

AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED AT

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH IN PORTSMOUTH,
NEW-HAMPSHIRE,

ON THE

FOURTH JULY, 1805.

BY RICHARD EVANS.

PORTSMOUTH, (N. H.)

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Portsmouth, July 8th, 1805.

THE committee of arrangements for the celebration of the anniversary of the Independence of the United States, present the thanks of the Republican Citizens of Portsmouth to Mr. Evans, for the ingenious and well adapted Oration, delivered by him on the fourth instant—and request that he would favour them with a copy thereof for the press.

CHARLES CUTTS,
JOSHUA BRACKETT, } COMMITTEE.
E. WENTWORTH,



Portsmouth, July 10th, 1805.

GENTLEMEN,

I have received your favor of the 8th instant.—By complying with your request, I make the only acknowledgment, in my power, for your polite attentions.

*With sentiments of respect,
I am your obed't serv't.*

RICHARD EVANS.

To CHARLES CUTTS, Esq.
DOCT. JOSHUA BRACKETT,
AND MR. E. WENTWORTH,

A committee for the Republican }
Citizens of Portsmouth.





O R A T I O N.



CITIZENS & FRIENDS!

HONORED by an invitation to address you, on this memorable anniversary ; I rise, doubtful of ability—but inspired by the occasion.

We convene Americans, to commemorate an eventual, an all-important day.—A DAY,—which emancipated more than three millions of human beings !—That great event is at this time, and will be in future ages,—commemorated, not only by the happy subjects of its benefits ; but by the great and good in all countries ;—by the Philanthropist of every nation.—Where is the man, who does not feel ennobled at a display of human energies !—Where the friend of humanity, who does not triumph at the success of those exertions, which tend to the enlargement, and the happiness of his species ! Alas ! there are men,—insensible to the charms of liberty ! While we, the sons of freedom, hail this auspicious era, as the dawn of that morning, which gave hope to the oppressed of the earth :—There are many, the votaries of ambition ; the minions of power ; TYRANTS—and SLAVES !—who rejoice *not*, at beholding their fellow men, independent and happy.

To show that human nature is debased, I need only to point your attention to the pages of history ; or, to direct your view to the present state of the world. The histories of

those nations, which have long since been swept away by the changes of time ; furnish us with sufficient evidence of the ambition of man.---And the face of Europe, of Asia, and of Africa at the present day ; exhibits the distorted features of rapine, cruelty and wrong. As the material world is visited by its earthquakes, its tempests, and the fire of its volcanoes :—so, the moral world is subjected to the tremblings of avarice, the tempests of anger, and the consuming flame of ambition.

We, my countrymen ;--have great reason to rejoice, that our nation is exempted, at present, from the moral depravity, and from the calamities which assail the nations of the old world :—yet, we must acknowledge, that a disposition to evil has appeared among ourselves.—Else, wherefore have arisen the sounds of contention ? why, has party spirit broken in upon the harmony of social life ?—Is it, that a difference in opinion on political questions, necessarily implies personal hatred ? or, cannot an investigation of principles—and an examination of conduct take place, without descending to such odious invective, as awakens in the public mind unfriendly emotions ?

The freedom of enquiry, and the right of election, which are so happily secured to us ; naturally give rise to a difference in opinion on the subject of government :—but those very privileges, do also furnish the means of correcting errors in practice, and of rewarding those persons, who are worthy of public confidence.

Error is the infirmity of human nature ;—but truth is superior to all things and must prevail :—and wherever a people possess the means of information, and can exercise the right of suffrage, the arts of sophistry will not long avail, to conceal the designs of the ambitious ; or the deceptions of the disorganizer. A calm investigation of principles would enable us to determine their correctness ; and a dispassionate observance of the conduct of men, would lead us to distinguish between empty professions, and real patriotism.

That there exist in our country, turbulent and ambitious spirits,—is a fact too notorious to be denied. Should we judge indeed of the principles of a *whole party*, by the conduct of a few of their adherents ;—should we, for instance, consult the pages of some of those newspapers, which are denominated federal—that we might determine the character of the federal party ;—we could not but consider it, an aspiring,—a disgraceful faction. But, such writings would disgrace *any* cause :—they are a defiance to *all* authority.—What a *SATIRE* upon federalism !—The writers to whom I allude, not only traduce our magistrates, and government ; they not only hold us up to foreign nations, as an object of imbecility, and contempt ; but they transgress the rules of decorum, and the obligations of morality ; their pages are defiled with the most *obscene* expressions ;—and they hand the same to an enlightened public,—a meretricious garb to the rudest breath of scandal.

We mean not to attach the opprobrium of such conduct to any but the immediate agents ;—we wish to absolve all honest men from the charge :—we are ready to harmonize with our brethren.—Let us on this auspicious day, hail every man—whose object is to promote the public good ! No matter whether he is called a *Federalist*, or a *Republican*, no matter to what party he belongs ; does he rejoice that we are freemen, we hail him as a friend and brother !

Let us, Americans, look back on the days that have passed ?

Since the adoption of its constitution, and more particularly, since the period, when the great WASHINGTON retired from the administration of his country ;—the United States have exhibited a scene of party contention : we have beheld a division among the people.

From the genius of our government, frequent changes will occur in the choice of public officers ; and when in the opinion of a majority of the people, a reform of measures is necessary ; they, possessing the sovereignty, and the right of exercising it, will evince the public sentiment. Thus a reform is effected ;—not by the loud boasting of pretenders, or the denunciations of a cabal, but, by the *sovereign will* of the *people*. Hence, we have witnessed within a few years, a great change in the politics of the country ;—we have witnessed a reduction of that division of the people which had assumed the name of *federal* ; and we now witness the *triumph* of *republicanism* ! from the federal interest

terest have seceded thousands of its adherents ; convinced we *doubt* not, of the presumption of its *declarations*, and the fallacy of its promises. It pretended to almost exclusive talents, and consequence : and it promised to make this people a great and happy nation ! but many of its experiments were unsuccessful. In the exercise of its talents, as displayed in the various departments of government, was perceived ;—not that energy of will ; which at once conceives of, and perfects all that can promote the general good ;—not, that union of sentiment ; which results from pure motives, and combining individual exertion, tends to the advancement of a nations prosperity :—but we noticed a duplicity in its declarations ; we observed a distraction in its councils,---a selfishness prevailed, which at length produced open contention :—a Secretary of State was discarded by his patron, and the President of the United States was traduced by HAMILTON !

TRENMOR ! the breaker of shields ; rested in the shades of Vernon.---He beheld the gathering of a cloud : in the midst were seen a *lion*, and an *eagle* ; waiting for the strife of blood.—The hero knew his country was in danger ;—he started from the couch of age ;—he called for his trusty sword ; the sword that never failed in battle ! he bared the scars of his bosom ; he lifted the shield of war ! Why art thou troubled, son of battles ? *no invader* approaches thy land !—The angel of peace, drew Trenmor to the tomb of repose ;—and his spirit ascended on the winds of heaven. The genius of America descended !—Brutus why sleepest thou ? sounded in the ears of her patriots.—The evils that

were impending over the country, aroused the attention of its inhabitants ;—They examined the measures of administration ; and, they declared them, void of wisdom.—They scrutinised the conduct of their public officers ; and, they found them, unworthy of confidence :—they lifted up the voice of indignation ; and, the enemies of liberty were scattered :—they exercised their right of suffrage ;—and peace was restored to our borders. The reformation which took place in the general government, was followed by corresponding changes in the individual states ; and *New-Hampshire* now evinces that union of sentiment in her various departments, which, gives fair promise that all her measures will be conducted in wisdom, to the promotion of the general good. The present aspect of our political affairs, is favorable to a fair experiment of the principles of democracy.—We are now to determine, whether a people can be happy in the enjoyment of rational liberty ; or whether, as has been predicted ; liberty will degenerate to licentiousness, and lead to anarchy, and national convulsion.

The people of these United States ; I speak not of those individuals whose objects were personal, but of the great mass ;—federal, and republican.—This people, at an important crisis, differed in opinion, on the measures most proper to be adopted, for the maintenance of our political character, and of our invaluable rights,—and the difference arose not so much from the immediate consequences which might ensue, but rather, as to the tendency of certain measures in their progress, and ultimate operations.—

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The great and good WASHINGTON ! pointed out to us a Scylla and a Charybdis ; which we are to guard against.

In one point of view, we learn that a perfect Democracy may lead to Anarchy. Hence, has been deprecated a liberty wholly dependent on the caprice of the people ; and it is from this view of *things* ; that the honest federalist, has advocated such measures—as would strengthen the arm of government, and render the people dependent.

In the other point of view, we see the evils that result from individual power,—we are *taught*, that when servants of a free people rise above the law ;—when they begin to impose *unnecessary* restraints, and to invade the rights of man ;—whatever, may be the pretence, a foundation is laid, for the assumption of power,—then, distinctions become known ;—thence, privileged orders ; an Aristocracy is created, and the people sink to slavery.

To guard, on the one hand, against that licentiousness, which tends to anarchy ; and on the other, against that assumption of power which leads to usurpation ; should be the care of the American people.—But to attempt to point out any great evils that must necessarily result from the possession of perfect freedom, by a people so situated and so well informed, as are the people of the United States ; would perhaps be vain ;—we have no example before us ;—the analogy between the circumstances of this people, and of the people of any ancient republic is so faint, that it affords no parallel :—it is therefore, no extravagant conception to suppose ;—should a train of adverse circumstances

stances tend to a dissolution of the federal compact ;— that this people, after the convulsion of a moment, would by the exercise of their experience, and information ; and prompted by that desire for happiness which is implanted in the human breast ;—again create a government, enact laws, and submit to a constituted authority.

But the evils incident to a state of despotism, are obvious to the meanest capacity. Who indeed, would not prefer even the licentiousness of a people,—such as prevailed in Rome ; when an universal depravation of principle, engendered the most shocking enormities ;—when, after the ambition of individuals, had pointed to the path of corruption ; after the armies, had become subservient to a lust for power ;—the people goaded to desperation by impositions and sufferings, and by their own vices, and wretchedness ; overturned all law, order, and government ; who, I say would not prefer even such a state of things ;—*for a period at least ;—to the deadly night of despotism.* We shrink from the lightning's flash,—the convulsion of a people is terrible ;—but, when the dread volcano opens upon us ; and the lava of desolation spreads wide around ; the light of *hope is extinguished.*—So despotism in its course ; overturns, and buries in ruin ;—all that is desirable to man, and spreads wide the melancholy gloom of despair.

The republics of ancient Greece, supported liberty in all her excesses :—dazzled with the blaze of her charms ;—they gloried in its consuming brightness,—whilst upheld by the bond of confederation, they bade defiance to the
power

power of Kings :---but at length civil dissensions followed a corruption of manners ; until weakened by a want of union, the States of Greece, fell a prey to the encreasing power of Macedon, and the prowess of Philip, and Alexander.---But compare the republics of ancient Greece, with the slavery of modern Greece ; and who will hesitate to prefer liberty with all its agitations, to the dozing apathy of slavery ! The degraded wretches of modern Greece, as they tread the ground ennobled by the ashes of heroes, appear unconscious of their ancestry, ignorant of the nature of liberty, and dead to all her charms.

The nations which have appeared on the theatre of the world, and have departed to the gulph of ages ;---the governments which have been successively built up, and have fallen to ruin ;---have left behind a memento of experience, to be contemplated by succeeding generations.-- The present race of man, appears however, to profit but little by the examples which are set before them :---and the United States, is the only nation upon earth, where civil and religious liberty are maintained to the people.---In almost every other nation, the rights of the subject---although in their nature imprescriptable ; have been sacrificed on the shrine of ambition ; and religion has been made the tool of power.

How earnest should we be, my fellow citizens, to maintain to ourselves, and to transmit to posterity, the inestimable privileges which we at present enjoy.---While surrounded by every blessing, both national and personal, which are compatible with the lot of humanity ;---with

what care should we guard against every inroad to our rights.---As we climb the acclivities of *fame* ; as we advance in the course of successful experiment ;---let us not, suffer our attention to be diverted from the object of pursuit ;--- which is, the maintenance of national government, and the due exercise of the *unalienable rights* of man.

“A brighter day may hereafter dawn upon earth, a new creation may arise ; when in every country the faculties of man shall no longer be cramped by the interference of civil authority in matters of speculation---by tyrannical laws against heresy and schism, and by slavish hierarchies, and religious establishments.”

In the progress of our government ;---we have seen an attempt to introduce the corrupt systems and establishments of Europe :---a sedition law ;---national debt, and a standing army. Perhaps many of the advocates of such measures, were taught to believe in their necessity, from a supposed emergency of state ;---whilst those who opposed them, dreaded the *existence* of such means, as might be used ;---not for the maintenance of our rights, but for the subversion of our liberty.---In different ages of the world, such have been the means, by which tyrants are created, and a power established subversive of the rights of man.

No danger to the United States can be apprehended from a combination of the people :---the diffusion of the population of the country, over such a vast extent of territory as we now possess, will deaden the spirit of faction ;

tion ; and the will of the people faithfully expressed, will continue to provide the most perfect system of laws, and policy. But who my fellow men ! who would be so lost to the powers of vision, as to look to the nations of the eastern continent for theories of government, or for examples of national happiness.-----Let us turn our view to Asia, the garden of the world ;---the enchanting spot, where the Creator of the universe planted Eden, and placed the first parents of mankind ;---here, stood favored Canaan, on which dwelt God's chosen people the Jews ;---here also was accomplished the great work of our redemption, and from hence, the gospel of Christ was diffused among surrounding nations ;---in this highly privileged land ; cities were built, and kingdoms founded, at a time, when the other parts of the earth were desolate ; or, but thinly inhabited. Once, the residence and seat of the greatest monarchies of the world ; now, the theatre of cruelty, and stupidity, and idolatry :---over that vast country the iron rod of despotism is extended ; while sunk in effeminacy, and in all the vices of superstition and idolatry, its abject inhabitants hug the chains which grind them.

We sicken at the sight of human degradation, we turn our eyes to Europe for relief : ah !--the distant prospect allures us ; we behold, extended navies, marshalled armies, and the palaces of Kings :---we approach, the depot of wealth, the seats of science, the nurseries of the arts :---we listen, for the busy *hum* of industry ;---we hear--the wailings of woe ! an odious press gang, is tearing from an aged widow, the son of her hopes !---A dreaded requisition, demands

demands the victims of war ! A cruel despot banishes the patriot from his home ; and *mocks* at the tears of his subjects !

As a nation ;—Russia ranks with the first in territory, in population, and in internal resources :—her Peter the great, raised her from a state of barbarism, and taught her subjects the arts of peace and civilization :—Alexander, treads in the steps of his progenitor, and his empire advances to the ac'ine of its greatness.—But in Russia, human beings are sold with the beasts of the field ;—and the groans of unhappy exiles, issue from the dreary regions ; and from the dreadful mines of Siberia.

The mighty empire of Germany is tottering to its decline :—From this country, issued those streams of population, which germinated almost all the present nations of Europe :—The mighty torrent, broke the chains wherewith the Roman power had bound a great portion of that quarter of the world.—But Germany, straitened in her circles ; and, at length deprived of a great portion of her dependencies ;—having wasted her resources, and fainting under her misfortunes ;—feels—that the season of her vigor has passed.

France—rises to our view in all her ephemeral greatness !—let us recur to the period of her Louis the sixteenth and contemplate the nation aroused from the lethargy of despotism !—We see her notables, and her states general in assembly ;—we behold an arbitrary monarch, surrendering himself to his subjects ;—and thirty millions of people demanding

manding liberty with an irresistible voice !---how does the bosom of freemen pant with expectation !---universal emancipation is at hand ! ah, no !---a combination of kings is already formed ;---miriads of slaves pour around ;---and the assassin's dagger is deep in the vitals of France. What heavy throes ! what deep convulsions !---Religion, thou balm of Gilead ; where was thy healing thy supporting power ? alas ! unhappy man, had been taught to believe *thee*,---the position of Kings :---thy cup of consolation---as a *deadly poison* ; was dashed from the hand of desperation :---then raged hatred and fell revenge ; the goddess of discord lighted her dismal torch !---A'TE and the furies lash'd on to slaughter ! Then France swam in blood ! her patriots, her warriors, her statesmen sinking in death !

France, offered to the rapacious invaders of her territory, a spoil more tempting than the partition of unhappy Poland ;---but the enemies of France failed from the earth. By a course of changes we at length see her established under a Consulate,---and the hero of *Lodi* seated in the civic chair. Bonaparte now fills the throne of the Capets !---France has trusted to ambition and the sword, what ought to remain in the sacred deposit of peace and legislative council :---and, although, directed by the genius which governs her, she has ascended the highest pinnacle of *empires fame* ! yet, we may predict, that a succession of kings will lead her to the end of its glory !---when some weak, ill-fated Louis, and detestable Maria Antoniette, will renew the tragedy of a revolution.

England remains---The pedestal of her glory is inverted ;--and she rests on its apex.---England, the theatre of revolutions ;--the stage of patriotism ;--the scene of corruption ! In vain have thy kings been murdered ;---in vain have thy HAMPDENS warned thee ;---sunk in corruption, thou knowest, but *the name* of liberty :---thousands of thy subjects, the inhabitants of thy soil, are the children of want and wretchedness ;---they are the deluded victims of folly and madness.---We would hasten from thy polluted shores !---but Ireland arrests our progress :---Unhappy Ireland ! the groans of thy O'Connors, thy Emmets and thy Hamilton Rohan's, are mingled, with the infectious steams of thy *dungeons*.

Come Englishmen, let us ascend thy navies ? thy greatness has spread abroad :---We will sail with thee to thy India !---perhaps thy wisdom, thy liberty, thy humanity have been transported thither :---Thy governors are princes, thy nobles the rulers of the earth.---But see the objects that India presents ? “ Nations extirpated, provinces desolated, and cities and countries overwhelmed in one *mass of destruction* !”

Ah, humanity ! I seek in vain for thy shrine among the nations of the old world :—“ My ear is pained, my soul is sick, with every days report of *wrong*, and *outrage*, with which earth is filled !”

My country, I look to thee for repose :---how cheering, how ennobling, how satisfying, the prospect !---Peace
is

is maintain'd in thy borders, thy subjects shout the song of joy :---Commerce extends her arms---She purchases the wealth of the earth : The husbandman is heard in the field, there is none to make him afraid.

Americans, are you sensible to the blessings you possess ? Will you prefer to rank with nations, who recognize in supreme power the sum of political right ? or, will you maintain to yourselves--distinct systems, laws congenial to freedom, and an independent suffrage ? Will you teach your sons to bow the neck to a despot, and to kiss the hand of the murderer drenched in the blood of their children ?---Or, will you *detest* all systems founded on that odious doctrine, which declares mankind unequal to the power of governing themselves !

Compare your situation as a *nation* : is there any other upon earth whose circumstances are so favorable ? Seperated by the Atlantic,---from the contentious States of Europe ;---you have but little to fear, from their intrigues or their armies.---On your *frontiers* ; you behold the remains of the aboriginal tribes, smoaking the calumet of peace.---In your councils, wisdom presides as the head ; ---and justice, judgment, and truth---are her support. In your cities, your towns, your villages, the churches of the living God are established ;---and your religion is the devotion of the *heart*.---Nurtured in the general soil of liberty, genius springs forth in her energies ;---the temples of science arise ; the arts are encouraged ; labor meets its sweet reward ; and humanity, with all her gentle offices covers *the land* !

Nation

Nation of America, what more do you wish for? Ah! there is a wish.---Tripoli?---but, we will not curse thee :--- thou art but an *instrument* in the hand of that Being, who governs the universe :--thy arm was feeble in the contest ; but, who can turn aside the decrees of Heaven.---We were in danger of forgetting the great first cause, which determines the destinies of nations : but we bow in deep humility, we remember our fallen brethren : they on this day---think of their country!---the vital current rushes indignantly to their chains!---Brethren, thy country, thy children---are still free ;---we do not forget thee ;---we will hush the voice of discontent,---we will harmonise with each other ;---party spirit shall be done away from the land ;---it may be, that a God of mercy will look unto us---and will return you,---our brothers!---to a pleasant HOME, and to a grateful COUNTRY.

