

AN
ORATION

PRONOUNCED

AT WATERTOWN,

JULY 4, 1809.

AT THE REQUEST OF THE REPUBLICANS OF WATERTOWN,

AND THE ADJACENT TOWNS,

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF

American Independence.

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BY TIMOTHY FULLER, ESQ.
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AN ORATION.

TO commemorate illustrious men, and illustrious actions, to celebrate the eras of national deliverance from oppression, is at once a duty and a pleasure. The social propensities are cultivated ; men are stimulated to great and decisive sacrifices for their country, when they see their fellow citizens delighting to honour similar sacrifices even of remote periods. Emulation is among the great advantages of social life, and civilization points out its proper objects. As much as the civilized excels the savage state, so much civilized freedom excels the refinement of tyranny. It is only in a country, where *freedom* is added to refinement, that the mind expands to its proper dimensions, and human beings learn to feel, that they are men.—A nation of freemen would disdain alike the riotous exultation of a savage tribe over a vanquished, slaughtered, rival tribe, and the obsequious tribute of flattery, annually offered on the birth day of an insignificant king.

The day, which gave birth to America, above all others claims the grateful, joyous observance of the citizens of our peaceful, happy country. You need no argument, my fellow citizens, to incite you to its celebration. Faithful recollection has recorded the perils,

we have escaped ; the sagacity, which detected the designs of those, who sought to cajole us of our liberties ; and the boldness and persevering heroism, which stood forth before a host of dangers, and in the presence of heaven and of a wondering world achieved our glorious revolution.

The king and parliament of Great Britain saw the colonies of America advancing in population and wealth ; they became jealous of our growing power, and avarice tempted them to grasp the fruits of our industry.—This was natural. Precedents are numerous in history of similar conduct in similar circumstances. Pharaoh and his Egyptian parliament, the oldest precedent on record, planned the subjugation of the Israelites. The same spirit of that oppressed people perhaps would have submitted : but Providence raised up for their deliverance the hero and statesman, Moses. We too have had *our* Moses. We too have been infested, like the Israelites, with traitors and cowards, enemies of our independence, who have incessantly laboured to bring us back to the house of bondage, to the leeks and onions of Great Britain, and who, instead of confiding in our own strength, in an armed and patriotic militia, and in the God of battles, have made the British navy the golden calf of their confidence and adoration.

Venerable soldiers, who witnessed the disastrous scenes of a bloody civil war ; who saw your cities wrapped in flames, your farms laid waste, your brethren and children slaughtered by the navies and armies of Britain ; you, who during eight years fought and bled, to expel those armies from our country, those navies from our coasts ; say, are you so soon weary of liberty ?

Can you not now bear a year's suspension of the pestiferous draughts of luxury, of the seducing gewgaws and fineries of Britain, of the poisonous, effeminating, demoralizing products of the continent, to save our country from the shameful sacrifice of her rights? Go, go, my countrymen, you, who call yourselves Americans! forget your name, forget your constitution, and the proud liberties you have tasted—go, tell the Cobbetts and the Cannings, the Talleyrands, and Napoleons, you are sick of Independence; you cannot live without their luxuries; humbly pray admission into their ports, to take *their licences* to trade, to pay them "*beaucoup d'argent*," to carry them your substantial productions, and only ask in return a few worthless baubles. Tell them too, you have learned by a short experience to despise freedom and to despise *yourselves*; that you have listened to men, who have convinced you, that you are ignorant and cowardly; too base born to govern, too weak to defend yourselves;—that you are now ready to receive the yoke at the hands of the governors or the prefects, whom their superior wisdom and condescension shall please to send! This is the language of the enemies of our government; this was loudly proclaimed in the town-meeting and legislative denunciations, which so lately echoed through out distracted country. Spirits of departed patriots, of Hancock, of Franklin of Washington!—look with pity on the frailty of human virtue! but curse not, O, curse not *yet* the country, you have delivered! the flame of patriotism is not extinct. A spark from the altar of Freedom shall rekindle it, and faction shall be consumed in the conflagration!

Many were the miseries of the war, many and unforeseen the distresses of the first years of the peace, which followed. The former were submitted to without repining, because they were deemed inevitable; but the latter filled every heart with discontent and dismay. General distrust and universal suffering threatened to crumble the newly erected edifice of our freedom into premature ruin. The patriots of the revolution once more united; the good wishes, and, with pride and pleasure I will add, the *good sense* of the great body of our fellow citizens, seconded their efforts, and our happy constitution was the product of the combination.

Let us reflect one moment on the difficulties, they had to encounter. The ruin of revenue and commerce; a vast debt, partly to an allied nation, but far the greater part to the veteran officers and soldiers, who had spent their youth and their best blood in our defence, and who were now starving with their families, beset by a band of sharpening speculators, tempting them for a morsel of bread for their wives and children, to sell their right to the hard earned pittance of their wages; agriculture scarce germinating after the blighting frost of an eight years war, and the general wreck of industry and mutual confidence. Reflect on these things, and you will hardly less admire the authors of your constitution, than the illustrious heroes and statesmen, who achieved our independence. Scarcely can I forbear to pour out the fervent gratitude and veneration due to these men. To Washington, the two Adamses, Jefferson, Madison, Hancock, Henry, and Franklin. Nor in naming these would I derogate from many, whose

illustrious names, and illustrious actions fill the recollection, and fire the emulation of all their countrymen. No distinctions of party shall withhold from such men a wreath of immortal fame.

Nor let us withhold a tribute of applause and conscious pride to the good sense and discernment of our fellow citizens. Americans, think not that a single man, or a few sage statesmen and valorous heroes can make a nation free! For then might La Fayette and Mirabeau have given freedom to France; and Chatham, Fox and Nelson, would have delivered England from the corruption, which palsies her vitals, which subjects her army to the unhallowed pleasures of a courtesan, and degrades her counsels by the participation of buffoons and hireling blackguards. No, my countrymen, a nation, that would be free, must be virtuous, must be well informed, must be brave. For unless the great body of the citizens are all these, it is in vain, that a few great and good men would write and propose to them free constitutions.—They neither understand nor read them; they want virtue to preserve them from domestick traitors, and courage to vindicate them from the hostility of foreign invaders. Our Ancestors were sensible of this;—They foresaw, that the continent of America, when inhabited by millions, would become a prey to the parent state, unless rescued by their own energies. When therefore they planted deep the seeds of religion, as the vital principle; they also interspersed innumerable seminaries of learning. Colleges, Academies, Schools, were accessible not alone to the rich and noble, but to every individual in the community. There they were taught the principles of piety, the truths of

history, and the elements of liberty. There too they were taught, that industry and the useful occupations of the mechanic and the farmer are honourable and highly conducive to health and virtue ; and that bloated wealth too often the upstart offspring of dishonest, unfeeling speculation, or illicit and unwarrantable commerce, is rather to be deprecated, than desired. Thus educated, thus fortified by habit, the citizens of America resisted the encroachments of Great-Britain.—*Enthusiasm* together with resentment for recent wrongs did much in accomplishing their *Independence* ; but the formation and adoption of the *constitution*, and still more its wonderful influence in practice over local and temporary prejudices, were the effect of superior general knowledge. Yes my fellow citizens, I do you only justice, when I say, that the mutual concessions, contained in the constitution, are badges alike of mutual goodwill and of minds disencumbered of prejudice.—To say our constitution is perfect would be weak and absurd ; to say it is the most wonderful effort of human reason on the records of time, is the language of all the friends of liberty throughout the civilized world. It unites the strength of the nation in its defence against foreign enemies ; its wisdom in forming treaties and national compacts. It pledges the means and revenues of the whole for the discharge of the publick obligations to those, who have earned a recompence for the sacrifice of property and personal services. For a temporary indulgence to a system which it nevertheless reprehends in the Southern states, it secures in return to the eastern the protections of lawful commerce ; it provides for the frequent change by the people of the

officers, chosen to administer the government, the best possible pledge of their moderation, talents, and integrity ; and lastly it contains in itself the means of its own renovation and correction, whenever it shall become obvious to the nation that such renovation and correction are necessary.

Such a constitution with the voice of five millions of people in its favor, and the wisdom, patriotism, and popularity of the immortal Washington to guide its first operations, could scarcely fail to gladden every heart with the blessings of freedom and prosperity.

It can be neither pleasing nor useful to retrace too minutely the party dissensions, which began during the administration of the illustrious Washington, to embitter our repose. Human nature, always the same, in free countries will not fail to develope itself. The community was not interested in those dissensions, when they went no farther, than the competition of the ambitious for power, or the military successes of nations beyond the Atlantick, over whose affairs we had little influence, and with whom it was our interest to maintain the most friendly and impartial intercourse. But those nations could not suffer us to repose in quiet.—From both we received ample provocation to hostility.—It may be invidious to call a man a *partizan of a foreign nation*, but such was the ambition or prejudice of some of the *great spirits* of our country—of one to lead an army of “fifty thousand men,” of another to make war with France and consequently a close alliance with England, that the people and their government were on the eve of war with a nation, which was at that

moment making every overture to reconciliation,—France indeed had injured us, and insulted our minister; but she had relented; and her proffered reparation was accepted by the Patriot, who then presided in our nation. Accepted to his lasting honour, amidst the bitter taunts and calumnies of those, who by their offices ought to have supported him in the arduous task, with the whole weight of their influence; but who were vexed and provoked, that they could not engage America in the cause of England, and reunite us to her fortunes; who would have lavished our treasures and the blood of thousands of our citizens, to purchase bondage for the rest. Illustrious Adams, we revere thy patriotism! Too long have the odious measures which were forced on us during thy presidency, by ambitious men, the enemies of liberty, been attributed to thee. Let us never forget, that you broke from the thralldom of pretended friends, and restored peace to the nation.

Nor shall the American seaman cease to venerate thy name, whose hoary age burns with *youthful* indignation at the arrogant pretensions of Britain to impress them, and at the shameless effrontery of those who advocate her pretensions, and still dare to call themselves Americans.

The vigilance of our countrymen was roused, when they saw a cunning, ambitious, confidential instrument of aristocracy at the head of a useless standing army, and the oppressive and corrupting system of loans and internal taxation making rapid strides in our political establishments. Our country arose in her might—the grand catholicon of the constitution, a free and general

election, disencumbered the nation of a horde of empiricks, who were poisoning the very life blood of liberty. Government experienced a total renovation; internal taxes and unnecessary offices were abolished, an army of drones disbanded, the revenue fostered, and the national debt reduced, peace restored with the savages, and a vast acquisition of territory peacefully obtained. These were the first fruits of the administration of Jefferson. Men were not wanting, who told us we were "poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked," but our *hearts* told us the contrary; and indeed, I grieve to say it, there were not wanting *some*, who were really so miserably "blind," as to fancy themselves "poor" in the midst of plenty. But the number of such lunaticks was small, and daily diminishing. The second election of Mr. Jefferson was unanimous beyond example; more than ten to one was the triumphant proportion of his advocates to their opponents. The puny remnants of opposition seemed to have contracted their dimensions to a simple cabal.

To the sincere and candid of the federal party, the severity of these censures is not intended to apply; and such, I trust, when guided by their own judgment, are far the greatest number of those who are distinguished by the appellation. For these I would testify, for I *feel*, the most sincere respect; and such, it is presumed, are all those, who now unite with us in the joy and festivity of this day. It is only the ambitious, intriguing, and hypocritical; those, who would rise to office and power by undermining our government, and betraying our country—those, and those alone, together with the herd

of sycophants, who adhere to them, I would probe to the quick with the keen rebuke of truth.

Various were the means devised to restore their shattered fortunes. Some advised to detach as many of the eminent confidential republicans, as possible, from the cause, they had espoused, by flattering their vanity, alarming their pride, and seeming to second their pretensions to promotion. Some proposed to overwhelm Mr. Jefferson under a torrent of personal abuse and slander. Some, whose lives had been a scene of profligacy, now shed floods of crocodile tears for the perils of religion, and uttered woeful lamentations at the infidelity of Paine. All these means were pursued with vigour; but the first seems to have flattered them with most success. Aaron Burr, a man of surprising talents, was successfully cajoled, and for a few months after the death of Hamilton, may be considered as the acknowledged head of the party. How far their plots succeeded, is fresh in the recollection of us all. And when his discomfiture was completely effected, and himself delivered over to the arm of civil justice; let us not fail to record, the fidelity, with which he and all his minions were sheltered from the storm. His friends, in and out of office, were faithful to their chief. Here indeed is the brightest page of federal history. Instead of deserting and abjuring Burr, as a traitor to his country, every federal newspaper, and every oracle of the party arose, as one man, in his defence; and from their incessant outcries the people could not but believe, the constitution was indeed in danger. In the midst of this cloud of alarm, a sort of trial took place, in which under the direction of a great and learned judge Burr was

dismissed for want of evidence. His accomplices escaped no less easily, and scarcely could be excluded from their seats in the senate, and from a share in the most important councils of the nation. Who can withhold his praise from a party so faithful to its leaders. How we regret that a little of their perseverance and fidelity could not have been reserved for the late perils and sufferings of their country.

The stratagem of exciting division among men high in the national confidence had no inconsiderable share in their great system. A treaty with England was sent over by our minister there, to be ratified, in which the great and increasing abuse of impressing our seamen, was winked out of sight; which after so much complaint and controversy, amounted to yielding it up to England. The president was an American—he returned the treaty with disdain. This treaty was so pleasing to the advocates of Britain, that their former bitter enmity of its negociator was changed to eulogy, and that gentleman, and many of his personal friends, were decoyed into a dereliction of their former attachment to the cause of America. Nor was the fond ambition of the venerable, aged vice-president left unassayed. Both were by federalists pointed out as candidates for the presidency. But all these and many other artifices seemed to shrink to nothing before the upright, dignified administration of the government in the presence of an enlightened and prosperous people. So much was our Jefferson devoted to his country, and regardless of the lures held out by two great foreign nations, to decoy us from neutrality, that it became the interest and policy of both those nations,

though *hostile* to each *other*, to encourage at the same time the ambitious projects of this party against our own government. Yes, I boldly pronounce it, Napoleon himself united, with the federal party, to undermine our republican government, and restore them to power. The plan was deep; to some it will seem incredible; but the hatred of the Emperor of France to republican institutions harmonized perfectly with the aristocratical views of this party. In pursuance of this compact he passed the decrees of Berlin and Milan, interdicting American commerce—England did the same, and thus our ships were excluded from the continent and the islands, and the earnings of our labour and the product of our farms, floating to distant countries, were exposed to the grasp of authorised plunderers. America stood for a moment appalled;—but, assuming her wonted resolution, she withdrew from a host of pirates and marauders, whom she was not yet armed to resist. Commerce was suspended, agriculture palsied, and the government, the watchmen of the people, having warned them of the first omens of danger, now with dignified confidence and resolute promptitude summoned them to union, to encounter the fearful tempest.

Now indeed was the moment so long expected, so much wished for, by Napoleon and the federalists. A lying spirit was sent forth to fill the columns of the federal newspapers, and the mouths of their town-meeting orators. The people were told, the embargo was to be perpetual—that Jefferson and congress in secret sitting had sold the nation to the Emperor of France, and the Emperor of France took care to utter some mysterious

expressions, which were translated and expounded, as occasion required. Multiplied and plausible were the tales of party. Great, indeed, were the sufferings of our citizens; they were taught to contemn and disobey the laws; that to disobey was a right and a duty, and assured of protection and favour, as a reward for their disobedience. When the ablest senators, and the most incorruptible judges, and the most eminent merchants, ventured to dissent and shrink from giving their sanction to rebellion, they were denounced in publick and private, as base prevaricators, and selfish calculators. Under such a pressure of falshood, terror, and suffering, can it be wondered, that some have departed and erred from their first principles! Yet to the lasting honour of America, and especially of New-England, where this suffering was most severe, the proselytes of federalism were few indeed. The almost equal scale of parties has scarcely been made to vibrate; and federalism preponderates for a moment, soon to disappear in the smoke of its own conflagration. Spirit of the revolution, thou art indeed returned! Americans, I this day hail ye worthy of Independence!

Permit me now, my fellow-citizens, to congratulate you again on the return of this glorious anniversary! Each year brings us new cause of felicitation. Our systems are acquiring vigour from the attacks of enemies and the fortifying hand of time. Yet, though they have repelled every assault hitherto, it behoves us to plant new bulwarks of defence around those sublime beacons of our liberty. Let us venerate religion, the religion of our ancestors and of the sacred scriptures.

and revere those teachers of it, who stand aloof from the rancour of party ;

“ Whose doctrine and whose life

“ Coincident, exhibit lucid proof,

“ That they are honest in the sacred cause.”

Let us diffuse general knowledge and correct information, by means of early education. Let the arts of life, of agriculture, manufactures, and lawful, honest trade be held in esteem ; and let children be bred to habits of diligence and industry, whether rich or poor ; let all distinctions be discarded but those of superior industry, honesty, virtue, and talents ; let every citizen be a soldier, enlisted for life in defence of his freedom, his wife, his children, and his country ; let our elections be perfectly free, uncorrupted, and impartial. The general observance of such a system of conduct would under Providence protract our liberty and independence to remotest ages.