

AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED IN

ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH,

BEFORE THE INHABITANTS OF

CHARLESTON, SOUTH-CAROLINA,

ON SATURDAY, THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1807.

IN COMMEMORATION OF

American Independence.

BY APPOINTMENT OF THE

South-Carolina State Society of Cincinnati.

AND PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THAT SOCIETY:

AND ALSO OF THE

American Revolution Society.

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O R A T I O N.



YOU are convened, on this festive day, to celebrate one of the greatest events which ever graced the annals of history. The remembrance of it must always prove peculiarly dear to you, as you were the instruments of this extraordinary achievement. If the perusal of the brave resistance, which other nations have made to the insolence and contumely of oppression, fills the reflecting mind with pleasure, how much more delightful must your sensations be, since your own exertions have procured your nation so distinguished a page in the chronicles of the world.

The subject upon which I am to address you this day, presents nothing new by which your attention might be captivated: but on such an auspicious occasion, I need only remind you of those events, which, though past, can never fade in your recollections, and which will always excite the finest feelings of your hearts. Various as were the events of our warfare, yet from the long con-

tinuance of peace, and this annual commemoration throughout all the states of the union, there is no fact of importance but what has been already occupied, nor do any of the least material remain untouched by some masterly hand. But to you this subject can never be indifferent, for the recital of past dangers will ever be received with transport, especially since you are in the full enjoyment of that object, to attain which, alone, could justify the perils you encountered.

Your gratitude has been just displayed in the offerings of your praises and thanksgivings to that Almighty Power, who led you safely through the tempest of war: Your minds will therefore be better prepared to ask for a continuance of his favors, to renew before him, in this hallowed fane, the engagements you owe to your country, and to sanctify your mutual pledge of guarding those sacred rights with which he has entrusted you.

With a disposition on your parts so prepared and so propitious, there will be no need to exert the arts of oratory to rouse your passions, or to practise its more seductive influence on your unsuspecting hearts. The recollection of the day, and of its grateful result, sufficiently commands your attention.

I shall pass over the origin of the war, as many of you who are now present, were contemporaries with its rise, and those who have been born since, can read the flimsy and unjust pretences upon which it was declared. The recapitulation of it could be attended but with one good effect, and that is, to revive in your minds, and to impress on

those of the rising generation, the necessity of opposing the least symptom prophetic of encroachment upon the liberties you enjoy. Acting upon this principle, you attained the most valuable political blessing which Heaven can bestow.

When it was ascertained, that the mother country had resolved on hostile and coercive measures, that empire of affectionate opinion which you had so long and so piously fostered in her favor, and which it is so difficult to subvert, fell like enchantment. You saw the dangers which threatened, and the destruction preparing for your country. The great object was how to repel the invasion and avert the ruin ; which the responsive voice of your citizens declared to be attainable but by well directed counsels, and by a prompt and strenuous opposition in arms. You renounced the idea of adopting any step either degrading or inglorious, and disdained to make a sacrifice of any principle which could mark your conduct with ignominy or pusillanimity. You foresaw that the public weal could only be secured by individual exertion, and therefore prepared to enter into this dreadful conflict, by discarding all the selfish and interested propensities of the human heart, which neutralize the practice of the most noble virtues. You felt a generous pride of country, and vied with each other in those personal sacrifices which prove a magnanimity of soul. You resolved that no human means, no persevering exertions should be wanting on your parts, to quicken, organize and invigorate a national spirit ; a spirit which was to be invincible but by death.

The collected wisdom of your statesmen was exerted to rivet fast these opinions, and to inspire you with a just abhorrence of the illegal attempts which the British parliament were making upon your liberties. But there was no pressing occasion for them to endeavour to excite a superior zeal, for you frequently outstripped the recommendations of your leaders, and commenced with them a system of rivalry. The competition was most honorable; for it consisted in the manly proofs of attachment to country, in the braving and overcoming the difficulties of your respective situations, in obtaining public confidence by meriting public approbation, and in rendering yourselves worthy of ranking with the bravest assertors of liberty, who ever contended for so inestimable a prize. Active measures of resistance were quickly resorted to; but you, who were catechumens in the mysteries of war, what had you to oppose to the formidable host of your invaders? Your bare, but determined bosoms. These you presented as the irresistible front of a people who had resolved to be free. You had no other shield of defence at first; for your arsenals and magazines were in the hands of your enemy. But having minds to conceive, and heads to digest, hearts to animate, and hands to execute, you were soon furnished with such means as enabled you to drive the enemy from your port.

Sons of Carolina! Let your country be ever your boast. Be proud of the exemplary exertions and honorable spirit, which she has always displayed; for no state in the Union was more for,

ward in the determined attitude she assumed for war, none surpassed her in the excellence of her achievements, in the voluntary advances she made of her treasures, or in the prodigality with which her best blood was spilt. Although she was distracted by domestic dissensions, embosomed with faithless citizens, and centered with a species of population whose dependent state might create a merciless revenge, and whose despondence might tempt them, in imitation of their masters, to throw down the gauntlet of defiance, she was never appalled. Whenever opportunities were offered, she signalized the patriotism of her citizens, and the bravery of her troops. Let the prison-ships in your harbour, and the town of Augustine, declare the one; and let the successful actions of Fort Moultrie and Beaufort, the victories of the Cowpens, and the Eutaws, the no less brilliant attacks on Stono and Savannah, with the long protracted defence of this city, glorify the other.

Some of the most illustrious military characters denounced the defence of Fort Moultrie, and predicted disgrace attendant on that measure. Experience had discovered that land-batteries could not effectually resist the artillery of the British navy, it was therefore considered as a deliberate sacrifice of men, since the contest must be unequal, full of peril, and fruitless. But soldiers, who had just enlisted under the banners of liberty, divorced these cold-hearted calculations of military prudence, and questioned such caution as the offspring of an equivocal diffidence. They disdained to retreat, notwithstanding their means of defence were in the most unfinished state; and

they greatly dared, although apparently surrounded with inextricable danger, to lay a foundation of southern glory. There are occasions in warlike exploits, when even temerity is commendable. Such, I will be bold to say, was the present. A retreat would have offered to the enemy the ready possession of your town; all the calamities you suffered afterwards, under your capitulation, would have been anticipated, and *aggravated if possible*; the opportunity which was now given of proving whether you deserved that freedom for which you had just entered the lists, would have been lost, and the fairest buds of your political childhood blasted perhaps for ever. Your gallant ardor pointed to a higher destiny. The trophies of Bunker's-hill roused your proud-minded emulation, and prompted a noble zeal to preserve, untarnished, your first steps in military life. You hoped, that as the designs of the prudent were sometimes disappointed and confounded, that those of your rash confidence, but venial inexperience, might be attended with success. You, therefore, spontaneously incurred the hazard. Your triumph proclaimed to your admiring countrymen, an example which should attract their attention, command the approbation of your fellow-soldiers, and impress your enemy with at least respect, if not with awe and apprehension. The God of battles smiled on your infant prowess, crowning with success your daring attempt, and the bright Seraphim of truth, consecrated to record the events of your new dynasty, stamped the fair characters of victory on the indestructible volumes of time.

Such was the result of the attack on Fort-Moultrie. This hazardous enterprize, so satisfactorily achieved, animated you to pursue the line of resistance, which you had so lately adopted, and fascinated you with the hope, that as the enemy had twice* been obliged to quit your port, he would never return. It pointed moreover, to a firm reliance on the invisible arm of that Omnipotent Agent, who had so lately given you the victory over an enemy, who was at that time formidable to all the world.

If the Greeks have obtained so much credit by the alacrity with which they resolved to oppose their barbarian enemy, and by their subsequent conduct in defeating them, how much more applause ought to be bestowed on you. They were indeed, as you were, fighting for their country and their country's liberty. They, a small and weak nation, were to contend with the most powerful monarch of that day; so were you. The security of their dearest interests was to be the reward of their successful resistance; you expected the same meed. But they were about to engage a foreign nation towards whom they had long and willingly entertained the most inveterate hatred: You were compelled to receive into your bosoms the swords of your dearest friends. They had been many years apprized of the ruthless designs which the Persian had been maturing against them, and were of course prepared to meet their merciless invaders: Some faint rays of hope, some feeble glimmerings of reconciliation had disarmed your

* In 1775 and 1776.

minds and enervated your exertions. The Greeks were strong in their national unanimity: Carolinians, divided by intestine discord, and consequently weak. They had always held the barbarians in contempt: But you knew and respected the courage of your foe. You were to cope with those who had not yet attained the political zenith of their glory: But they were to resist a people who were fast declining towards the dotage of their empire. Their armies were to engage a people effeminate and heartless: Yours the proud victors of the world. They were to contend with a multitudinous horde of slaves: You with the disciplined troops of the bravest nation of freemen on the globe. They were encouraged by the commanding voice of their chiefs, who led them on to glory: You were discountenanced by the disapprobation of your general.*

If the exploits of those men have never been celebrated in any measure equal to their merits, as they have so modestly declared, notwithstanding their poets and historians have lavished unbounded encomiums on their many actions, and their orators have consumed years to emblazon their bravery, how can I, in raising my feeble voice, do you that justice which you deserve. I can but present you with the language of simplicity, with the tale of truth. I trust, however, although my

* It is very well known that Major General Lee, the Commander in Chief, endeavored to impress a belief that the Fort was indefensible, and wished much to have withdrawn the troops.

style be less elegant and refined than theirs, and my sentiments habited in a less artificial dress, than the celebrity of the occasion requires, that, as your hearts are beating in unison with mine, my endeavours will be propitiously received.

The enemy, though discomfited and retreating, were not vanquished: They returned once more to invade your peaceful shores. You were again called upon to defend your native city, which you obeyed with promptitude, and with the strongest assurances of again raising the trophies of victory. The total defeat which the enemy had suffered at Fort-Moultrie, inspired you with towering hopes, and the successful opposition which they had made in their lines at Stono and Savannah, afforded you the best grounded expectations of a defence at least equal to theirs. Fortified with such examples, there was not a soldier in your army who not only expected, but who wished, that the enemy would assault your unfinished works: But they were disappointed. Your foe prudently and respectfully began the formal siege of your town, displayed before your field lines his three parallels, with the technical accuracy of a pompous ostentation, and perseveringly continued his approaches by such slow and almost imperceptible degrees, that he consumed forty-two days in effecting a surrender thereof. When you were reduced to a few days provisions and to about only twenty rounds of shot to each of your guns, he very gladly granted you a capitulation upon honorable terms. And to such you were entitled; for your enemy consisted of more than

double your numbers, had lately obtained over you two signal triumphs, and had, always, unworthily affected to debase you in estimation. But *by such a defence, he was again convinced*, that you were no despicable opponent.

To whom then is the honor due? To those who believed they were fighting with recreants, and would therefore have an easy victory; or to you, who expected to cope with a brave and formidable army, flushed with repeated successes? To those, who with such superior numbers might choose their point of attack, on an extended line of above two miles, or to you who were obliged to be prepared with so small a body of troops to resist an assault in every place? To those who were rioting on the rich productions of your country, or to you who were reduced to want the common necessaries of life? I will not reproach the enemy for want of spirit and vigour upon this occasion, because he afforded you so good an opportunity of discovering other talents, which it is sometimes necessary to practice in war. Your valour and contempt of danger had been already proved, and it pleased the mighty Controller of human actions to permit you to increase your justly earned fame, by this trial of your patience and perseverance under difficulties. You lost, it is true, your town, but you preserved the dearer prize, your honor.

In consequence of the capitulation of your capital, the whole state was overrun by the invaders army, and every species of contumely and injury was practised upon your defenceless citi-

zens. Whom did they spare? Whose station was so obscure as to protect him from suffering? Or who was so distinguished by his public services who did not share in the general calamity? Who was not banished or imprisoned? What insults were not offered to the aged? What outrages to the weak? Whose estate was not sequestered, or whose property was not plundered?

But your citizens never despaired of the public liberty, and collecting in small and desultory bands, surprised, attacked, or repelled the enemy by numerous repeated efforts: Until at length, the action of the King's Mountain, dispelled the long impending obscurity with which your arms had been involved. From that proud day, you were overpowered with success, for you never came within sight of the enemy, but it was a signal of your triumph, whether it was by displaying your unexceeded sufferings in a temporary retreat, or by the martial spirit you exhibited in those actions in which you were subsequently engaged.

To such effect were the powerful faculties of your citizens applied, that at length your brave, your formidable, your hitherto invincible enemy, was reduced to a state of despondence, and renouncing the chimerical delirium of conquering your country, abandoned your shores.

Brethren in arms, and fellow-soldiers! Permit me to remind you of the virtuous rivalship, of that friendly emulation of excelling in generous deeds, with which we contended. It excluded all jealousy of fame, and no pleasure was more

acceptable to our hearts, than the valorous exploits of a brother soldier. The step which you took on entering into your country's service, was not an inconsiderate one. You were not ignorant of the comparative security which would have resulted from your declining a commission, nor of the danger you incurred by accepting of it. The danger was preferred; the security disdained. The danger was honorable, the security base. The transports of your minds must indeed be great, since you are now exhibiting the enviable spectacle of soldiers, returned to the bosom of their country as citizens, and that you are not only enjoying the fruits of your actions, but that you see so many of your fellow-citizens made happy thereby. Shall I not then congratulate you upon the return of this important day, and remind you of the enterprizes you were engaged in, the labors you underwent, the dangers you risked? That you declined none of these to acquire honor during your lives, or glory to your memories if you perished in battle? Shall the cold tongue of a false delicacy suppress these effusions of my heart, or withhold from those brave martyrs who fell in our conflict, the declaration of a brother officer, that they sank to rest amidst the blessings of their compatriots. But it would not become me, dear as you are to me, and dearer still by being the few survivors of our companions in arms, to illustrate your merits, or enrol your names with the benefactors of your country. Your fellow-citizens will immortalize your fame in the grateful characters impressed on their

hearts. Your greatest glory is a modest and reserved silence on past services.

Youths of Carolina ! If any thing I have said, this day, shall inspire your hearts, and awaken the sensibilities of your souls, if the incense of a well deserved praise be congenial to your artless minds, if love of country predominate in your affections, and the chivalrous spirit of encountering danger, prompt you to the field, prepare to merit, whenever you shall be called upon, and which from present appearances* cannot, ought not to be much longer delayed, the rewards of your patriotism and your courage. The good models which our contest has presented to you, cannot fail to throw a lustre upon such precepts, and infuse into your youthful souls the glow of generous emulation. They point out to your lively imaginations the road to eminence, and the proofs which they afford of the successful efforts of your ancestors, will animate you to be distinguished in so honorable a career. He, whose heart thrills not at the voice of praise, will never endeavor to deserve it. Suffer not the trite and speculative maxim, that the paths of glory lead but to the grave, to enchain your energies ; for when you shall have fallen in the field of battle, in the service of your country, that spark of celestial fire which animated your frames, shall raise you from the dust, and shall acquire you everlast-

* The news of the barbarous and outrageous attack made by the Leopard, British ship of war, on the Chesapeake, one of the armed vessels of the United states, had been received the day before.

ing life in the embalming memories of your countrymen. **Behold, over your heads, the monuments of friends who died in your glorious cause, and look where the upheaved sod marks the moldering remains of our brethren.* Believe me, my young friends, that such a death has no terrors to the brave; and that those who fall by such an early fate, might justly be envied by their youthful associates: By those who likewise perished, not in the tented field of honor, but on the bed of sickness; not cheered with the shouts of victory, but dismayed by the groans of relatives; not by a public sacrifice on the shrine of glory, but without a conflict, and without renown. Cherish, then, the same patriotic ardor which your progenitors have displayed, maintain the lustre which they have diffused on your infant republic, and transmit it undiminished to the heirs of your magnanimity. They, encouraged by such a succession of meritorious and glorious services, will, in their turn, pour out to you the blessings of their thankful hearts. But these are not the only fruits to which you will be entitled. To whatever wayward state your fortune in war may reduce you, behold around you the infant

** Monuments erected in St. Philip's Church to Major Benjamin Huger, and Major Philip Neyle, both of whom were killed during the siege of Charleston, and several of the other officers are buried in this cemetery, among whom are Col. Parker of the Virginia line, Capt. Thomas Moultrie, of the Second Regiment, and Capt. William Mitchell, Capt. Gilbank, Capt. Templeton, all of the Continental Artillery of this state, and Mr. Richard Lord, who was a volunteer with them,*

roses which will pillow your sufferings, the cherub smiles which will chase despondence from your hearts, and those fairy hands which shall thereafter bless you with domestic peace.

Incomparable Women! Though ruin and desolation pervaded your country, and those to whom you were bound by the dearest ties were insulted, outraged and imprisoned, still you remained firm and undismayed in the conscientious discharge of your duty. Though surrounded by dangers, your modest deportment proved not only your greatest ornament, but the truest guard of your virtue. You did not hesitate to discard your pleasures and your interests, your innocent pursuits, and your fondest wishes, to partake of all those privations to which your fellow-citizens were reduced. Many of you, who had been rocked in the cradle of affluence, sacrificed largely of those superfluities, which the bounty of Heaven had bestowed on you, and submitted voluntarily to a comparative poverty. You did not suffer yourselves to be absorbed by your private afflictions, but extended your sympathetic feelings to a brother's pain. You were rich in good works; for your exertions in acts of benevolence never ceased, and your charitable offerings, mitigating the baneful effects of war, were daily repeated. Notwithstanding the difficulties you had to contend with, and the many scenes of pleasure which were tempting you from the paths of rectitude, you never swerved from the chaste line of propriety. You signalized yourselves in the most exemplary manner, by a meekness and lowliness

of mind, by a humble resignation and cheerfulness, under the bitterest sufferings. Your silent patience under accumulated misfortunes, was more difficult to practice, than braving the dangers of an active and conspicuous situation, and your sufferings were the more meritorious, because there was no brilliancy to attract or infatuate your minds. These were the delightful constituents of your pure and affectionate bosoms: These were the charms with which you cherished the hearts, and sustained the courage of your oppressed countrymen. These the blandishments with which you fascinated their senses, and revived their drooping spirits. You, captive indeed yourselves, led captive the whole train of moral virtues, and have set an illustrious example to your daughters, by which they will see how the weaknesses and infirmities of their natures may be sublimed. You have shewn them, that if their countrymen should hereafter embark in another great struggle, in an undertaking as noble as the past, they must be their affectionate support, and impart to them that cheerfulness and those consolations, which no reverses of fortune can ever depress, or ever deprive them of. You are now receiving that tribute which is your due; and you will hereafter receive a greater reward, when these lovely scions of your virtuous principles shall grow up in the chaste paths of life, shall flourish uninjur'd by the rude blasts of temptation, and arrive at the fulness of perfection, in the performance of their sexual duties. Whilst the daughters of Carolina shall remain virtuous, her sons will ever prove valorous.

It would be unpardonable, Brother Soldiers and Fellow Citizens, if, on this eventful day, I should omit to mention the Great, the Good Washington. Every panegyric is a declaration of the triumph of virtue; but the sources of his are inexhaustible: whether I should review the splendid theatre of his military life, or the advantages resulting to his country from his useful, but less brilliant conduct as your Chief Magistrate. But let us not consider what honors should enshrine his important services; for to him, in the bosoms of Americans is erected a temple of glory, which no eloquence can ever embellish, which no time can ever destroy.

Were I to take a view of all the illustrious events which happened in our warfare, I should exceed the limits of your patience. They would take years to compose, and months to deliver. I have therefore selected only a few prominent features of your local history, in which you will feel a more lively interest; and I have endeavoured thence to shew the necessity of resisting oppression in the first instance, and the importance to a young nation of distinguishing itself by early deeds of worth; to exemplify the good effects of wisdom in council, and bravery in the field, with the success which sometimes attends a prudent temerity; to exhibit the value of establishing a character of intrepidity, and the result of perseverance, under difficulties; to impress on you the intrinsic uses of fortitude in adversity, and the victorious patience of women, characteristically virtuous.

Citizens of an envied, and of the only republic of the world ! By such principles, and by such deeds, you now exist as a nation. May you always have the spirit of resenting the insults of any country, justly appreciating the happiness you have enjoyed ; and may your peace and tranquility never be disturbed, but to enhance the glory of your country.

