and the demigods of pagan credulity, sink to the graves of the heroes from which they sprung. The clear light of truth will pervade every land, and folly, and corruption, and sorrow, dissolve in its beams. The priest of Brachma shall cease to immolate the victims of a bloody superstition on the funeral pile, or under the wheels of the car of Juggernaut. The afflicted African shall be acknowledged as a brother, and the Indian shall peacefully cultivate the soil over which his fathers roamed. The Tartar shall become industrious, the Turk gentle, the Arab honest, and the Taheitan chaste. The animated machines,—the half sentient masses of flesh and blood,—the carrion-fed reptiles, that hide the land and the waters of China, shall rise to the dignity of men. On this subject Faith swells to Enthusiasm, and kindles into rapture, for she sees the certain and the near approach of the period, when war, and violence, and fraud, and oppression, and bloodshed, and misery, shall be swept from the earth.