

AN

# ORATION,

*PRONOUNCED AT THE MEETING-HOUSE*

IN THE VICINITY OF

**Dartmouth College,**

ON THE

**FOURTH OF JULY, 1811.**

—•—  
*BY JOTHAM FAIRFIELD,*  
MEMBER OF THE SENIOR CLASS.  
—•—

— Fuimus Troës, fuit Ilium, et ingens  
Gloria Teucrorum.

VIRGIL.

Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey. GOLDSMITH.

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HANOVER, N. H.

*PRINTED BY CHARLES SPEAR.*

—•—  
1811.

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE July 4, 1811

The undersigned, appointed a committee to wait on Mr. *Jotham Fairfield*, do, in behalf of the Students of Dartmouth College, tender him their unfeigned thanks for his truly elegant, spirited, and patriotic Oration, delivered on occasion of the Anniversary of American Independence, and request a copy for publication.

BEZALEEL CUSHMAN, } Committee in be-  
WILLIAM GORDON, } half of the  
THOMAS FESSENDEN, } Students.

MR. JOTHAM FAIRFIELD.



DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, July 5, 1811.

Gentlemen,

YOUR request of a copy of my Oration is granted. Should errors be discovered, they may be palliated, if not excused. For it was written in hurry and disturbance, "in sickness and in sorrow."

Gentlemen,

Respectfully,

Your Friend and

Humble Servant,

JOTHAM FAIRFIELD.

Messrs. Bezaleel Cushman, } Committee in be-  
William Gordon, } half of the  
Thomas Fessenden, } Students.

# ORATION.



MEN and BRETHREN,

IN conformity with a laudable custom, we are this day assembled to celebrate the joyous anniversary of American Independence; to commemorate the day, that witnessed an event extraordinary and unexpected; an event which gave to the world a glorious example of bravery and perseverance; which reanimated the expiring hopes of a distressed, desponding, and almost disheartened people, and told them they were free. We are not now convened to indulge in noisy revelry or unseemly mirth; but the celebration of Independence should not occasion "sorrow and sighing," and we may well rejoice. We have not met together to assail the characters of public men, and call in question the purity of their motives; but to pay the tribute of panegyric, which every patriot owes to our departed sages and heroes. Nor have we assembled to inquire the causes of *all* our public measures, and detail the consequences where known, or conjecture those which time has not disclosed; but to contribute our feeble though honest exertions to perpetuate the memory of times that are past.

ON occasions like the present, it is no necessary to go far or search deep in pursuit

of materials for the composition of a public address. As elaborate elucidations of political subjects, or luminous illustrations of the comparative advantages resulting from the different forms of government ought not to be expected, if any expectations of this are at present formed, they will undoubtedly be disappointed.

It may be thought by some, that, on the present occasion, a formal comparison between the several important measures of our different administrations would be neither difficult nor improper. But the execution of such a design would require a compass larger than that of a short address, and might also by *some* be considered a violation of decorum towards our present rulers, who have been declared meritorious of obedience and respect by the voices of a majority of our people.

A love of independence is deeply impressed upon the human constitution. It is written in characters, which neither the rudeness of ignorance can mar, nor the meanness of slavery obliterate. Instinctive at first, it soon rises to a principle, it "grows with the growth of man and strengthens with his strength;" it teaches him to guard against tyranny and oppression; tells him that "it is base to suffer when he ought to act," and rouses his exertions for the preservation of the rights and privileges, which the Author of his being has committed to his care.

HENCE have proceeded the wars and revolutions, which ever since its creation, have continued to vex the world; which have

made human affairs as uncertain as the duration of the passing gale, and fluctuating as the troubled sea. Ever casting a jealous eye towards his rights, man, unless jaundiced by the grossest ignorance, is ever active, ready to resist every infraction ; and, mindful of the duty he owes to himself and his posterity, is impatient to throw off the burden of oppression when it has become too “ grievous to be borne.”

BUT while admiring his spirit of independence, we have often to lament its perversion, and while contemplating with delight his steadfast regard for liberty, we are frequently called to trace his devious windings through the mazes of blindness and error. Grievances are as often imaginary as real : And hence the frequency of revolutions. Hence also it happens that they are as often a misfortune as a blessing, that they as frequently tend to rivet chains as to unloose them. A mild and temperate monarchy has often been succeeded by the madness of anarchy and confusion, and the ruins of a free republic have been the bases of tyranny and oppression.

BUT a short time since, two revolutions, surprising in their nature and important in their consequences, presented spectacles more grand than any ever witnessed by an astonished world. America and France, each in their turn, attracted the eyes of the nations of the earth and fixed them in astonishment and wonder. The American revolution severed an infant country from its parent state, and added one to the catalogue

of independent nations. While it augmented the happiness of a growing people, it produced no consequences deleterious to the human race; the liberty of other nations was not diminished, nor the harmony of the moral world deranged. Transcendent merit afforded no pretext for persecution, nor were the goods of the wealthy confiscated and sold. Morality and religion were still respected; the churches were not prostituted, defaced, or demolished; but the devout Christian still entered unmolested, and paid his unrestrained devotions to the God which his fathers worshipped.

THE French revolution, originated by motives different from those which occasioned the American, as the characters and views of the inhabitants of America and France *once* were, was productive of consequences serious and alarming to the civilized world. France was the theatre of transactions, at whose bare recital fortitude trembles, courage is dismayed, and the human heart is rent with anguish. The sceptre was wrested from the hands of a monarch, broken in pieces and scattered among the outrageous and sanguinary mob, led on and instigated to "treason, sacrilege and crimes," by such men as Danton, Barras, Marat, Robespierre and Condorcet; the land was deluged with the blood of her choicest citizens; the axe was laid at the root of revelation, society and government, and even natural religion itself trembled on its perishing foundation. The priest sighed for his crumbling altar, and the philanthropist, having reared a

structure for the advancement of human happiness, was constrained to shed a tear upon its ruins. The moral world was in fearful agitation while this dark and fullen tempest was gathering around it. Bursting at length, its ravages were more dreadful than the devastations of the tornado, more terrible than the concussions of the earthquake.

A species of republican government was adopted; but it was of short duration. It was like a baleful comet, and portended the despotism which has followed. France is now groaning in chains.

POSTERITY will hardly credit the assertion, that in this country, among a people proud of their regard for religion and morality, these enormities should find powerful advocates, and these revolutionists close adherents. But surprising as it is, such men are to be found, even among those, who have been

“ Raised to the highest states the realm affords

“ By plausible speech and eloquence of words,”

and who have long enjoyed our confidence and esteem.

To state before an enlightened audience the causes which provoked our resistance to the British nation, would be an outrage upon decorum. It is enough to say, our fathers were oppressed, they flew to arms, they fought, they were successful.

THIRTY-FIVE years ago, when dark clouds of misfortune had overspread our country, when the hopes of the most sanguine had begun to despond, and resistance seemed to

border upon madness, the ears of an astonished people were greeted with the Declaration of Independence. It was this that confirmed the wavering, and added new vigor to the weary ; it animated the harangues of the statesman, and nerved the arm of the warrior.

Most of those, who were active in achieving our independence, have long since sunk into their graves. A sufficient number remain to tell us of the sufferings and hardships, which were the price of our republican government ; that we should guard it as the friend of our souls ; and that, when any one presumes to deprive us of the privileges we ought to enjoy, it is a power usurped, and resistance is a duty.

WHILE speaking of the American revolution, to pass by the name of WASHINGTON, would be treason against liberty, virtue, and humanity. It was he, my fellow citizens, who led your armies to victory and glory. It was he, who exerted his powerful influence to unite the jarring and discordant interests of divided states, and arrange and dispose them in "beauteous order and harmonious love." He has departed, but he has left an invaluable bequest. He has told you the effects of discords and divisions, and warned you to avoid them. He foresaw the dangerous consequences of foreign influence, and told you to be independent.

YET notwithstanding his reasonable claims to the universal and unqualified affection and gratitude of his countrymen, this truly great



and good man has been exposed to the virulence of enemies and detractors. He has been meanly insulted and traduced by vile exotics and base-born hirelings unprincipled and unfeeling, hardy and ferocious, with characters lower than perdition and blacker than despair, with souls as base as perfidy and as foul as guilt. It belongs to every patriot to spurn at every aspersion of so pure a character, and punish the authors with deserved neglect.

MY fellow citizens, remember WASHINGTON, for he was your friend. Respect his memory, for he was your deliverer. Treasure up his counsels and instructions, for he was your guardian and protector.

AMONG the names of those, who enjoyed the esteem and confidence of our immortal Chief, the deathless name of HAMILTON holds a conspicuous place. Needless would it be, at this time, to dwell upon his talents or his virtues. They will outlive the language which was the vehicle of the slanders against him. He enlightened us with the productions of his pen. He digested plans to enrich our treasury, and appreciate the national debt. Yet the purity of his motives has been questioned, and the policy of his plans disputed, while they have been adopted and approved by his more *punctilious* successors.

BUT while admiring his splendid talents, and unrivalled patriotism, we are constrained to weep for his inglorious fall. He departed at a time when his country stood in perishing need of his assistance.

COULD any thing alloy the pleasure arising from the celebration of our Independence, it would be the recollection, that this is the anniversary of the day, which witnessed the loss of our country's brightest ornament. It would be needless to dwell upon the talents and virtues of our immortal AMES, for by the wise and virtuous they are duly appreciated. To make use of the forcible and energetic language of his illustrious friend, "a purer spirit never left the earth." He was a Christian, and was humble; he was a patriot, and was faithful; he was wise, and was consulted; he wrote, and we were instructed; he spoke, and we were astonished. You have all seen a collection of his writings. It should be a manual for every politician. It is a fountain of political knowledge, which no patriot will leave untasted.

TRULY the worth of AMES was great was inestimable. He lived to see the dark clouds of adversity gathering around his country, and then departed. He departed in the meridian of his vigor and usefulness; he died "in the blaze of his fame." Should this once happy and respected people ever be compelled to bow to the sceptre of a despotic tyrant, (which may heaven avert,) should this once favored land ever revert to ignorance and barbarism, some miserable slave, more wise and more thoughtful than the rest, while raking the ashes of our republic, will discover the name of AMES, and sigh that he lived no longer.

WHILE celebrating the anniversary of our natal day, and rejoicing in the fruition of liberty, it becomes us to beware against being weakened and lulled to sleep by an overweening confidence in our security and virtue. Former republics, where are they? and national prosperity, does it last forever? The savage greets the rising sun with his morning aspirations; a cloud obscures it, and he is sad. The moon "in full-orb'd majesty" commands his worship and admiration; it wanes, and he is sorrowful. A nation joys in the sunshine of prosperity; the sun goes down, the night of adversity succeeds, the nation mourns.

My friends, have you ever seen the sun of prosperity rise upon a nation, and have you seen that sun go down? Have you seen a nation struggling up the stream of adversity and arrive at the desired haven, and have you seen it swing from its moorings? Have you seen a nation "shaking off the incumbrances of fortune," vanquishing a powerful opponent, and declaring their Independence, and have you seen them virtually renounce it? Have you heard a nation professing impartiality to all other nations, and have you seen that very nation succumb to a foreign power? Have you seen these things, and do you believe what you have seen? I *know* that you believe it.

NATIONAL happiness is frequently of short duration. Shall I point to you a happy nation?—But you have already seen one. You have seen a valiant people "bursting the bands of slavery asunder," emerging from

obscurity, and claiming respect from the nations of the earth. You have seen them establish a republican form of government, and frame codes of mild and equitable laws. You have seen their constitution respected. You have seen them enriched by foreign commerce ; you have seen the ocean whitened with their canvas, and the wharves groaning beneath the weight of their merchandize. You have seen a nation answering to this description, but you saw it for a short time.

My fellow citizens, is this a description of our own nation ? Would to God I could give you a negative answer. Towards yonder sea, “ now smiling as in scorn,” let us cast an eye to behold the misery of our country. The gladsome hum of business has given place to the complaints of the beggar ; our ships are huddled together in the ports ; the wharves are beaten by their decaying hulks, and the timid land-bird lights upon their rotting shrouds,

THE first blow upon our commerce was the fatal embargo. You are acquainted with the circumstances attending this act, and it is now needless to state them. Do you wish to know the reasons of the act ? Go to the sturdy rabble ; they will tell you it was intended to bring England at our feet. If this is insufficient, they will tell you that our rulers have adopted the measure, and it becomes you to be silent. But I perceive you are not satisfied with this. Go then to the more enlightened and virtuous among

our people. But they also are unable to assign reasons satisfactory and convincing. Ask them if there was no opposition. They will tell you that every thing was done, which eloquence the most forcible, energetic and impassioned could do ; but every exertion was vain and ineffectual. The subject is disgusting and we are glad to leave it.

Men, Brethren, and Fathers, hear me for a few moments, and I have done. Is there not a faction in this country, that will ere-long subvert our independence ? Is it not now preying like a greedy vulture upon the vitals of order, religion and morality ? Do not its members consider the interest of a foreign nation paramount to those of their own ? Is not our country gangrened by French influence ? Is not Napoleon feared, respected and beloved ? Is not the nation which presents the only barrier to his devastating progress undeservedly obnoxious to our people, and do they not wish for its destruction ? Interrogations like these need no reply.

AND are there any in this country, who wish success to the destroyer, and do they expect to be gratified ? We hope and confidently believe that they will not. Yet he has inspired his minions and vassals with the promise, that the expiration of seven years will witness the subjugation of the British nation.—Vain and silly rhodomontade ! He cannot impoverish a nation, that depends for supplies on the industry of its inhabitants.

He cannot vanquish a people contending for liberty, with a fixed and unalterable determination to succeed or perish. He might as well overturn the universal world; he might as well blow the stars from the sky, as to scatter that navy; he might as well take his sword and cleave old Saturn, as to subdue that nation.

What now is the state of our country, and on what do we rest our hopes of future prosperity! Our clergy are abused; our people are poisoned with the nauseous filth of newspapers; they are deceived and cajoled by artful flatterers and wily demagogues; real merit has become but a passport to obscurity, and bold ambition a requisite for office. *The city has become desolate, and glory has departed from Israel.*

You have heard ministers of the gospel reviled for pointing out to people their danger, and warning them to flee it; and you have seen the man who is now laboring to enlighten us with the productions of his pen, set up as a mark for the foul and filthy slander of upstart editors and pigmy politicians. But he is secure. He has given his countrymen a challenge to support any allegation against him, which as yet remains unaccepted.

It is now time to close. Had I thought that any assertions or insinuations, I have now made, would, by the candid and impartial, be considered aberrations from truth and candor, they should have been withheld.

I CAN only add ; let us cultivate national virtue, It is the palladium of our republic, it is the ægis of our independence. Let us suppress designing and ambitious demagogues. A demagogue is a professed patriot but a real traitor. Let us confer rewards upon merit. Let us strive to become enabled to repel the reproach, which may now too justly be cast upon us ; “Your political watchmen are blind : they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, that cannot bark ; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they are shepherds, that cannot understand ; they all look to their own way, every one to his own gain from his quarter.” Let us resent every aggression on our rights, and guard with vigilance our Independence. “Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.”

“ In the field of proud honor, our swords in our hands,  
 “ Our laws and our country to save,  
 “ While victory shines on life’s last ebbing sands,  
 “ O ! who would not rest with the BRAVE !”