

AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED AT SALEM,

ON THE

Fourth of July,

1806.

BY HENRY ALEXANDER S. DEARBORN.

“ A day, an hour of virtuous Liberty,

“ Is worth a whole eternity of bondage.”

SALEM :

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1806.

SALEM, July 4th, 1806.

DEAR SIR,

In behalf of the Republicans of Salem, we return you our sincere acknowledgements for the elegant and very appropriate Oration delivered by you this day on the subject of American Independence—and we request you to have the goodness to furnish a copy for publication.

We are, with sentiments of esteem,
Your obliged, and obedient servants,

JACOB CROWNINSHIELD,
HENRY ELKINS,
JAMES DEVEREUX,
JOSEPH SPRAGUE, jun.
SAMUEL LEE,
JOHN HATHORNE, jun.
BENJ CROWNINSHIELD,
JOSEPH WHITE, jun.

} Committee of
Arrangements.

HENRY ALEXANDER S. DEARBORN, Esq.

SALEM, July 4th, 1806.

GENTLEMEN,

Feeling happy, if the Oration which I had the honour of delivering to the Republicans of Salem on the anniversary day that gave birth to our Independence, met with their approbation—agreeably to your polite request, I willingly commit it to your care for publication.

With sentiments of esteem,
I tender the salutation of friendship,

HENRY ALEX' R S. DEARBORN.

Messrs.

JACOB CROWNINSHIELD,
HENRY ELKINS,
JAMES DEVEREUX,
JOSEPH SPRAGUE, jun.
SAMUEL LEE,
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AN
ORATION.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,

WHILE the Eastern Continent is convulsed by the horrors of war, and despotic ambition unfurls the banners of desolation, the Citizens of the United States are enjoying the blessings of Peace, under the benign and cheering influence of an Independent Republic. Those just and magnanimous principles, which urged an injured and insulted people to an heroic vindication of their natural and political rights, have preserved us from that universal wreck of Empires, to which the nations of Europe are inevitably consigned. If we travel in retrospect through a long succession of ages, until we land on the remotest confines of history, we shall be enveloped in a gothic and impervious darkness, rendered more terrifically sublime by a few transient scintillations of Liberty, that at periods have flashed conviction on the benighted minds of the wretched multitude,

and conducted them in triumph to pour out their oblations on the sacred altars of their goddesses.

But unprotected from the malevolent attacks of despotism; unconscious of the machinations that unwarrantable and vaulting ambition meditated for their destruction, those halcyon days of security and peace were soon amalgamated with the cheerless night of tyranny and woe. Barbaric ignorance and monkish superstition, yoked with the sycophantic intrigues of aristocratical idolators, prostrated the sacred temple of Liberty, and founded on its ruins the iron throne of oppression.

The Genius of Freedom, banished from the ancient Republics of Greece and Rome, wandered a neglected exile round the globe, palled in the mantle of commiseration for the revolting sufferings of enslaved and degraded man, until hailed by the hardy sons of Columbia, as a protectress and guardian angel of their natural and indefeasible rights. On these shores, on the Fourth of July, seventeen hundred and seventy six, did she unfurl that standard, under which her bold champions, on the plains of Marathon and Corioli, purchased by their Godlike valour, the laurel wreaths of immortality. What scene more transcendantly noble could have been pictured to human imagination, than to behold a great and generous people, struggling in the cause of Liberty, marshalled in hostile opposition to the usurpations of tyranny—spurning the vile, perverted and garbled pretensions of kings—bursting from the shackles of despotism, and declaring themselves a Free, Sovereign and Independent Nation. The complicated acts

of political inquisition, which imperious and sanguinary Britain had inflicted on these United States, added to the hostile invasion of a mercenary soldiery, enkindled such an expansive flame of patriotism, that the whole country, from the shores of New-Brunswick to the frontiers of Georgia, reverberated, Liberty or death ! America shall be independent, or a howling wilderness shall again wave its umbrageous foliage over these cultured plains ! Animated by the justness of their cause, and frowning indignant upon the groundless pretensions of Britain to assume unlimited domination, the loud clarion of battle sounded the signal of revolt. The bannered eagle streamed to the passing gale, as they cast over their martial shoulders the panoply of defiance, and grasped the falchion of slaughter. A glorious cause nerved their arms. Roused by those stimulating sentiments of heroism which accompanied the Spartan phalanx of Leonidas to the ever memorable straits of Thermopylæ, to stand as a defensive rampart between the rights and liberties of their country, and the invading armies of Persia, they consecrated their arms to the service of the Union, and bade defiance to the conspiracies of despotism. Notwithstanding they had to contend against the superior force of regular troops, who had long been trained to murder, inured to hardship in the tented field, and disciplined to deeds of arms in war's stern school, yet did not our gallant champions shrink back, or stride unwilling to the embattled plain.— Bold and adventurous as the immortal Hannibal, they traversed the unexplored and savage wilderness of the North. Not even the complicated horrors of nakedness and hunger, joined to the in-

clemency of a Canadian winter, were sufficient to abate the fervid glow of patriotism. Zealous and indefatigable to a degree unparalleled in the annals of warfare, the most formidable obstacles presented but a feeble barrier to our enterprising, resolute and determined soldiery. They fought not as the degraded vassals of feudalism, scourged and driven into the ranks by the relentless cruelty of regal ambition; but the crying injuries of a bleeding country were the powerful propellants that urged them to battle. They vindicated the incontrovertible rights of man, and battled in the universal cause of justice and independance.

The principles of a Republic had long been exiled from the eastern shores of the Atlantic—All the merciless engines of aristocracy were leagued in opposition to the philanthropic struggles of aspiring genius, whilst the insatiable scythe of persecution swung its keen set edge through the rich and luxuriant scions of germinating freedom.—Mankind had for such a length of time grovelled in ignorance, and borne the incumbent yoke of bondage, that the impeccability of Princes became consecrated by antiquity, their crimes were emaculated by the mystic rites of political necromancy, whilst the mania of royalty operated as an infallible panacea for every disorder of government. But the monarchical and papal veil of delusion was rent in twain by “the irresistible genius of universal emancipation.” The coruscations of regenerated science dissipated the dark and portentous clouds that enveloped the hallowed temples of truth, streaked the American welkin in the bright and vivifying rays of republicanism, and

conducted us in triumph to the enjoyment of peace and the glorious establishment of an independent republic, founded on the broad basis of a just and equal representation of the people, and the immutable rights of man. The citizens of the United States here exhibited to the astonished world the omnipotency of *Liberty*—that although “individuals may perish, truth is eternal. The “rude blasts of tyranny may blow from every quarter, but freedom is a hardy plant, that will survive the tempest, and strike an everlasting root “in the most unfavourable soil.” The illustrious warriors, who achieved this grand and important revolution, and emblazoned their military escutcheons by the most valorous acts of heroism, must ever be held in grateful remembrance by every friend to his country. Their names will be hung up in the same tables of immortality and fame as those who fell in the battles of Plataea and Salamis, or poured out their lives under the ramparts of Warsaw. Succeeding generations will eternize their splendid achievements in all the energy of enrapturing pathos, mantle them in the most brilliant trappings of eloquence, and in their praise the bards of future times will harmoniously strike their tuneful lyres. Let the aged sire, hoary in the service of his country, assemble at nightfall his youthful offspring, and tell them the story of the revolutionary war;—Let him relate to them the barbaric cruelties inflicted on their suffering country, while contending with the rapacious minions of Britain;—Let him tell them of the wanton conflagrations of Charlestown and Esopus—of their wretched inhabitants, stripped of their wealth and beggared of that soil, which long their hands had

titled—destitute and defenceless age, tottering on
 assistant crutches—distracted mothers, surrounded
 by infantine innocence—their maternal breasts
 chilled with dreadful horror and anguish keen op-
 pressed—all cast vagrants on the world's wide stage,
 buffeted by the angry storms of inexorable war,
 with nought but the broad spread curtains of hea-
 ven as a protecting canopy, while the gloomy si-
 lence of midnight gleamed with the aspiring flames
 of their devoted dwellings;—Let him tell them
 the sanguinary tales of the Indian massacres; the
 revolting and hideous calamities borne by our in-
 jured citizens, while famishing and manacled in
 the pestiferous holds of prison ships—And when
 he perceives their young hearts palpitating with
 indignant rage, and the tear of sensibility trickle
 down their cheeks, glowing with the ethereal flame
 of patriotism, let him exclaim, Such were the sac-
 rifices, by which we triumphed over our enemies.
 —Let him enumerate the proud constellation of
 heroes who struggled in that memorable war;—
 Let him plant in their tender minds those invigor-
 ating principles, which bared their martial arms—
 Then shall they learn duly to appreciate the rights
 and privileges of freemen.

Fellow-Citizens, when we look back to the
 times of Seventy-six, and contrast the deplorable
 situation of our country at that eventful epoch,
 with its present grandeur and prosperity, “rolling
 “on in the full tide of successful experiment,” the
 pleasing reflection must expand every patriotic soul,
 and give a latitude to the imagination, boundless
 as the ocean of eternity. The mild features of our

Constitution, stripped of those feudal and monastic restraints, which are the peculiar characteristics of regal governments, hold out the most powerful inducements for laudable ambition. The illustrious statesmen, who drafted this invaluable charter of our political rights, learned from the melancholy experience of past ages, and familiarized with those momentous causes, which have given rise to the establishment, progress and final dissolution of empires, sedulously endeavoured to guard against the Scylla of national destruction, and avoid the Charybdis of ignorance. They had mourned over the ruins of fallen nations, who from their local situation and fiscal advantages, might have stood the shock of ages, and bade defiance to predatory usurpation, had they trusted less to the magnanimity of a warrior, guarded with an eagle's eye the gigantic strides of selfish ambition, and founded their imperial glory on the imperishable basis of science, rather than the imposing grandeur of foreign conquest, and the delusive splendor of victorious armies, returning in triumph, clad with the spoils of war. The pomp of battle and the allurements of plunder, have ever been employed as the stepstones of despotism. There is a prodigality of confidence, and an irrefragable attachment, pervading the emulative breast of every soldier for a gallant and successful commander, which imperceptibly hurries him into an unconscious acquiescence in the most daring acts of unwarrantable usurpation.

Such is the peculiar character of man, that unless his mind is strengthened by education and matured by precept and experience, he is bound an

easy victim in the chains of servitude, and willingly immolates his rights at the unhallowed shrine of royalty. Conscious of the ruinous effects produced by such vain fantasies, the gilded pageantry of titles and hereditary qualifications were by the wise architects of our government made to bow subservient before the omnipotency of sterling talents and intrinsic worth. National virtue, and an universal dissemination of knowledge, were deemed as the grand bulwark of our *Liberties*—the Chinesian wall of protection against the hostile incursions of the Tartars of innovation, and the merciless domineering partizans of faction. Encouraged by our national policy, the regenerated spirit of enquiring genius, has thrown open the massy portals of science, and exposed to the effulgent beams of day the engulfed Herculaneum of Literature, which was long entombed by the lava of persecution, piled incumbent during the dark ages of superstitious barbarity. Schools of learning and seminaries of science are nationally encouraged and rapidly increasing throughout every quarter of the union. Where once flamed the savage altars of massacre, academic institutions announce the rapid progress of civilization, and proclaim a simultaneous excision to the wasting pestilence of bigotry and hoary error. On those grounds which were long profaned by the sacrilegious idols of infidelity, now stand the mansions of our God.—Happy country! Where a rich and luxuriant soil, embracing all the vast variety of climes, from the fruitful tropics, to the more rugged regions of the arctic-circle, & favorably intersected with extensive rivers, has given a stimulus to agriculture, and holds forth the most flattering prospects of ample

reward to the commendable exertions of honest industry. Here no arrogant and domineering lord, strips from the enterprising husbandman the meritorious fruits of unremitted labour. He is disenthralled from the palsying imposition of oppressive taxes, and the cruel mandates of titled grandeur, by a power more omnipotent than the magical touch of the Lictor's vindicta, or an emancipating enrolment upon the Censor's books. It is the independent spirit of our Constitution, which equalises every American Citizen, and places him above the indignant frowns of arbitrary power. On the fertile banks of those majestic waters, where the wild and untutored aborigines dozed in their smoaky wigwams, now rise in the majesty of the Doric order, harmoniously associated with the colossal strength of the Tuscan, numerous and thickly populated cities, superbly embellished in all the splendour of ancient architecture—where the rough hewn timbers of savage convenience yield to the stately Corinthian column, around whose towering coronal the sculptured acanthus is gracefully entwined. Those streams, which for ages freighted nought but the slender batteaux of warring Indians, are now swollen by numerous galleys, deeply laden with the rich stores of agriculture and foreign merchandize, whilst along our lengthened sea coast, happily indented with commodious harbours, ride the triumphant fleets of commerce. The enterprising spirit of the adventurous American has taught the astonished nations of Alyaska's frozen shore, to read, bannered on our national flag, the rising greatness and prosperity of this infant republic.—We have trade with the equatorial climes, and our ships are freighted from Lapland, southward

to the pole—from Europe's realms, to Asia's wealthy shore. The seas round every land groan with the burthen, and are whitened with the canvass, of American commerce. Wonderful people! Blessed by the most bounteous donations of Providence; secure from those revengeful turmoils, that are deluging whole kingdoms in blood; reclining in security and peace, under an administration, actuated by the disinterested motives of patriotism; whose sole ambition is their country's greatness, and the security and happiness of its citizens, and whose only wish is its perpetuity—You have far outstripped the statistical calculations of the most enthusiastic admirers of your unequalled system of government.

Other nations will take example from the United States, and build up republics on the prostrated ruins of aristocracy. Then shall "Knowledge and Liberty, the two descending angels of enlightened man," commence an eternal reign. "The symbols of war shall be made a burnt sacrifice to reason, and the olive branch of peace proclaim the triumph of humanity."