

AN

ORATION

DELIVERED AT

THE COURT-HOUSE IN TOPSHAM,

JULY 4th, 1806,

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF OUR

National Independence,

BEFORE THE

Federal Republicans

OF BRUNSWICK AND TOPSHAM.

BY JONATHAN ELLIS.

PORTLAND :

FROM THE GAZETTE PRESS.

1806.

Brunswick, July 4, 1806.

SIR,

THE Committee of Arrangements for the celebration of our national Independence in this vicinity, have been directed by a vote of the Federal Republicans attending it, to present you their thanks for the appropriate and interesting Oration, you have this day addressed to them, and to request the favor of a copy of the same, for the press.....It is with pleasure we comply with their desire, and beg leave to add our individual thanks, and the assurance of our cordial concurrence in the request, we have been thus authorized to communicate.

With due respect,
we are, Sir, your
obedient servants,
JOHN PERRY,
B. ORR,
I. LINCOLN,
THOMAS G. SANDFORD,
DAVID DUNLAP.

JONATHAN ELLIS, ESQ.



GENTLEMEN,

I SUBMIT to the disposal of my republican fellow-citizens, who have expressed their approbation of the sentiments it contains, the Oration delivered on the Anniversary of our National Independence.

Be pleased to accept my acknowledgments for the very polite manner in which you have communicated the wish of the meeting.

I am, Gentlemen,
with due consideration,

your obedient servant,

JONATHAN ELLIS

JOHN PERRY, ESQ.
BENJAMIN ORR, ESQ.
DR. ISAAC LINCOLN,
MR. THOMAS G. SANDFORD,
MR. DAVID DUNLAP,

} *Committee of Arrangements*

AN ORATION.

REPUBLICANS,

BY this name of honorable distinction permit the speaker to address you on this returning anniversary, The day, which gave to our country a name and rank among the nations of the world.

Thirty years have rolled away since that invincible band of patriots dared to proclaim to the world, that our country was, and of right ought to be free ; and that they would support this declaration with their lives and fortunes,

At that time our country was invaded by a formidable army of one of the most powerful nations of the earth, whose navy, extended to every sea, bore her flag in triumph.

Our resources were few and small indeed, our countrymen inexperienced in the science, arts and practice of war, and no bond of union to connect its different portions, and concentrate its powers, necessary to produce the best effect.

Other untoward circumstances might be mentioned, but these are sufficient to remind us, that patriotism was then a reality ; that the love of liberty, of the just and natural rights of men, was not a mere expression used for conveniency ; no, it was then a glowing, vigorous principle, which called forth every exertion which could possibly be made to secure the object which they professed to regard ; and this at the hazard of every thing painful and humiliating ; of dungeons, tortures and gibbets, if they failed in effecting their purpose.

Patriotism was then evinced in resisting the imposition of a foreign yoke. Inspired by this principle, our best and wisest men nobly exchanged the quiet scenes of domestic care, for the arduous and perplexing duties of the Senate, and more exposed and fatiguing service of the camp.

These were patriots and heroes worthy of grateful recollection; worthy of constant imitation; the most of whom, whose heads were whitened in the service of their country, now repose in silence, under the clods of the valley. Peace to their venerable shades! your virtues, your labors and sufferings for your country, shall not be forgotten by us, who enjoy the fruit they produced. Your patriotic achievements shall be recorded by the faithful historian, and transmitted to future ages; while the poet weaves a garland for your brow, which shall never fade.

Under the smiles of divine providence, and the wise measures pursued by our government, that Independence, to which we were declared entitled in 1776, is still preserved, and its rights and advantages generally enjoyed.

The tree was planted in a fruitful soil; it was cultured and pruned by the most skillful hands; we have enjoyed its richest productions; and the fowls, from the four winds of heaven, have found a shelter under its branches.

In recurring to the epoch of our national existence, what do we find to censure or condemn, under the direction of those, to whom was then committed the management of our public affairs? They placed the object they pursued in a luminous point; their intention was proclaimed to the universe; they, walking on high and open ground, disdained the base subterfuges of the intriguing office-seeker; their conduct was not only subject to the inspection and examination of all, but they wished all to be informed, and to exercise the right of examina-

tion. This justly gave weight and dignity to their characters, and inspired their co-patriots with almost unlimited confidence.

The change which took place at the period to which we refer, differs much from a revolution, in the more modern use of the word. We contended for the preservation and perpetuity of those rights and privileges, which we then enjoyed; against a power which assumed the right to bind us in all cases whatever. We did not seek for the overthrow and destruction of any system of government. Our resistance was against encroachments upon those systems, which the several colonies had, with consent of the mother country, established for themselves; with the benefits and blessings which these, in some small degree differing systems, secured to the colonies, and which they peaceably enjoyed for more than a century, we were satisfied.

The resistance made against impositions laid, or attempted to be laid upon us, was not because George the III. was then king of England, and as such exercised a limited authority over the colonies. The same resistance would have been made against the same impositions, coming from any other quarter.

Had the republic of Holland or Switzerland, or any other republic, the most pure that ever existed, attempted to practise the same thing, it would have been resisted and frustrated the same way.

The opposition was against the principle, against the assumed right of binding us to compliance with the laws of government, where our will was not consulted, nor our voice permitted to be heard. An opposition which must never be abandoned if our existence as an independent nation is long protracted.

How different this from the revolutions of more modern days. Our towns and cities were not stained with the blood of their inhabitants ; nor our fields piled with the bodies of victims, who fell by the sword, sharpened by private animosity and revenge. We did, indeed, suffer the calamities inseparable from war ; but the parties were known, and the object in controversy was as well known. Our history presents us with no mock tribunals and butchers, licensed to insult, torture and destroy. In the time of our greatest distress, life, liberty and property were secure ; and justice impartially administered, so far as our government extended.

Mad and cruel ambition had not her thousands to destroy who stood in the way of her bloody car.

We wished to erect a superstructure upon a foundation already laid ; others have overthrown the whole edifice, and left not one stone upon another. We wished to enjoy uninterruptedly, our natural, civil and religious rights, and to secure them for the enjoyment of all ranks and classes of society, indiscriminately.

Others, under the pretence of reform, have not only destroyed private confidence, and social and domestic happiness ; but have spread desolation thro' kingdoms. Upon the ruins of one family, they have raised another to distinction. This has been the issue : while the ostensible cause which called forth their exertions, the amelioration of the condition of the great body of the people, has been totally disregarded or forgotten.

These rights and privileges, of which, we can justly boast as a patrimony, have not been taken away ; but are confirmed to us by our revolution. A constitution of government, adapted to the genius, character and condition of our country, the result of profound penetration and wisdom, of moral candor and concession, has been found in practice, to answer the purpose for which it was intended.

If the pillars which now support this, our distinguished political fabric are preserved inviolate ; if, under the specious pretext of improvement, they are not frittered away, we may long hope to enjoy the security it was calculated to give, if we are not, in ourselves, criminally deficient : but, if regardless of the characters we designate to fill the offices which the constitution creates ; if we prefer men, who have ambitious views to gratify, in whom this lust is stronger than the pure virtue of patriotism ; if we advance those to be our rulers, who can break thro' all morai and religious restraints, what barrier can be erected ; which they will not undermine or overleap ? There may be attending circumstances to hasten or retard, but the event is certain. Constitutions, and oaths, and professions, will be found as ineffectual to restrain such unprincipled animals, as the fences of your fields are to enclose or shut out, the wolf or the tiger.

Is this language too strong ? The speaker appeals to history for its justification. Where are the once famed republics of the earth ; those of Greece and Rome, and those of more modern date ?

Open the map of the world, view civilized man under every climate, and point out that enviable portion where its inhabitants enjoy the blessings of a free republic : excepting that portion we possess, you will look in vain ; inattentive to the means of their own safety, they have all, in sad succession become a prey to wicked ambitious men.

Reflect a moment on the astonishing scene, which in our day has been opened in Europe.

How did the language of the late philosophers of France charm the ear, when they made their warm professions of a highly benevolent regard to men, and appeared sincerely zealous to lighten the burdens of the oppressed ? As these were considered the breathings of a philanthro-

pic heart, they produced a strong partiality in the minds of our countrymen. Let despotic France be renovated, was echoed thro' our land. Let a milder and more equal government, such as we enjoy, be their portion.

But mark the sequel. When these pseudo-patriots and philosophers, had wrought the public mind to a state of madness, they assume a bolder tone, and commence the cruel work of destruction. Destroy your king, say they, he is the cause of all your evils ; and the innocent Capet, for being what the constitution made him, was immolated to their fury. We will be one grand republic, was decreed ; and they swore eternal hatred to kings and crowned heads. We will have no royalists ; and thousands and tens of thousands of all ranks, ages and sexes, from hoary purity to smiling, unoffending infancy, fell in indiscriminate carnage. We will have no religion, say they, immortality and future accountability are nothing but the dreams of priests, which they have artfully imposed on the ignorant and credulous ; we will have no priests ; and they fell by their altars, floating in their own gore. Having decreed that death was an eternal sleep, to close the awful climax of their impiety, as far as men and devils can do it, they dethroned the sacred majesty of Heaven ; they formally decreed, there is no-GOD.

I have sketched some of the most prominent features of this gloomy picture, those who recollect the transactions of that astonishing period, will be able to fill it up with its proper lights and shades.

Where now is the boasted republic, projected by those who were to advance their countrymen to the highest pitch of perfection ?

“ Her Consuls and her Senate are no more.”



This very people, who a few years since, proscribed kings and royalists, and every form of government, but that of a republic, are now the servile subjects of a Corsican adventurer. Every thing in form of a republic, in the European world, is crushed by the modern Cæsar, and such is their degraded situation, that they dare neither resist nor complain of the bondage under which they must silently groan.

After France has wasted millions of lives and money; and is still wasting more, how much are the people bettered? Is the monarchy, or if you please the tyranny, of Napoleon I. more tolerable than was that of Louis XVI? No one will assert it who has a due regard to moral reputation.

May the destructive example of those wretched improvers of human happiness, operate as a solemn caution, in the minds of our countrymen, against trusting to the smooth and pleasant things which are said by designing, unprincipled men.

We are republicans by birth and compact. We do not derive our civil and religious privileges, from the benevolence or indulgence of the philosophers and potentates of the earth. The spirit of civil and religious liberty glowed in the breasts of those who voluntarily exiled themselves from country and friends, that they might enjoy its exercise and fruit in this then wilderness, the habitation of savage beasts and men.

This country, by them adopted, has descended to us an inheritance, and conducting like men deserving so rich a legacy, cherishing the same love of liberty which led them to these shores, and as jealous of encroachment upon our rights as they were, we may confidently rely on the guardian care of Heaven, to secure it to us, against all attempts of foreign nations, and the more dangerous machinations of home bred apostates.

Distinguished as we have been for all that is justly dear to man, we are in danger of not properly estimating the possession. Inattentive to its high worth we shall hazard those solid realities which we have enjoyed, for the specious, ideal good of projectors, fond of change, or the assuming, aspiring demagogue.

If amidst the profusion of good, which has been scattered around us on every side, we think changes are practicable which will lead to more distinguished and permanent enjoyments, our situation is perilous, perilous indeed ! There will not be wanting those who will volunteer their service to lead us, at any hazard, on this single condition, that we will follow them.

That men who enjoy liberty to think for themselves and may speak and publish what they please, on public measures, should differ in opinion, is the natural consequence of such liberty ; and when a subject is investigated from the honest motives of ascertaining what is most proper, while the wordy combatants are kept within the limits of decent, fair discussion, and will admit facts which are made to appear and rational deductions from them, this freedom of discussion may produce the best effects.

But, when ingenuity is tortured to misrepresent or conceal truth, when unsupported declarations, opprobrious names, and bold assertions, supply the place of argument, the evil thus produced in the public mind, by the confusion and perplexity it creates, the uncertainty and indecision it engenders, are incalculable, as its consequences are ruinous to a rational, manly and intelligent course of conduct.

The dissention which now prevails, and so extensively agitates our fellow-citizens of this state, wears a portentous aspect.



If ever there was a time since the existence of our government, when the friends of liberty, religion and social order, were called upon for united exertions in the common cause ; for circumspection and a prudent but determined opposition to encroachments upon our personal, constitutional rights, it is the present.

A wish (we would not, we dare not say design) to deprive our fellow-citizens of this state from having their government administered by the man they had chosen, was too openly avowed to admit of concealment or denial.

It was indeed feared by some that the faithful STRONG, who has grown grey in the service of his country, tho' chosen by a majority of suffrages, was to have been driven to the shades of retirement....to those delightful scenes of domestic enjoyment, from which your unsolicited voice, not his love of power or distinction, reluctantly led him. But conscience was not stifled in the breasts of those who dared to be honest ; the presumptuous hand which menaced the deed was seen to tremble ; it was withdrawn, to wait perhaps a more favorable opportunity.

May the God of our fathers still be our shield and defence, who in old time, in behalf of his faithful servant and chosen people, turned the desperate counsel of Ahitophel to foolishness.

The friends of good government, as they prize this inestimable blessing, should now exert themselves to afford it every security. Decision and energy should mark their conduct. The spirit of '76 should burn within them.

The idea that we must abandon the principles and example of our venerable and virtuous men, who made our country prosperous and happy ; whose wisdom and virtue gave us peace and plenty at home, and estimation and

respect abroad, to *harmonize* with those who seek popularity by every mean, at every risk, ought to be treated with pointed disdain.

Has the administration of the present general government, been directed by more wisdom, or sounder policy by the present chief magistrate, with every thing in the "tide of successful experiment," prepared to his hand, than it was by his predecessors?

I forbear a minute comparison. The future historian, uninfluenced by frowns or flattery, will do justice to the private and public character of our first, second and third President.

Be cautious, fellow citizens, of deception. Take your stand on ground that is tenable and manfully maintain it against the wiles and stratagems, the covert and open attacks of every assailant.

It has been said that in the ocean of politics there is an island, called Neutrality, on whose shores the curling billows of the deep never dash, that the waters all around are,

"Calm and unruffled as a summer's sea

"When not a breath of wind flies o'er its surface."

But this convenient halting place, spoken of by some with so much rapture, has never yet been found to exist; it is considered therefore, as the visionary dream of those, who can dispense with the honest convictions of their understandings, that they may steal your hearts. We are republicans, and those who are not with us are against us. There is no middle ground between republicanism and jacobinism. The cause of difference between, is no longer concealed. We should not hesitate a moment in declaring our settled disapprobation of that licentious spirit, which offers insult to our rational faculties, which sneers



at our religious convictions, and keeps society in a constant ferment.

Has the want of integrity and moral qualities, become a reason why we should prefer men who do not possess them? Is there a work to be done too base for men of even common reputation to undertake? Suspicion is awakened and the cause is too apparent.

Ought we to please men in public stations, in whose integrity and honor we can put no confidence in private life? Do you think that such men will most faithfully guard our civil and religious rights from infraction? Will such take the best care that the republic receive no detriment?

“ I know your better thoughts, I know

“ Your reason cant descend so low.”

Let us stand unmovable on the basis of republicanism and be seriously engaged to maintain those pillars which give strength and beauty to the edifice; to support the wise institutions of WASHINGTON: the religion of our fathers; and men of intelligence and virtue, who alone are worthy to bear rule among free men.

It is pleasing to reflect on the progress of general improvement in this part of our country; on the more copious means which are now afforded for acquiring a knowledge of literature and the arts and sciences. We have evidence before us of the attention which is given to military discipline and instruction. How soon the standard which is now unfurled to grace our days of social improvement, will be displayed on the high places of the field, is known only to Omniscience; we may rest assured however, from the known character of Americans, that wherever borne, in a good cause, it will be honorably supported.

May returning anniversaries have less in prospect to create unpleasant apprehensions ; may every doubt be dispelled from our political horizon ; the things which now remain to be strengthened, and a free and righteous government, securing all the invaluable rights of men, be continued to our country, till time and nature die.

THE END.
