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Gleason, Joseph, Jr.

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MR. GLEASON'S

O R A T I O N,

JULY 4, 1806.

AN
ORATION,
PRONOUNCED ON THE
THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY
OF
American Independence,
BEFORE THE
YOUNG DEMOCRATIC REPUBLICANS,
OF THE
TOWN OF BOSTON,
AT THE
SECOND BAPTIST MEETING HOUSE,
July 4, 1806.

.....
BY JOSEPH GLEASON, jun.
.....

.....“*Non passibus æquis.*”——VIRGIL.

“The voice of your fathers’ blood cries to you from the ground, my
sons scorn to be slaves.”
WARREN.

BOSTON:
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.....
1806.

BOSTON, JULY 5, 1806.

AT a meeting of the Young Democratic Republicans, July 4, 1806—It was unanimously voted, that MOSES HALL, jun. S. G. SNELLING, and JASON HALL, be a Committee to wait on Mr. JOSEPH GLEASON, jun. with their thanks, for his animated Address, on the 4th of July, and request a copy for the press.

MOSES HALL, jun. Secretary.

*To the Committee of the Young Democratic Republicans,
GENTLEMEN,*

With all the defects of an infant production, the Oration is submitted to your disposal.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your's respectfully,

JOSEPH GLEASON, JUN.

O R A T I O N.



TO be called by my Young Republican Brethren, on this glorious occasion, to delineate the blessings of that INDEPENDENCE, which, we are here assembled to commemorate, is indeed a pleasing reflection, and my heart rebounds with gratitude for the honor they have conferred.

Conscious of my inadequacy to do justice to the *cause of freedom*, and having nothing to boast, but a common education, and the age of youth which I have not yet put off. This I presume will be a sufficient apology for my not discharging the duty to that degree of perfectness, which might be expected from one, whose years are more, and on whom, the rays of fortune have more bountifully shone.

From the first era of my remembrance, I have always been instructed in the principles of *Republicanism*. An attachment to that cause, and the love of patriotism, have been the only *inducements*, for me to comply with the request of my respected young friends.

In commemoration of our *National Independence*, we have this day assembled, and come forward to evince, by the most grateful marks of reverence,

that we still retain the principles of Republicanism, and have a sacred regard for the memories of those Heroes, who “fought and bled” in defence of the freedom and Independence of our country; that our love of the sacred trust committed to us, to be handed down to posterity, is not abated; but that we feel a growing attachment with every increasing year.

The reasons for which we celebrate this day, with increased enthusiasm, are too well known to every American to need a repetition, but the vast contrast, between the situation of our country now, and past times, is so truly interesting, that it is impossible to pass it over in silence.

A government, like that of *Great Britain*, where the most unrestrained, and wicked impositions are daily put upon the people, and where men are born to be the conductors of the public welfare; it will readily be perceived, was not calculated to gain the support of those, who believe man was *born free*, and capable of governing himself, and that they are indebted to none but the *Almighty*, for these blessings.

Such was the belief of our pious ancestors who first landed on these shores, at the time of their emigration from *Europe*.

They preferred a barren wilderness, and the friendship of the uncivilized Indians, to all the magnificence, and splendor of Monarchy; they preferred to worship God, in their own manner, in a wilderness,

rather than be compelled to worship with those, with whose creed, they could not conscientiously coincide. Such was the situation of the first settlers of New-England, they explored the tempestuous ocean, in an unfavorable season of the year, and after combating the many billows of adversity, which had often threatened their destruction, they landed, on *forefather's rock*, Plymouth. 1620.

In a barren wilderness, peopled only by the rude untutored savages—where the Indians yell and the warhoop rung in constant succession, in the dreary season of the year, when the face of the earth was not discernible, and the roarings of the beast of prey, struck terror to the soul of man. In such circumstances did our pious and venerable forefathers lay the foundation of New-England.

Through all difficulties did they persevere, aided by that Providence, which had guarded them across the watery element, and protected them in this inhospitable, and uncultivated region :—they rose with every encreasing year, in magnitude and happiness.

But Heaven had ordained that their happiness was not to be perpetual. The mother country had taken to herself “ *the right to tax them in all cases whatsoever,*” and had so far extended her parental authority, that in compliance with what she had claimed as her right, she levied the *stamp act* upon the Colonies.

The resentment, *irritated* by this act, and the repeated remonstrances of the Colonies against it, were

very serious—and viewed by Great Britain with a jealous eye.

At that time commenced the most enlightened publications in vindication of the rights of the American People, and the spirited conduct of *James Otis*, *Samuel Adams*, *John Hancock*, *Joseph Warren* and *Patrick Henry*, at that period, shone conspicuous. They hesitated not to deny the right of Great-Britain to tax and oppress the People.

The bloody and inhuman *mussacre* in State-Street, on the *5th of March*, 1770, will be recorded as one of the leading events to the American revolution. If cowardice was ever witnessed, *State-Street* was the spot where it appeared *most valiantly*. A body of men armed, and prepared for a ready attack, had the bravery to fire on the *unarmed*, and innocent citizen. See there the street bespattered with the brains, and bedewed with the blood of our patriotic and venerable fathers.

From thence we can trace them to *Lexington*, when a well disciplined and regular British army was compelled to fly before the hardy American yeomanry. Here opened the scenes of bloodshed and slaughter ! Here commenced the American war ; and *Lexington* will ever be revered, as the spot, where fell the first martyrs in the cause of American Freedom !

Again we behold them, on “ Bunker’s awful mount,” and thousands pressing forward to offer their lives in defence of Freedom and Independence.

Here fell the ever truly great, and illustrious WARREN ! nerved by a spirit of heroism, he had *voluntarily* gone to the field, to assist his countrymen in obtaining their Independence, and in the retreat of the American troops, he was shot, and expired.

Here let us pause, to pay a tribute to his distinguished and patriotic memory. He had early been a firm friend, and supporter of the People's rights, and died, while fighting to secure to them, the blessings they now enjoy.

Illustrious WARREN ! Though thy name is engraven on the "*cold marble*," our hearts shall always be a mausoleum to thy memory ; and if tears can be a proof of our affection, we will retire to the spot, where thy ashes are entombed, and bedew thy cold urn to evince our sincere gratitude, for thy distinguished excellence.

We should delight to trace all the events of the American Revolution, did not the "limit of oration" forbid it ; but to do justice to all those heroes, whose patriotism was manifested through its various struggles, would occupy more time than is usually devoted on this day.

After the *battle of Bunker Hill*, the command of the armies of America was given to GEORGE WASHINGTON, a native of *Virginia*, who, at the head of his fellow countrymen, fought and secured to us the blessings of liberty. His worth and patriotism were constantly exhibited by his endeavors to soften the burthens of the soldier. While travelling through

fields of ice, bare-footed and hungry, in pursuit of Freedom, he alleviated their distresses by partaking all their misfortunes ; and after a tedious struggle, in which Great Britain lost every thing, she possessed in America, and our fathers gained their Independence, they retired to participate and enjoy the blessings, for which, they had fought.

During the American Revolution, some of the ablest, and best generals lost their lives.—The tears of Americans were often seen flowing to the memory of MONTGOMERY, MERCER, PULASKI and others ; and shall not our tears be mingled with those of our fathers, to evidence the respect we entertain for their patriotism ? Yes ! our cheeks have been *mantled* with tears, and our hearts filled with gratitude for the memory of those heroes, whose lives have been sacrificed for our happiness.

After the American army had defeated the British, and obtained their purpose, they were never heard to sigh because they had no more *worlds to conquer*. Their pursuit was liberty ; they obtained it, and felt contented.

Can we too dearly appreciate the worth of those patriots, who were wielding the pen in the cabinet, while their fellow-countrymen were wielding the sword in the field, to secure to us the blessings we now enjoy. Among those the names of SAMUEL ADAMS, and JOHN HANCOCK, shone conspicuous in the constellation of American worthies. A sufficient eulogium has been pronounced upon their characters, by the abhorrence, in which, they were held

by the British, and *Tories* of that day. The threats of a GAGE, could not quench the flame of patriotism, which glowed within their breasts.

“ Their natures were too noble for this world,
 “ They would not flatter Neptune for his Trident,
 “ Nor Jove for his power to thunder.”

But they are no more !—They lived to see that Liberty, which they so ardently strove to establish, duly estimated, and while reflecting upon their worth and greatness let us enshrine them, in eternal remembrance.—Endeavour to adhere to the principles, which they supported, and copy, and imitate their virtues; for should we ever see the *Tree of Liberty* corroded, and about to be destroyed, we may regret, if we have not a *Hancock*, or an *Adams* to defend it.

This country was declared *free and Independent*, on the *4th of July*, 1776, and from thence we date the establishment of the American Republic.

Since that period how has our country increased its resources, and its happiness, by the showers of divine beneficence, and by the genial rays of the sun of prosperity.

What a contrast between our country now, and the time of its first establishment. The places, which were the retreats of the beasts of prey, and the haunts of the savages, are now the social walks of civilized man :—where was heard the terrific yell, and the war hoop, is now heard soft music lulling to sleep the war-worn veteran soldier, who has fought

in defence of his country's freedom. The briars and thorns have become roses and myrtles, and the whole country affords a striking resemblance to a well cultivated *village-ground* abounding with the richest and choicest productions of nature, either for man, or the animal creation.

How charming appears the prosperity of our own free government, when compared with others, the comparison is almost too flattering; can any rational being feel discontented in this happy country? How wretched is the man, and how foolish the pursuit, if he seeks greater happiness than can be enjoyed in America.

Let us cast our eyes towards the continent of Europe, and behold the blood streaming through every avenue; see fields desolated—the helpless innocents suffering at the point of the bayonet, and thousands plunged into endless eternity to please the mad ambition of the British ministry!—and behold! our own country, at peace with all the world, a great and good man presiding at the head, who is not desirous of obtaining fame, by the price of his countrymen's blood!!

Can any one behold this comparison, and feel desirous to become an European? If he can he is unworthy the name of an American. He will not there find the sweet and exhilarating gales, which are wafted along Columbia's happy shores.

In fact the felicities of our own country are the the most replete of any on the face of the earth, and

we have every reason to believe that they will continue, while the bosom of man is illumed by one spark of patriotism, or the love of Liberty.

Our constitution is founded on the strongest basis, and he who would endeavor to destroy it, ought to be branded with the reproaches of all those, who hold it as the sacred deposit of their rights.

The constitution is the best, and most effectual guardian of our national happiness, and prosperity, founded by the wisest and best men in our country, and supported by every true American.

Agreeably to this Constitution, the government is vested in a *President*, *Vice-President*, and a *Congress of Delegates* from the several states, each branch of its *Legislature* having a negative upon the acts of the other, and the *Executive*, a negative upon the acts of both. Thus we may always expect to see the balance preserved, by the various checks in the government.

The first executive under this Constitution was the illustrious WASHINGTON, "after fighting the battles of his country," and gaining our Independence, he was unanimously called to fill the first office in the gift of his countrymen. To say he discharged the duties of his office to general satisfaction is not sufficient, for such was the people's love, that he was called a second time to fill this important office. After serving for *eight* successive years, in the office of *President*, with modest diffidence he retired to private life. Not an American, but felt the loss

of a *Father*, in the councils of their country. How did they regret, when he retired from office! but how can we express the sorrows, that were witnessed, when the illustrious hero departed the world! From every quarter of the Union the lamentations of his countrymen were heard, and the tears, which were shed to his memory, discovered the high respect and sympathizing veneration of a great people.

The office of President of the United States, which had been vacated by the resignation of WASHINGTON, was vested in Mr. JOHN ADAMS, of *Massachusetts*; who deserves the praise of the American people, for the patriotism which he evinced in the early part of the revolution, and detached from the consideration of various political transactions, is entitled to our respect. His conduct as President of the United States was not generally approbated, but we are much disposed to attribute his failings in that important trust, to certain aspiring and designing men, who had urged every measure which was adopted under his administration, derogatory to the character of America.

After the term for which he was elected had expired, the people saw fit to call the man who had been aiding the establishment of American Independence, during the whole revolution, to discharge the office vacated by the removal of Mr. ADAMS.

THOMAS JEFFERSON, a native of *Virginia*, and "the author of the Declaration of American Independence" was inaugurated as President of the *United States*, on the 4th of *March*, 1801, amid

acclamations, and with the full consent of every lover of republicanism,—adherents to those principles which characterized our fathers in establishing our liberty.

Since this worthy man came into office, how various are the blessings the people enjoy. *Taxation* is less ! The *national debt* is rapidly decreasing ! He has gained a valuable territory, “ embracing some of the finest and best harbours, without bloodshed ! Every means, which possibly could be put in force, to lessen the burthens of the people, have been adopted, and our country has flourished under his administration beyond all comparison.

Previous to his being elected as president, how vile and base were the means employed to ruin his reputation, and blast his happiness—he was denounced as an *Infidel*, an *Atheist*, and a member of a *French Party*—the *hue and cry* was, that should he be elected, *Meeting-Houses* would be razed to the ground,—Our *Bibles* would be burnt, and those who were the sacred *Oracles of Divine Truth* would be sacrificed to his rage ! Through every aristocratic paper, from Maine to Georgia this disgraceful calumny was resounded. The *pulpit* was even made a vehicle to slander the virtuous, and *plots* and *massacres* were issued as largely as the word of God !

Thus has the man who now presides at the head of the American Nation been calumniated and abused ; and how has he withstood the threatening *political tempest*, which in vain raised its head to terrify, and affright him.

Under his Administration we are taught to believe that the people are their own *best friends*, that an honorable *Peace* is preferable to an ignominious *War*, and a well disciplined *militia* is superior to a *standing army*, that a small *navy* is preferable to a large one, when our country is in peace with all the world. He has asserted that “*Error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.*” His wish is, “*Peace, Commerce, and honest Friendship with all Nations, entangling alliances with none.*”

Such are the multiplicity of blessings the people enjoy under his administration, with the aid of a kind Providence.

How false and malicious have been proved all the assertions of his enemies ! how low are they now reduced by their own disgraceful conduct :

Have we witnessed any destruction of Meeting-Houses ?—have we seen any conflagrations of the Bible ? or the execution of any of the Clergy ? Have we not seen an increase of houses for Public Worship, and the most rapid spread of divine truth since he came into office ? If we have :—why all this commotion ? Has Mr. JEFFERSON, been proved an infidel ? He has asserted that it “*does him no injury if his neighbor says he believes in ONE GOD or twenty Gods, it neither breaks his leg nor picks his pocket ;*” a sentiment for which, alone he deserves the praise of every good christian. He feels perfectly willing that every person should worship agreeably to the dictates of his own conscience.

I would ask who has suffered under his adminis-

tration? and what are his injuries? Has the *Farmer*, the *Merchant*, or the *Mechanic* been injured by his being elected to the first office of his country? Has the earth not yielded the *Farmer* its usual supply, and abundance? or has he refused to till the soil, or acknowledge his claim to it;—because he is burthened with a *land tax*? Has the merchant refused to transact his customary business, because he has to pay a *tax* for the *stamp* on every piece of paper, on which he writes? Has he found it impossible to make his *imports*, and has he refused to make his *exports*? Has any thing like this transpired? If it has, why is it not communicated, and vociferated through every vehicle of detraction? Has the *Mechanic* been obliged to throw up his business, and compelled to sell his implements of workmanship? Has he refused to build him a *house* for fear of a *Window Tax*? Has he been obliged to keep his *fire in pots* because he expects a *hearth tax*? To all these questions we answer **NO!!**

Under his administration, the social hours of an evening's fire side is as much enjoyed as ever, and the smoke can ascend and mingle with the vapors, *without taxation*.

The *Merchant* can write his Commercial letters, his Bills of Exchange, his Certificates and Notes, without being dogged by a *stamp-master*. The *mechanic* can build his house, and see, through every avenue, the light of Heaven, *without taxation!*

The *Farmer* can sow, and reap his full reward, in his harvest,—his *lands* are fruitful, and his happiness perpetual.

