

1 Wolcott 8:9:8

A N.

O R A T I O N,

SPOKEN BEFORE THE SOCIETY OF THE

C I N C I N N A T I,

OF THE STATE OF

C O N N E C T I C U T,

Met in HARTFORD, on the 4th of JULY, 1792:

45.
1932

BY THEODORE DWIGHT, ESQUIRE.



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1792

*At a Meeting of Connecticut State
Society of the CINCINNATI, at
Hartford, the 4th of July,
A. D. 1792.*

VOTED, That Maj. SEYMOUR
and Capt. BULL, be a Com-
mittee, to wait on *Theodore Dwight,*
Esquire, to return the Thanks of
this Society for his ORATION de-
livered this Day, and to desire a
Copy that it may be printed.

A true Copy,

J. TRUMBULL, Sec.

To

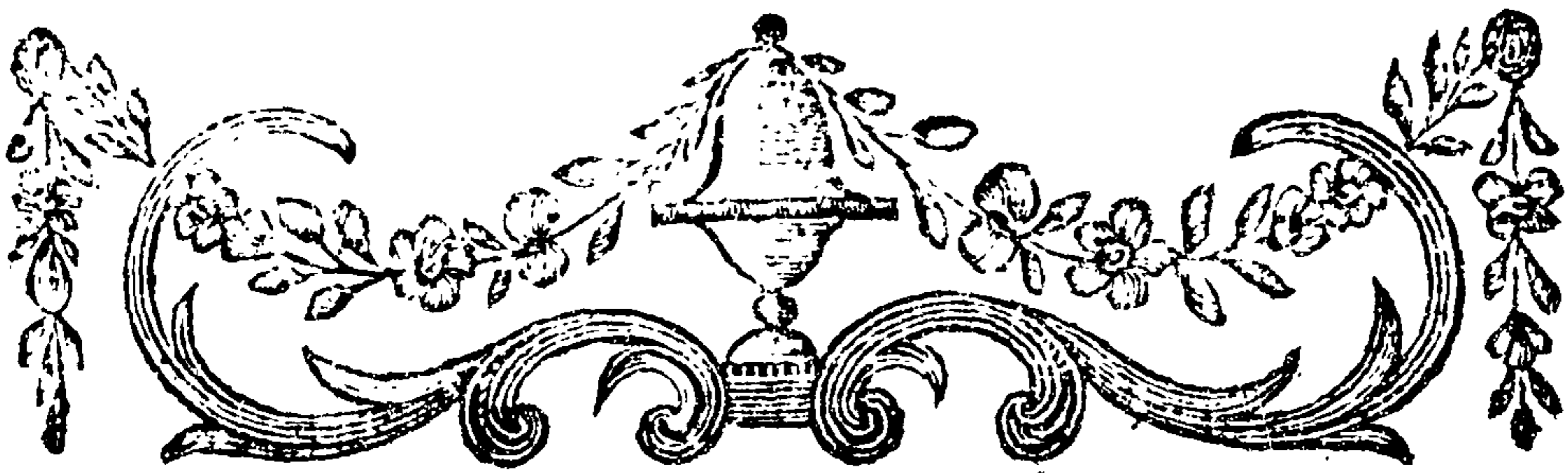
JEREMIAH WADSWORTH, Esquire,

PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI,
OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT.

S I R,

A SIMPLE Proof of sincere Esteem and Gratitude, affords higher Pleasure to a Mind not distinguished by Ostentation, than can possibly be derived from the most painful Effort at Adulation. In the Belief of this Remark, the following ORATION, composed and spoken at your Request, without Professions, or Flattery, is dedicated to you, by the Author.

HATFORD, July 12, 1792.



AN O R A T I O N.

IT may perhaps be impossible on the present occasion to suggest an idea, which has not often been the subject of contemplation to every member of this Assembly. But as the impression of events, even the most interesting and important, becomes easily effaced from the mind, it may not be an unpleasing, or unprofitable employment, to recur for a few minutes to the consequences of that illustrious event, which the present anniversary is designed to perpetuate. And if this remark is just as it respects the audience in general, it applies with peculiar force to the society, at whose request the speaker has undertaken the task. As actors, and sharers, in the toils, the dangers, and the glory of the late American Revolution, the stated period of recollection, must be, to them, the stated period of rational joy. Under the influence of this truth, he claims the attention of the Assembly, and particularly the

society of Cincinnati, to those events, which have succeeded as consequences of the Independence of the United States. Nor will the view be confined to the nation of which we are citizens; but will be extended to Europe; and perhaps may stretch into imagination, and prophecy. And should the speaker, in his progress, discover the extravagance of a zealot, the only apology he has to offer, is a truth which no American will deny—that the love of freedom is nearly allied to enthusiasm—and his flight, if not directed by the tame guidance of reason, will be winged with the warmest affection for human happiness.

WHEN the citizens of the United States, assembled in Congress, affixed their hands and seals, to the declaration of Independence, the world beheld with astonishment a few infant Colonies, engaged in a cause of infinite difficulty and hazard, in opposition to the force and vengeance, of the wealthiest and most haughty nation on earth. Accustomed to habits of submission to sovereignty, nothing less was expected than absolute slavery, or total destruction; and every friend to the freedom, and happiness of mankind, waited with the highest solicitude, the event of a contest, on which was suspended the existence of Liberty, and the rights of human nature. The inhabitants of this country, instead of being spectators, were the actors on this stupendous scene. Alarmed at the voice of hovering danger, without a moment for reflection, or preparation, they were impelled to union and exertion. The standard of Indepen-

dence was erected, citizens of every description rushed into the field, the useful implements of agriculture were beaten into weapons of war, and the onset was distinguished by veteran fortitude and bravery. The progress of freedom thro' the war was sometimes wild and irregular ; her sacred purity was often stained with murder and depredation ; but her struggles were crowned with glory and success. The military, and naval forces of tyranny, retreated with infamy from the field of action ; while acclamations of thanksgiving, ascended from the lips of millions, to the God of heaven, for the restoration of peace, and the establishment of freedom and happiness.

ANIMATED by the same virtue and patriotism, which planned, and accomplished their Independence, the citizens of the United States, in the enjoyment of profound tranquillity, have framed, adopted, and put into operation, a system of national government, which, if possible, reflects higher honour on their wisdom, union, and love of liberty, than even the events of the war. Under the influence of this government, the nation has assumed a new, and more dignified character ; her councils are admired, her wisdom and firmness revered. To her, the nations of the earth look for lessons on rational happiness, and her progress is traced by the eye of prophecy, to the summit of national dignity and felicity.

ON these events, every being in the United States, and especially those of my fellow citi-

zens who fought, suffered, and bled for their accomplishment, must reflect with the liveliest satisfaction. By the blessing of JEHOVAH on their resolute, and generous exertions, this country has been led to high national dignity and enjoyment. Every valuable property was risked ; and inestimable wealth has been gained. Yourself, your children, and your friends, are secured against the encroachments of despotism—freedom, independence, and happiness, constitute the inheritance, which must descend to the last generation of your posterity, unless forfeited by folly, or alienated by madness.

IN this animating view of the subject, let me remind you of those patriot citizens and soldiers, by whose counsels, and exertions, the revolution was achieved. From the President of the first Continental Congress, and the illustrious commander in Chief—the head of the society of Cincinnati—to the lowest active citizen, and soldier, they are entitled to your affectionate regard. But the public voice has anticipated me ; their merits have been the steady theme of eloquence and poetry ; and a single character among them has exhausted the language of praise ; and Admiration remains silent under the accumulating weight of gratitude and affection.

BUT amidst the festivity of the era we have met to celebrate, let us not fail to recollect those dignified and illustrious characters, who lost their lives in the cause of freedom : or

those who have yielded to the arm of death, since the establishment of Independence. Every blessing we share, every moment we live, ought to remind us of their merits; and on this day let us shed the tear of affectionate lamentation for their glorious, but untimely fate.

AND here with peculiar propriety, my subject leads me to address the society of Cincinnati, on the death of a worthy member of their institution. The objects of this society were highly endearing, and respectable. A train of severe, painful and glorious services, had formed a bond of union between the officers of the army, at the separation of which the heart recoiled. For the purposes of perpetual friendship, and extensive benevolence, your society was formed, and an annual meeting appointed, among other important objects, to pay the tribute of a tear to the memory of your deceased friends. Since the last meeting of the society, you have been called to bemoan the fate of Major JONATHAN HART. In your minds, the mention of his name will awaken every tender, and affectionate idea. An attachment founded on the sympathy of generous dispositions, receives redoubled strength, and ardour, from the mutual services, and sufferings of war. This brave man was your companion, during the revolution which gave birth to your society. Perfectly acquainted with his amiableness, generosity, and heroism, "no tongue can teach your sorrows when to flow." The termination of the war with Great Britain, was

not the termination of his military life. The service of his country called him to a different field of action where his career was finished with the distinguishing characteristics of an officer, and a hero.

BUT while the recollection of his fate claims the sincere sorrow of his acquaintance; it gives me pleasure to reflect, that his worth lives in the hearts of his companions, and his countrymen—and that as often as the anniversary of American Independence, shall collect the members of this society, the tears of regret and affection, shall be shed at the remembrance of their friends who are no more; while the blessings of their treasure shall extend relief to the widow, and cause the heart of the orphan “to sing for joy.” In the language of a poet of our country, who lamented the fate of a soldier* and a friend, in a similar situation, I shall end this tribute to the memory of your brother.

“ Lamented Hero ! far from weeping friends,
 “ No funeral honours to thy corse were paid,
 “ And no memorial o’er thy grave extends,
 “ To mark the lonely spot where low thou’rt laid.

“ Yet what avails to please the senseless clay,
 “ The trophied tomb, the monumental bust,
 “ Or reeks the spirit mid the realms of day,
 “ The empty rites attendant on its dust.

“ A fairer wreath shall friendship’s hand bestow,
 “ A fairer tribute shall thy shade receive,
 “ Than all the idle pageantry of woe,
 “ Than all its pompous monuments can give.

* Major J. P. WYLLYS.

- “ Long, long, shall memory’s ardent eye recall
 “ Thy worth, thy milder virtues to her view ;
 “ Thy country long lament her hero’s fall,
 “ And o’er thee fame her brightest laurels strew.
- “ O’er the lone spot, where rests thy mouldering form,
 “ Shall opening spring her mildest breezes wave,
 “ And Flora’s hand with every fragrant charm,
 “ Deck the soft turf that forms thy verdant grave.
- “ There the wild rose in earliest pride shall bloom,
 “ There the Magnolias gorgeous flowers unfold,
 “ The purple violets shed its sweet perfume,
 “ And beauteous *Medea* wave her plumes of gold.
- “ Rest much lov’d shade, “ in fame immortal dress’d,
 “ Amid yon realms of light, yon seats of joy,
 “ Where hush’d is sorrow in perpetual rest,
 “ And pleasure smiles unconscious of alloy.”

HAVING traced the course of freedom over this country, where the limits of a Continent were too circumscribed, the mind with pleasure pursues her progress over Europe, and the globe. Having learned the invaluable lesson of liberty in the American war, the citizens of the French nation returned to their country, intent on glorious practice. There, in co-operation with the patriots of the kingdom, the French members of the society of Cincinnati, conceived, and accomplished a revolution, which has renewedly excited the astonishment, and the admiration of the universe. By the still, but persuasive voice of reason and liberty, with scarcely a momentary aid from terror, or from arms, more than twenty millions of people have been rescued from the sufferings, and the ignominy of slavery, and elevated to the dignity and happiness of freedom, and

Independence. Awed at the approach of the standard of liberty, the Bastile, that right arm of oppression, drew back, and withered. The votaries of absolute sway, and the subordinate representatives of despotic power, fled, and sought an asylum under the protection of the neighboring tyrants —while the monarch of a powerful, and extensive empire, found himself stripped of the diadem and sceptre, which had too long been prostituted to the purposes of tyranny, and obliged to abandon the throne or to resume it to promote the happiness of his subjects. Charmed with the conduct of free, but affectionate citizens, the king of the French re-ascended his throne. At the head of a nation in the eager pursuit of every great, and majestic object, he finds abundant compensation for the loss of useless, and dangerous prerogative, in the testimony of the respectful, and manly attachment of a great, wise, and independent people.

FIRM, and unshaken, in the midst of amazing difficulties and dangers, the citizens of France have pursued their object with unremitting diligence and fidelity. Their efforts have been gloriously successful; and the nation warmed with the love of freedom, is rapidly progressing to be the arbiter of Europe. The other kingdoms must adopt her plans of strength and greatness, or they must submit to her sway —for twenty millions of freemen, can give law to an universe of slaves.

ROUSED at the spreading evil, which threat-

ened to reach the throne of every tyrant in Europe, the surrounding sovereigns espoused the cause of the princes of France, and agreed to combine their forces, to produce a counter-revolution in favour of despotism. This confederation, which had united the emperor of Germany, the king of Sweden, and the empress of Russia, wore an alarming aspect. But the nation supported by conscious rectitude, and the strength of Independence, remained unmoved. Wisdom, firmness, and caution, marked the measures of the national council, while the citizens prepared for a vigorous, and manly defence of those liberties they had so recently obtained. With the same alacrity and ardour, which distinguished the inhabitants of this country—their predecessors in danger, and in glory—they trained for the field by a steady attention to military discipline; and a few months exhibited an army of freemen, sufficient, in the cause of liberty, to have checked the progress of united Europe. But the eye of Jehovah watched the progress of this iniquitous combination. At the moment, when the imperial Leopold was to have made a spirited effort for declining tyranny, a fatal distemper deprived him of existence. This important event, was succeeded by another, not less important. Gustavus the third, king of Sweden, the intended commander of this powerful, confederated army, was assassinated in the face of the nation, by one of his subjects. Benevolence will sigh at the recollection of human depravity, when told of such fatal effects of it; while the superintendence of Providence, shines

with all the effulgence of the Godhead, in this divine interposition for the salvation of freedom.

THE long reign of the Empress of Russia, bears evidence of superior talents for government, in the sovereign. But absolute dominion is her object, instead of "that righteousness which exalteth a nation." Every friend to the rights of man, will therefore listen with satisfaction to the probability, that her own enslaved, and hardy vassals, are beginning to feel their frozen bosoms melt with the fire of liberty. *May a whirlwind of the Lord go forth in fury among them, even a grievous whirlwind—and may it fall grievously upon the head of the wicked—that the anger of the Lord may not return until he hath executed, and until he hath performed the thoughts of his heart—that in the latter days they may consider it perfectly*.*"

WITH exquisite pleasure we view the female character, in a land of equal liberty and happiness. With minds enlarged by science, and ornamented with every refined, dignified, and delicate sentiment, the women of America establish their sovereignty, by the united influence of beauty, modesty, and virtue. Removed from the splendour, and vices of courts, their hearts cultivate the accomplishments of peaceful, elegant, and domestic life. The names of wife, parent, and friend, are infinitely more captivating to them, than all the titles of royalty; while benevolence, and religion, designate them as the objects of the peculiar regard of Heaven.

FROM this view of the state of liberty in France, the mind will necessarily extend to the rest of Europe. Scarcely a nation in that quarter of the globe, but has been alarmed at the approaches, or at the commencement of a revolution. The subject engrosses universal attention, and supercedes every other object of regard. The dignity of human nature has awakened from a long night of stupid submission to injury, and is calling loudly at the doors of tyrants for relief, and for compensation. The sceptre of domination trembles in the hands of every monarch in Europe. The glory, and the pomp of royalty, “like the morning cloud, and the early dew, is passing away.” Every idea which superstition, or slavishness had framed, respecting sovereigns, has vanished; and kings are viewed by reason and common sense, as tyrants, “or as ministers of GOD, for good.” Even the imperial pontiff of Rome, instead of holding the keys of death, and of hell, finds himself reduced to the mortifying insignificance of being slighted and despised, by those, who have heretofore been blind devotees to his arrogance, and his blasphemies. The animated apostrophe of the prophet, describes his situation with all the clearness and certainty of divine prediction.

“HELL from beneath is moved for thee, to
“meet thee at thy coming: it stireth up the
“dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the
“earth; it hath raised up from their thrones
“all the kings of the nations. All they shall
“speak, and say unto thee—art thou also be-

“ come weak as we? art thou become like un-
 “ to us? Thy pomp is brought down to the
 “ grave, and the noise of thy viols; the worm
 “ is spread under thee, and the worms cover
 “ thee. How art thou fallen from Heaven, O
 “ Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou
 “ cut down, who didst weaken the nations!
 “ For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend
 “ into heaven: I will exalt myself above the
 “ stars of God: I will ascend above the heights
 “ of the clouds: I will be like the Most High.
 “ Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to
 “ the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall
 “ narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee,
 “ saying, Is this the man that made the earth
 “ to tremble, that did shake kingdoms?”*

NOR is freedom deemed the exclusive birth-
 right of civilized nations. The negroes of
 Africa, whose injuries exceed computation,
 conception, or credulity, behold the day-star of
 liberty, rising on the gloomy, and desperate re-
 gion of slavery. The sound of Independence, first
 raised in the United States, “ has gone out, and
 filled the earth.” Forced into a conviction of
 the iniquity of tyranny, by the successful strug-
 gles of America against oppression, the friends
 of man through out the globe, are promoting
 the cause of equal liberty and happiness. So-
 cieties, associations, and plans, are forming for
 the purpose of destroying this scion of infernal
 policy. Even the miserable victims of slave-
 ry have themselves aroused from the abyss of

* Isaiah xiv. 9, &c.

injury, and in some parts of the world made a noble, vigorous, and manly attack on their oppressors. Humanity will lament the indiscriminate sufferings of the innocent, and guilty inhabitants of the revolted countries; while justice must behold with a smile of approbation, the rapid progress of the slaves to triumph, and independence.

To the citizens of the United States, and especially to the actors in the American revolution, these events must be the subject of the most animating reflection. To your exertions is owing the measure of liberty now enjoyed in the world; and the glorious prospect of its spreading over the habitable globe. The fire of freedom caught from this continent, flames with godlike ardour in the other parts of the earth. The forces of tyranny are consumed by its power, and the sinews of despotism shrink from before it. The feeblest hands, and the palest faces in Europe, are found upon thrones. Equal, and universal justice has burst the chains of confinement; and the genius of liberty has "risen, and shook his spear," Europe is on the eve of a general convulsion. The love of freedom is implanted in the soul of man, by the God of nature; and the spirit it inspires is irresistible. "The Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest and hail-stones. For through the voice of the

“ Lord, shall the *Assyrian* be beaten down, who
 “ smote with a rod.”* The prediction in
 scripture of a season of universal freedom, and
 tranquillity, is rapidly fulfilling ; a Spirit of tol-
 eration pervades all nations ; and the religion
 of EMANUAL is extending its influence over
 the regions of bigotry, persecution, and idola-
 try.

LET us then, in the midst of the joy and fes-
 tivity of this illustrious day, adore that God,
 who raised us to the enjoyment of peace, hap-
 piness and liberty.

“ Oh liberty, Heaven’s choice prerogative !
 “ True bond of law, thou social soul of property !
 “ Thou breath of reason, life of life itself,
 “ For thee the valiant bleed. O sacred liberty !
 “ Wing’d from the summers snare, from flattering ruin,
 “ Like the bold stork you seek the wintry shore,
 “ Leave courts, and pomps, and palaces to slaves,
 “ Cleave to the cold, and rest upon the storm.
 “ Uphorne by thee, our souls disdain’d the terms
 “ Of empire—offer’d at the hands of tyrants.
 “ With thee we fought this fav’rite soil, with thee
 “ These fav’rite sons we fought ; thy sons, O liberty !
 “ For even amid the wilds of life you lead them,
 “ Lift their low rafted cottage to the clouds,
 “ Smile o’er their heaths, and from their mountain tops
 “ Beam glory to the nations.”†

* Isaiah xxx. 30—31.

† Brooke.

F I N I S.