



ORATION

ON

American Independence.



AN
ORATION,

SPOKEN ON TUESDAY,

The Fourth of JULY, 1797,

AT THE

East Meeting-House in Suffield :

BEING THE

ANNIVERSARY OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

By Gideon Granger, Esq.

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AN ORATION, &c.

WITH hearts filled with gratitude to the Supreme Disposer of events, who, in the time of our distresses and dangers, risked us from the jaws of tyranny, established and confirmed our Liberty and Independence, and gave us a name among the nations of the earth : Let us, my Friends and Fellow Citizens, unite in the celebration of this beloved day.

To some it may appear idle ; nay more, immoral, to assemble on the occasion. But if any day in the course of the year, merits public attention (that day hallowed by heaven, and set apart by God himself, for his peculiar worship alone excepted) this is the very day.

SHALL we fast and pray at the opening of the spring, or seed time, that the labor of our hands and crops may succeed? Shall we keep a day of public praise and thanksgiving at the ingathering of our harvests, and take no notice of the day on which our liberties and privileges, both civil and sacred commenced? Shall the birth day of a WASHINGTON (meritorious and deserving as he is) be had in remembrance, and the day in which a Nation is born be lost in silence and forgotten? This surely ought not to be. Justice, nay heaven itself forbids it.

As we are young, as a nation, and still younger as to our form of civil government, some sketches of social and political duties, with some observations on the probable advancement of literature and increasing happiness of mankind, shall form the present entertainment.

THE social principle in man is of a nature too expansive to be confined within the narrow limits of a family, of friends, or of a neighborhood. It runs into larger circles, and forms societies and commonwealths.

In these, alone, it is, that some of our noblest and best affections arrive at their highest

improvement and perfection. No objects, corresponding to these principles, are to be found in the solitary state of nature. There the motives to action rise no higher than natural love to one's children. There family wants engross all the care and attention, and leave no room, at least no exercise, for contemplations and affections of a more enlarged kind. The whole employment is nothing more than one dull round of providing for animal life. And after all, such is our make and condition in this world, that unaided by the help of others, with all our labor and toil, we should find but a miserable supply of our wants, and a still more miserable security against wild beasts, angry and tempestuous seasons, and a thousand other dangers to which we are exposed. But in society, the aids and assistances men give and receive, diminish the labor of each ; and the united strength and wisdom of the several members, afford safety and protection to the whole body.

MOREOVER, the various abilities, tastes, and inclinations to be found amongst men, adapted to the various occupations and employments necessary to the growth and prosperity of

society, do evidently point to such a state. Nay, some of our best affections, especially the God-like one of doing good and reverencing our nature, would be abortive with such directions. Man, therefore, is a social creature, and a state of society his natural state.

WHEN a Society is formed, there arises a set of social and political duties: Such as—love of our country; submission to its laws and orders; public spirit; love of liberty; sacrifice of life, and all we have, to our country; and duties of a similar nature.

THE love of our country, is one of the noblest passions that can warm the human heart. In it are included our love to parents and children; our love to friends and neighbors; and to our fellow citizens and countrymen. It ought to regulate those particular affections, and keep them within their proper bounds, and never suffer them to weaken and impair those higher and better regards we owe to the community of which we are members. The exercise of this public affection will warmly interest us in its concerns. We shall feel ourselves under the strongest obligations to maintain its

security with the greatest zeal and engagedness, especially in times of public calamity and danger. This love of our country is not limited to that spot of earth where we received our existence, tho these natural ideas are often linked with the moral ones, and help to fix and bend them. It means an affection to that moral society which is under the same government and laws with ourselves; the various parts of which are properly adjusted and connected together, and all combined in one common interest.

SHOULD the commonwealth spread over large tracts of country, it is not probable that every member would be able to comprehend an interest so large. Much less would he be able to comprehend such an interest where no real commonwealth exists; which is, and always must be the case, where all are under the controul and subject to the capricious humor and will of one man. Still the earnest desire which most men show of returning to their native country, after long absence; the toils and hardships they will undergo to save or serve it; and the love they bear their country-men, do all clearly show the

passion to be a natural passion, and will always exert itself, when disentangled from foreign embarrassments, and pointed to its proper object. —The genuine exercise of this public affection overcomes all selfish considerations, and teaches us courageously to sacrifice our best friendships, our gratitude, and love, and care of our family, to preserve the interest, and promote and advance the happiness and glory of our country.

SUBMISSION to its laws and orders, is another of those duties, and indispensably necessary, without which society cannot exist, but must soon be crushed by some despot, or sink into anarchy and confusion. Its happiness, nay, the very nature of society, demands a subordination of orders, and ranks amongst its members. Some must be appointed to provide for, and watch over the public tranquility. All must have their proper duties and offices assigned them. The arrangement must be made so that no one shall interfere with another. General rules of action must be laid down, as directions for every one in the discharge of his duty. All must unite in promoting the interest of the

whole body. Those rules of action are the laws of the land. Those different ranks and orders include all the citizens from the highest to the lowest class. The construction, superintendance, and execution of the laws, must be committed to some. From such an arrangement of things, it becomes the duty of every one to submit to the laws and to the executors of them, as to the preservers of the public peace, and protectors of public liberty; and to maintain his own rank, and fulfil the duties of his own station, with fidelity and diligence. Those who are invested with authority, if they employ it well, are entitled to submission and esteem from those below them. And again, the lower orders are entitled to protection from the higher; and all must submit to the laws, for they are, above all, the final resort, from whence there lies no appeal.

PUBLIC spirit, and love of liberty, are duties of the Political kind, and do strongly recommend those who practise them, to the praise and admiration of their fellow men. They proceed from the noblest minds, and are the greatest benefits and blessings to mankind. High and

exalted however as these virtues are, it is in free and equal governments alone, where they can be exercised in perfection. There alone does a real Commonwealth exist. There only is the public good made the rule of the civil Constitution. The welfare and happiness of the citizens is the great end for which society is formed. And this end must be the supreme law of the land ; from whence particular rules are to be drawn, to regulate the actions of the several members towards each other. This common interest derives its source and origin from the common reason and common feelings of the several members in the community. Therefore, no particular order of men can have a right to make laws, and impose them on their Fellow-Citizens, contrary to those interests and those feelings.

Hence also it follows, that a real Commonwealth, such as is here intended, cannot be a banditti, combined together for mischief ; nor a crew of lawless savages ; nor herd of slaves, under the whip and controul of a master. — It must be composed of Freemen, who are

capable of devising and making their own laws : Or should they not be able to meet in a collective body, can delegate such a number of Representatives, as shall fully understand and equally represent those interests and feelings, and will adapt their laws accordingly.

A SOCIETY thus formed and entered into, cannot fail of becoming the object of public love, public reverence, obedience, and regard ; to which all its members ought to maintain an inviolable attachment ; an attachment not to be seduced by bribery or corruption, or awed by threats and terrors. To guard the civil Constitution ; to do all he can, by his reason and all the abilities he possesses, to promote its interest ; to repel every attack made upon it, whether brought about by private fraud and corruption, or open violence and usurpation : In a word (if need so require) to devote and give up his ease, and wealth, and honor, and life ; and (what is still more dear) his family, and friends, to maintain its security—must be the duty, the interest, the glory, and the happiness of every member of it. This will render

him respectable while he lives; and should he fall in the defence of his country, he will be bewailed and wept over when he dies; and his name will descend with growing renown to the latest generation.

In all free governments, the people are the source of sovereignty and power. They enact the laws, and appoint officers for their execution. Should those officers abuse their delegated power; should the sovereignty of the people be seized upon by tyrants and usurpers; their authority be perverted to uphold and maintain violence, or protect and shelter bribery and corruption; the laws become destructive through accidents, which could neither be foreseen or avoided; or rendered vain and fruitless by an unfaithful and corrupt execution of them. Then it is the people's right, nay more, their duty, to take back their abused authority; to repel and put an end to the tyranny and usurpation; to vindicate and maintain their injured sovereignty and perverted authority; to put a stop to the execution of those laws, or alter or repeal them, and inflict proper punishments on their corrupt and un-

faithful servants. Nor is this alone the duty of the community at large ; but every member of it, must, according to his rank and station, do all in his power, to support and maintain the civil Constitution of his country.

EVERY American, who belongs to the United States, must feel himself under the strongest obligations to perform those duties, when he reflects on the excellency of the Constitution, of which he is a member ; a Constitution formed by the united wisdom and consent of the people, and for their own good ; a Constitution containing a clause (dictated by wisdom itself) for correcting, repairing, altering, or enlarging our form of civil government, as occasion may hereafter require : From which flow free and equal laws, and which secures every citizen against the arbitrary will of tyrants, and mad licentiousness of the people. Every one, who has knowledge sufficient to observe, and honesty to own its beneficent influence, must esteem and admire (I might almost say adore) a Constitution, in which the majesty and sovereignty of the people are recognized ; in which officers are made and

made by them, as often as they judge the public interest requires.—Laws are enacted and repealed by their own consent, and for their own advantage : And by which no one can be deprived of his property, restrained of his liberty, or hazard his life, but by an appeal to the laws and verdict of his equals. In a word, it is the parent of liberty, the patroness of arts and learning, the joy and pride of America, the envy of foreign nations, and their place of refuge and shelter too.

How ought those men to be abhorred and detested, (if any such there are) who, instead of maintaining and supporting our civil Constitution, the anchor of our safety and happiness, are doing all they can to ruin and destroy it. Some by endeavoring to extend the Executive power beyond all reasonable construction of the Constitution ; others by declaiming against, and censuring the administration of government ; and both sides busying themselves in sowing the seeds of discord, and slandering and villifying the best of men, who have justly deserved well of their country, and not suffering even the dead to escape.

Such men, destitute as they are of all love and regard to their country, would do well to consider, that in the course of events, the meditated destruction may be avoided, and they themselves overtaken in their iniquities and brought to condign punishment.

The practice of the social duties is of the last importance to a people. The nation, who shall observe and fulfil them, will be free from all bribery and corruption, and from all civil wars and internal convulsions. What can prevent such a nation (unless attacked by some foreign power) from continuing and growing in happiness as long as the world itself shall continue? Nevertheless, while the iniquitous and cruel policy of kingdoms and nations continues to be such as it is at present, and while they are so frequently and unjustly making war upon one another, it will be the wisdom of the community of which we have been speaking, to keep and maintain a well armed and well regulated militia, for their protection and defence in case of invasion.

WHEN we look back into the history of past ages, and take a view of those dreadful wars and calamities which have been brot on the world by wicked, ambitious and designing men ; and of the fatal catastrophes and miserable ends, which have commonly befallen the authors of those calamities and wars, we may justly stand astonished that mankind have not hitherto learned better.

HONESTY is the best policy, as well with respect to nations as to individuals. Experience shews, that if by fraud, intrigue, and cunning, in their intercourses, commerce, and dealings, one nation gains any considerable advantage over another, it immediately becomes the source of uneasiness and discontent—never fits well ; seldom lasts long ; and sometimes issues in bloody and destructive wars.

It is the wisdom of the United States of America, to avoid this crooked policy ; to live in the practice of the duties already mentioned, and to maintain the strictest probity and justice to the nations with whom they are concerned.

This will render us more respectable abroad, and more firm and united at home. In offensive war, we never shall be engaged, and shall be less liable to foreign invasion; and should it ever fall to our lot, shall be better able to repel it. Besides all this, we may reasonably hope, that heaven would interest itself in our protection. The nations of the earth too, on beholding our peace and prosperity, may be allured by our example, and led to a similar practice, and thus war cease from under heaven.

In a volume, venerable for its antiquity and authority, we are told that a more perfect state of society awaits mankind than they have hitherto experienced. And have we not some good grounds to expect it?

THE madness of crusades and all religious dissensions, which have kindled such implacable wars, and produced such dreadful massacres, as are scarcely to be read by a good natured man without amazement, horror, and tears, are now no more. Mankind may now worship the Au-

thor of their existence according to the dictates of their own consciences, and there be none to make them afraid. The world, doubtless, is delivered from that persecuting and inquisitorial curse, by the opening and expansion of the mind, and progress in letters. And since all religious tyranny and persecution are banished, or well nigh banished from the earth, why may we not indulge the pleasing hope, that a period will arrive, when not only all ambition, and love of dominion, and war, that scourge of nations ; but also all private frauds, rancorous passions, and vices of the mind, will cease, and come to a perpetual end.

MAN is a moral agent ; the laws of whose nature *the dictates of right reason may justly be said to be.* He is formed for social as well as individual happiness. And can it be imagined, that he alone, the noblest part of creation, shall never act up to the dignity and destination of his nature ? Large improvements have already been made in knowledge, both natural and moral. We know many things, and avail our-

selves of their uses, which were formerly unknown. Many things of which we are now ignorant, will be known hereafter. Our mental powers and faculties are progressive, and capable of endless improvement. And tho one generation passeth away and another cometh in its stead, learning, since the invention of letters and printing, may be truly said to be immortal. Each preceding generation leaves all its new discoveries and literary acquirements to the age which follows. To what transcendent heights of virtue, knowledge, and piety, mankind will hereafter arrive, at present no proper conjecture can be formed. But of all the parts of the habitable globe, the commencement of those high attainments bids the fairest in our beloved country.

IN no other country is there such a general diffusion of knowledge. The great encouragement given to learning by the general government, and by the particular governments ; the large funds appropriated to its use ; our numerous public seminaries, and more numerous private schools ; and our free and liberal form of

civil government (at once the patroness of learning and protectress of liberty) do all conspire to raise our hopes to that happy and glorious event. Greater advancements will be made in moral and natural science. The former will have a direct tendency to eradicate and do away our vices, and implant and establish within us the principles and habits of virtue. The latter will instruct us in the arts of life. A more accurate discernment will be had in the mechanical powers of nature. New machines will be invented for the use of man, and that in greater variety and abundance. Larger excursions will be made into the planetary regions: Their harmony, their beauty, order and grandeur, better understood, and the moral reflections thence arising more warmly felt; and all combined will, by a natural and easy progress, lead us to the devout recognition of a Parent Mind, who presides over all, and operates unseen in every age and in every system, through the whole progression of nature, and sustains and upholds the whole of things.

WHEN to all this is joined that insatiable thirst after knowledge, implanted within us, they will not fail to call into action all the latent powers and faculties of the soul. And by making new discoveries, and affording new assistances, will at length lay open the unfading fruits and triumphs of virtue, and secure its interest beyond the power of time and chance. We shall be as happy here, as our present mode of existence admits. From death, the common lot of humanity, we shall not be exempted, but shall be fitted and prepared for it. And when we quit the stage, we shall leave the fair inheritance to our children, and go, where our career in the tracts of wisdom and virtue will be smoother and swifter, and those generous ardors, with which we glow and pant after immortality, find their adequate object and exercise, in a sphere proportionably enlarged, incorruptible, immortal.

E R R A T U M.

Page 5, line 4—For riskued, read rescued.

**ROLL ON, ye prosperous years ! ye prosperous
days !**

**And as ye move, our happiness increase,
Quicken our slowness and our dull delays,
Nor let us loiter in the road to peace.**

**BEYOND the bounds of this terrestrial sphere,
Is plac'd a world on tother side the skies :
A life of virtue will conduct us there ;
There our best hope, and our best interest
lies.**

