

# ADDRESS,

DELIVERED IN

TRINITY CHURCH, GENEVA,

AT THE

CELEBRATION

OF THE

43d ANNIVERSARY

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

5TH JULY, 1819.

BY THE REV. ORIN CLARK,

RECTOR OF SAID CHURCH.



GENEVA, N. Y.

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**THE** transactions which pass under the general name *trade*, and which are meant to be decried and condemned in the following ADDRESS, are those extensive, unprincipled speculations into which numbers of every description in the community have been led by the hope of great, easy and speedy gain. Not, certainly not that exchange of the spare commodities of almost every country for those of some other country. This commerce conduces to the comfort of the world; cherishes the best powers of the human mind, and is, perhaps, even *necessary* to the extensive acquisition of science; and the Merchant, the *true* Merchant, may be ranked among the most useful characters in community.

**I**T is our happiness, brethren and fellow-citizens, to have, on every return of this anniversary, a new inducement to celebrate it with sentiments of joy and gratitude; as every return of it brings us additional confirmation of the value and stability of the blessings which it was instituted to commemorate. It is of the nature of all human institutions and enjoyments, that they cannot be properly estimated till brought to the test of experiment. Appearances, however promising, can never safely be trusted; and it is not uncommon that those institutions which, to the eye of speculation, present the most flattering aspect, and afford the fairest promises of utility and permanence, are found, when brought to this test, destitute of either of these qualities. The hand of time and experience, therefore, only can fix upon institutions of human origin the stamp of stability and value. Of the worth and excellence of the blessings of which the day reminds us, no doubt could ever be entertained by liberal and enlightened minds; yet, before an experiment had been made—while our national liberty and independence were as yet in the cradle, many good and wise men, regulating their views by the lessons of history, and taking into them the infirmities, the fickleness and obliquity of the human character, apprehended their maintenance upon the broad basis of equality and universal suffrage, for any length of time, to be extremely problemati-

cal, and rather desired, than expected, that they would be permanent.

But, happily, they have survived a sufficient period of time, and a sufficient variety of trials, to dissipate all such apprehensions. They have borne, unimpaired, the lapse of almost half a century : they have sustained the sharpest assaults of domestic dissention : they have resisted the shocks of foreign war, and, so far from injury, seem to have derived additional firmness and vigor from the trial. This is a sufficient eulogy upon the wisdom and value of our civil institutions, and upon the wisdom of their immortal founders ; and may well justify the grateful commemoration of their establishment.— This is sufficient evidence that they carry in them the principles of stability, and to convince us that, unless we are wanting to ourselves, they can never be subverted.

But let us not imagine that there is no danger here ; for in truth there is the greatest. Most of the governments, particularly those of the popular form, that have subsisted in the world and are now no more, have been laid in ruins, not by the arms or intrigues of external enemies, but by the hands of the people whom they protected ; and this often when nothing, perhaps, was further from their wishes and designs, than their subversion. But habits and pursuits have been encouraged and indulged, which perpetually, though imperceptibly, undermined the great pillars upon which they rested ; and the fatal tendency of such habits and pursuits has

been too late discovered to be counteracted. And no little reason there is to fear that we, as a free, independent nation, have already advanced very far in this path to ruin.—It will not, therefore, be unsuitable to the occasion, nor deemed, I trust, any desecration of this place or of the sacred office sustained by him addressing you, to advert, cursorily, to the means by which only, as citizens, we can hope to preserve and transmit, unimpaired to posterity, our exalted civil privileges.

It is a principle sustained by Divine authority—by the constitution of man, and to which history can furnish no exception, that righteousness only can exalt and secure the blessings of civil liberty to a nation; while sin, a general disregard of the sacred obligations of morality and religion, is not only a reproach, but a sure omen of ruin to a free people. Vice, by degrading the mind and checking all its noblest aspirations, naturally prepares men to set lightly by their liberties, and to yield with little or no resistance to the fetters of servitude. To speak, therefore, in general terms—the only solid basis of a free, popular government, is the practice and prevalence of the pious and social virtues. Its subversion, according to the present constitution of things, must follow the general neglect of these virtues. But the practice and prevalence of these will, in no inconsiderable degree, depend upon the general, ordinary secular habits and pursuits of a people: those habits and pursuits to which, as individuals, they addict them-

selves to procure the means of subsistence; to acquire property and distinction. And the habits and pursuits of this sort, which I presume will invariably be found the most favorable to the cultivation of the pious and social virtues, or rather least dangerous to them, are those which, while they conduce, in general, to individual competency and a general distribution of property through the community, do at the same time limit its wants to its own resources; and thus avoid dependance upon foreign states. The necessity of thus limiting our wants, at least to the security of national freedom and prosperity; if not to the existence of those virtues which are their surest support, is a position so obvious, that it may seem superfluous to state it; nor would it be thought necessary, had not our practice been a perpetual denial of it ever since we have had being as a nation. While celebrating, year after year, our independence, we have, with an incomprehensible inconsistency, been, from the very period of its establishment, studiously forming habits and prosecuting pursuits which placed us in a state of servile dependance upon almost every nation of the earth with whom we could have intercourse. Yet the absurdity of this course might be passed with a smile, did it not involve consequences of a nature too serious not to excite alarm. But alas! these, it is feared, have already reached the very vitals of our happiness, our virtue, and our safety, as a free and independent people. Recent experience has shown us into

what extreme and distressing embarrassments indulgence in such a course must plunge us, when the assertion and protection of our rights and liberties may demand its suspension; and the state of public morals, it is apprehended, presents but too convincing a proof that *this* is the least of the evils of which it is productive. And the fact is, though private interest will always attempt to conceal or palliate it—the fact is, it is vain to dissemble—the pursuits of commerce, of *foreign commerce extended in any considerable degree*, are, from their very nature, subversive of all those sober habits of industry, prudence and economy which constitute the strongest safeguard of virtue and freedom. If they open the way to wealth, they open also the floodgates of vice, and invariably generate that insatiable cupidity—that love of money, which we need not the authority of an apostle to satisfy us, is the root of all evil; the bane equally of public and private virtue. Affording facilities for the sudden and enormous accumulation of wealth, the first ill effect from them is luxury, and unbounded extravagance in expenditure. This leads to the multiplication of artificial wants, even beyond the limits of the largest fortunes to supply. All, therefore, the rich equally with the poor, become necessitous. The next consequence is, every man becomes selfish upon principle: every benevolent and patriotic sentiment is extinguished: the public good is forgotten and abandoned; and virtue, freedom, happiness—all are sacrificed at the

shrine of self-indulgence, and for the gratification of the moment.

But, again,—this is but one of many of the evil results of a general or extensive competition for the tempting baits of commerce.

It needs no proof that it is essential to the stability of a *really* republican government, as well as to the interests of virtue, that the property of a community should be distributed among the many: of course, whatever has a tendency to throw it into the hands of the few, must endanger it: for the maxim that money is power, has been too often verified, and too long tested, to admit of question; and no aristocracy, perhaps, is more invulnerable, as well as oppressive, than that which is reared upon this basis.

Here, then, is another formidable peril to our institutions from that mania for commercial speculation which has of late, and long pervaded our country, and which all classes of society have been too ready to encourage.—While alluring men from those sober pursuits by which, diligently prosecuted, competency and limited independence are sure, though gradually, to be acquired, and tempting them to risk their all for the attainment of the prize, of which many must fail, it throws into the hands of a few fortunate adventurers enormous estates, and in proportion to their magnitude, leaves the unsuccessful competitors, and indeed the whole body of community *comparatively* in a state of poverty and dependence. Nor is it the least of the evi-

That this melancholy result is for a time prevented by a resort to "*unsubstantial facilities*," furnished by monied institutions: for this expedient, while it *seems* to palliate, can but increase the evil, and must, in the end, give a yet more ruinous ascendancy to successful accumulation.

The present embarrassed state of the times is a sufficient proof and illustration of these remarks. And, happily, we seem to have discovered the cause of the evil before it is too late, it is hoped, to eradicate it. Yes, our sufferings, it is hoped, will teach us the important lesson which obviously results from the principles stated—which is, that our interest, our happiness, and our security as a free and independent people, essentially depend upon our discouraging the spirit of commercial adventure; limiting our enjoyments to the products of our own soil, and seeking for competence and wealth *principally* in the pursuits of agriculture, and the mechanic, and manufacturing arts. This is unquestionably essential to real independence, and I may safely add, equally essential to the permanency of our republican institutions. And even in point of wealth, though individuals might be losers, yet the country would, on the whole, be a gainer by a general attention to these pursuits. For a country's riches, it will undoubtedly be admitted, consist in the products of its soil, and the industry of its population: and certainly their aggregate will be increased in proportion as this industry is employed in the augmentation or im-

provement of these products. Every hand employed upon the soil really adds to the public stock, by drawing from a resource before unopened; and though in given circumstances it should be contended, that the prosecution of the mechanic and manufacturing arts could not contribute to national wealth, yet as in ours they are evidently a safeguard to our independence, and only can secure us in the enjoyment of wealth derived from other sources, the prosecution of them, at least to the extent of our wants, is sanctioned by every principle of prudence and policy, even were riches the main object. But there is a much higher point of light in which these pursuits should be viewed. They bear a friendly aspect upon the moral sentiments and habits of a people: they are favorable to habits of industry, order, economy and sobriety; and through the influence of a well known principle of our nature, difficult, perhaps, to be explained, have a tendency to cherish love of country and freedom. And of such habits and sentiments, I scarce need add, must the body of a people be to maintain or enjoy, for any length of time, the blessings of a free government.

Our course, then, if we would preserve these blessings, is not to be mistaken. Let us dash from our lips the cup of foreign luxury. Let us extinguish that wild spirit of adventure which, in the pursuit of competence and wealth, spurns the safe calculations of prudence and the patient efforts of industry; and, with this spirit, that unbounded cupidi-

which it is sure to produce. Let us look exclusively to the resources of our own soil, and our own labor, for every article of necessity, of convenience, and of pleasure; or at least counteract, as far as possible, those pernicious habits which bind us to dependance upon foreign commerce. Let us encourage manufactures and the mechanic arts; and with them, the interests of learning and science, morality and religion. Let us cherish habits of moderation, frugality and sobriety in our desires and enjoyments, and train up our offspring to those sober pursuits which are best calculated to enure them to the practice of those virtues. Thus may we hope speedily to remove our present embarrassments, and be sure to prevent their recurrence. Thus may we hope, under the smiles of a gracious Providence, to spend our days in the enjoyment of our happy privileges, and to transmit this sacred bequest of our fathers, unimpaired to distant posterity. But on the other hand, if we desire to survive these privileges and to seal their ruin with our own hands, let us persist in the course we have pursued for a few years past: cast off the sober habits of industry: neglect the resources of our own country: seek by commercial adventure and speculation, to supply their place: create and indulge a fondness for foreign luxuries, and with them an appetite for foreign vices. Let this course be persisted in, and our independence will be soon little else than a name: its speedy virtual, if not formal subversion, will be but in the nat-

ural order of things, and according to the ordinary course of God's providence. For tho' as yet, we have viewed the subject only as citizens, and adverted only to those natural principles by which, according to the established constitution of things, the fortune of nations is usually regulated, yet we must not forget that we are Christians, and that it is God who ordained and administers this constitution—that he is Governor among the nations, and seldom fails to doom to extinction or slavery those who abuse the blessings of civil liberty; who in their enjoyment, neglect and forget Him: that therefore the best, the only ground of security for them is regard to the authority, respect for the institutions and discharge of the duties of religion, which inculcates and will, if heartily embraced, insure the maintainance of those virtuous and prudent habits whose cultivation has been urged. Let this, therefore, be remembered and engraven upon our hearts—Let God be feared; let him be your King, and have your allegiance and homage, and you need never fear the sway of any other. Under His protection your *republic*, your *institutions*, your *liberties* and *independence* will be secure; and shall, unless your children swerve from your example, remain, to the latest ages, a name and a praise in the whole earth.