

Madam Pillsbury from her Obedt. Servt.
The Author

AN

ORATION,

PRONOUNCED AT

GROTON,

IN THE

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,

ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, A. D. 1807,

IN COMMEMORATION

OF THE

INDEPENDENCE

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

BEFORE THE

REPUBLICAN CITIZENS

OF THE

TOWN OF GROTON,

AND THE

VICINITY;

BUT PRINCIPALLY THE

INHABITANTS

OF THE TOWNS OF

CHELMSFORD, DUNSTABLE, LITTLETON, LUNENBURG, WESTFORD,
HARVARD, TOWNSEND, SHIRLEY, PEPPERELL, ASHBY
AND BOXBOROUGH.

BY SAMUEL DANA.

OLIM HÆC MEMINISSE JUVABIT.

AMHERST, N. H.

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1807.

GROTON, JULY 4, 1807.

SIR,

THE Committee for making arrangements to commemorate the **FOURTH of JULY** in this place are desired by the Citizens, who have honoured the occasion with their presence, to return you their sincere and hearty thanks for the appropriate and ingenious Discourse, which you have delivered before them.—While we gratify them, we, as your neighbours and friends, are happy to add our own plaudits, and to request of you a copy of your Oration for the press.

A. BROWN,
WILLIAM NUTTING,
CALVIN BOYNTON,
JAMES LEWIS, JUN.
JACOB L. PARKER,
WILLIAM M. RICHARDSON.

TO THE HON. SAMUEL DANA.



GENTLEMEN,

YOU well know, the short time which I had to prepare the ephemeral Compilation, which was yesterday addressed to you. It was not designed for the press. But as it is more respectful to comply with your wishes than to deny them, the copy is herewith submitted to you.

S. DANA.

TO THE COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS.

GROTON, JULY 6, 1807.

ORATION.

FRIENDS, FATHERS AND BRETHREN,

II STAND before you at this time, appointed by a special Committee of some of the inhabitants of this town, and desirous to offer something for your entertainment, upon the return of this National Anniversary. On *their* behalf an apology may be necessary for having selected a person to perform the duties of Orator, without pretensions to talents for the office, and without any claims to genius or originality. This field has so often been explored, its productions arranged by the hands of masters, its choicest flowers culled, and the richest garlands formed by the ablest orators of our country, that novelty* in a discourse of *this kind* can hardly be expected. A subject, which has so often employed the first talents in America, can neither require nor admit much additional illustration.† The unparalleled instrument, which contains the declaration of Independence, with a few plain comments, will satisfy this respectable audience, without any new scenery, dresses or decorations.

* Professor Adams' Inaugural Address. † Idem.

Suffer me, then, for a few moments to attempt to trace some of the causes, which led to the establishment of this nation, and expatiate awhile upon the effects, which have followed that event.

Our forefathers left their native country, where they were forbidden the liberty of conscience and the enjoyment of their religious privileges.* They crossed a trackless ocean, and arrived at Cape Cod in November, 1620. Being brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees, and blessed the God of Heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from many perils and miseries.†

The history of their lives exhibits for many years all the hardships attendant upon a new settlement, while they were struggling with the ruggedness of the country and the merciless savages of the wilderness. But the sweet enjoyment of their religious privileges was sufficient to induce them to persevere in the cultivation of a howling wilderness. One of their great designs was, to obtain for themselves and their posterity the liberty of worshipping God in such manner, as appeared to them most agreeable to the sacred scriptures.‡ In their political state, the powers of government, as well the legislative as executive and judicial, were exercised by the same body of men. Their exactions upon the colonists were few, and they were contributed without re-

* Hutchinson's History Massa. Thomas & Andrews' edition, page 9. † N. England's Memorial, p. 16. ‡ Hutchinson.

luctance. In the year 1634, the first delegates from the people, to the number of twenty-four, appeared as a representative body. By their first resolution they declared, that none but the *representatives* of the *people* had a right to exercise those *sovereign acts* of power—Raising money and taxes, the disposing of lands, the establishment of laws, and the appointment of officers.* Their history for several years following exhibits the various attempts of their parent state to interfere in their affairs, exemplified in the abolition of the the old, and granting them new Charters for their forms of government. The details attending these measures will exceed the limits of this discourse. On the part of the mother country, we find constant and unceasing endeavours to mould the government to suit their particular purposes, and to hold their children in perpetual subjection : On the part of the colonists, a uniform struggle to manage their *own* affairs in their *own way*.

An acute English writer has given the true character of our countrymen, which has always been the same. “ They left their native land in search of freedom, and they found it in a desert. Divided, as they are, into a thousand forms of policy and religion, there is one point in which they all agree ; they equally detest the pageantry of a king and the supercilious hypocrisy of a Bishop.”†

* Hutchinson, p. 368. † Junius, p. 134, Philad. edition.

The project of an American taxation might have been longer meditated, but the memorable *era* of the Stamp Act in 1764 was the innovation, that gave a general alarm throughout the continent.* Thomas Hutchinson, a native of Massachusetts, was among the number to advocate the right of a Parliamentary *taxation*, without a *representation*,† and among the first, who felt the full weight of popular resentment : in one night his *furniture* was *destroyed*, and his house broken to pieces, in the tumult occasioned by the news of the Stamp Act,‡ leaving *him* an awful example to all those, who shall embrace his principles.§ The right to tax us in all cases in an assembly where we were not represented, was the great hinge, on which the dispute between Great-Britain and her colonies turned. The consequences, which would have resulted from yielding to such a claim, were obvious to every reflecting mind. Americans, *faithful* to the *character* of their ancestors, and preferring even death to slavery,|| prepared for the mighty contest. A demand for a three-penny duty on tea imported into the then British Provinces drew forth the fire of the flint, and the landing of the tea in many places was never permitted. A determination was shortly to be had, whether on the one hand there should be an unconditional submission to the power and influence of Great-Britain, or on the other hand

* Mrs. Warren's History, vol. i. p. 27. † Idem, p. 114.
 ‡ Idem, p. 83. § Independent Chronicle, March, 1807.
 || Cowper's Reports, p. 673, Rex, vs. Horne.

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resistance, at the hazard of every thing dear. It was soon discovered, that nearly all the officers of the government were enlisted on the side of their creators.

Distressing doubts appeared among the yeomanry of the country, whether we should find statesmen to guide our councils, and commanders to direct our armies; but it was soon discovered that our country possessed in her bosom her Ciceros, her Sciacolas, her Fabiuses and her Scipios. The Amphictyons of the western world met in council on the 5th September, 1774, and prepared for the mighty conflict. Hostilities soon commence; the din of arms is heard. WASHINGTON appears, and is invested with the command of our armies. Still we are like a child growing towards manhood, *rebelli*ng, though justly, against the tyrannical authority of a parent. Various overtures are made for a settlement of the differences, but the important pursuit is not relinquished. In the summer of 1776, RICHARD HENRY LEE, of Virginia, was the first, who dared to propose the decided measure of Independence;* he was seconded by JOHN ADAMS, the sage of Quincy. He rose with the face of intrepidity and the voice of energy, and invoked the *god of eloquence* to enable him to do justice to the cause of his country. After a long debate, in which was displayed the energy of brilliant talents, and all the

Scævolas

* Mrs. Warren, vol. i. p. 306.

strength of argument, a large majority of the members of Congress appeared in favour of an immediate renunciation of allegiance to the crown, or any future subjugation to the king of Great-Britain.* A declaration of the independence of America was drawn up by the then ingenious and philosophic JEFFERSON; and in the language of the late Doctor STILES, he poured 'into it the soul of the continent.† On the 4th of July, 1776, it was signed by order, and in behalf of the Congress, by JOHN HANCOCK, president, and a delegate from Massachusetts. Thus, my brethren, was this nation born in a day!

The immortal WASHINGTON, aided by the councils of our sages in Congress, and supported by a people determined to live free or die, led our armies through difficulties before unknown, and dangers unparalleled, to conquest and victory, and obtained for us an honourable peace.

But it was soon found, that common dangers, not our articles of confederation, held these states together. A request to the states to invest Congress with power to lay an impost duty of five per cent. on goods imported, broke the links of this feeble instrument; and we were again afloat without helm or compass "upon the tempestuous ocean of liberty." Difficulties arise, and the threatening storm of clashing opinions gathers. But our Lockes and Sidneys again assemble, and

* Mrs. Warren, vol. i. p. 308. † Dr. Bidwell's Oration.

form our present federal compact. Near twenty years has this charter been upon the full tide of successful experiment. Thick clouds have arisen in foreign nations, and darkened our hemisphere ; but the wisdom of our executives has hitherto dissipated them. We have generally had our war partisans, and many times their insidious propositions have seemed to gain ground ; and some internal regulations have been thought in their tendencies to conceal a deadly poison, which would in the end destroy the constitution ; yet the remedy has been found in the essence of the constitution....frequent elections. And the God of our fathers, who has so wonderfully appeared for this nation, has preserved us from war, that we may arrive at more mature strength ; he has defeated the schemes of its partisans, and turned their counsels to naught ; and we are yet in the possession of the blessings of peace. Happy Americans, you inherit a land literally flowing with milk and honey !

Cast your eyes on the devoted countries of Europe : Behold their nations swiftly passing away ; behold their religion subverted ; behold their fairest cities plundered and burned ; behold their domains laid waste and destroyed. Almost every arrival brings accounts of fresh slaughter of the human race. When will the God of armies say to the destroying angel, It is enough ?—Return to your own peaceful shores ; here let men of piety and devotion behold in these United States, and

particularly in New-England, the numerous beautiful edifices dedicated to the worship of the Most High, and the labourers of every denomination, who are constantly sent forth into the vineyard. Our nobles are from among ourselves, our governors proceed from the midst of us, and we have our judges as at the beginning.* Let the jurists of the country rejoice, that the halls of judgment stand open, and that impartial justice is administered freely and without delay. Let the disciples of *Galen* and *Hippocrates* be glad at the progress of their art, that the present enlightened Legislature of Massachusetts have at their late session made advances toward granting to *their Society* a township of land in the District of Maine to enable them to pursue their enquiries into the causes of disease, and to extend the healing art. Let the lovers of science find pleasure in beholding the numerous colleges, academies, and schools, which at once adorn our country, and disseminate knowledge. Let our farmers glory that our hedges are pruned, our meadows drained, our upland cultivated, our trees thriving...in fact, our whole country is becoming a garden; "and nothing is taken from the mouth of labour, but what is indispensable for the support of government." Let the bosom of the merchant swell with honest pride, that our canvass whitens the ocean of every clime, and our ships return laden with their rich-

* Jeremiah.

est produce. Let all classes rejoice in beholding the vast machinery, the fruit of the fertile invention of our countrymen, by which immense labour is saved. Let the opposers of the peaceful acquisition of territory be informed, that more than one third part of the raw cotton manufactured in the United Kingdoms of Great-Britain, is exported from the United States of America. In this amazing contrast, is there not abundant cause of gratitude to Him, who holds the destinies of nations in his hand, for the numerous favours he confers on us as a people. Let the meed of praise be given to our faithful representatives in the Congress of the United States. Let the just tribute of merit be given to the transcendent policy of a JEFFERSON, who, aided by the counsels of a MADISON, a GALLATIN, a DEARBORN, a SMITH, a LINCOLN, a BRECKENRIDGE and a RODNEY, has preserved us to this time in *peace*. Illustrious citizen! disinterested patriot! it is among the everlasting decrees, that your labours for the benefit of mankind *must* come to an end.* Greatness will depart in glory! Envy will be silent! All will acknowledge you to be the first of citizens and best of men, and none will feel hurt by your superiority. Recorded honours shall gather round your monument, and thicken over you. Your reputation is a solid fabric, and will support the laurels that adorn it.†

* Hon. Judge Minot's Eulogy on Washington.

† Junius' Letters.

With pleasure we this day address our former brethren in arms, and hail them upon the return of this glorious Anniversary. The battle of Bunker's Hill, the defeat of Baum by the venerable STARK, and the capture of Burgoyne, are lasting testimonials of what may be achieved by the militia. Your situation as soldiers is honourable to yourselves because it is useful to your country.* Are there among you any who are ready to say, Why do we toil and spend our strength...why do we incur expense, and devote our time to the learning of the use of arms, to protect the property of our richer neighbours? Let me answer, that nation, which has not within itself the means of defence, will soon become a prey to some lawless power. In what manner shall we have a defence? Will you have a standing army?† Never! never! never! The injured shades of *Maverick, Gray, Caldwell, Carr* and *Attucks*, slain by the soldiers of a mercenary army on the 5th of March, 1770, when exhibited before a New-England audience, produce a frenzy like the bloody mantle of Cæsar, when shewn by Mark Anthony before the Roman populace.‡ Even the small specimen of an army attempted at Oxford, when no enemy was near, when no service was assigned them but to await the orders of their officers, spread *alarm* in the community, and the body politic exhibited

* Gov. Strong's General Orders to the Militia.

† When this interrogatory was put, there was an apparent involuntary burst from all the officers and soldiers, No! No! No!

‡ Shakespeare's Julius Cæsar.

spasms like the body natural when agitated by convulsions. JEFFERSON, whose piercing eye pervades all the resources of the country, has told us, that “our reliance must be upon the militia, to repel the first assaults of an invading enemy, and that regular troops must be formed from them afterwards.” The possessors of the country must be the defenders of it.* Persevere, then, in acquiring the art of tactics ; let your uniforms always be neat and clean, your arms bright, and all your equipments in good order ; then may your country repose in safety upon your columns for defence. And should any daring despot presume to make a demand of you similar to that which the judges of Edward I. of England made of Earl Warren, shew the title to your independence ! let your answer be (drawing a sword †) by *this* our ancestors acquired it, and by this we will continue to hold it. ‡

My respected Fathers,

ALREADY have most of your compatriots of the revolution been gathered to their fathers. An important duty still remains for those of you, who yet survive ; *you*, who devoted the meridian of your lives to the acquirement of *independence....* *you*, who remember the *blood* and *treasure* which this *independence* cost, consecrate your children up-

* Gov. Sullivan’s Inaugural Speech.

† Here a naked sword was actually drawn and exhibited before the militia.

‡ Rapin’s History of England, folio edit. p. 359.

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