

AN

# ORATION,

PRONOUNCED AT

HENNIKER, NEW-HAMPSHIRE,

*JULY 4, 1811,*

BEING THE

THIRTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

.....  
BY MATTHEW HARVEY.  
.....

*CONCORD:*

PRINTED BY I. AND W. R. HILL.

.....  
1811.

*HENNIKER, JULY 4, 1811:*

SIR,

THE Committee in behalf of the Citizens of the town of Hennaiker present you their thanks for the ingenious and highly appropriate Oration by you this day delivered on the Anniversary of American Independence ; and have it in charge to request a copy for the press.

WILLIAM WALLACE,  
JOSHUA DARLING,  
SAMUEL WADSWORTH, } COMMITTEE.

*MATTHEW HARVEY, ESQ.*

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*JULY 8, 1811.*

GENTLEMEN,

IN compliance with your request, I submit a copy of the Oration delivered by me on the 4th instant, to your disposal, without apology.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

**MATTHEW HARVEY.**

*WILLIAM WALLACE,  
JOSHUA DARLING,  
SAMUEL WADSWORTH, ESQUIRES.*

# Oration.

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*MY FELLOW-CITIZENS,*

**T**HE annual return of an important event, which has distinguished the page of history, never arrived with more pleasing satisfaction to any nation, than the anniversary of this day, to the American sons of liberty.

We have not assembled to commemorate the accession of a tyrant, the coronation of an emperor, or the birth-day of a despot. We are not called together to make an annual acknowledgement of a constitution, which guarantees wealth and power to a corrupt nobility, or which binds servitude and wretchedness on ourselves. But we have convened to celebrate the anniversary of our national glory—to commemorate the day when the heroes of our country erected the standard of liberty and boldly declared our independence.

Thirty-five years have now elapsed, since the United States arose from dependance and vassalage to a distinguished rank with the nations of the earth, and obtained a registry with the empires of the world.

Let us hail this auspicious return of our national jubilee. Let us interchange our congratulations on this

happy occasion, which affords such increasing motives of joy and gratitude. But, in performing these duties, let us avoid intemperate mirth and idle declamation.

You, my venerable fathers, can yet remember the apprehensions, the difficulties and the dangers, which beset you at the commencement of our revolution. You beheld, with painful solicitude, the storm which gathered around you, and darkened the horizon; you anxiously watched its progress, whilst it threatened the ruin of your country. You saw the proud arm of Britain, intoxicated with power, and emboldened with success, extended to wrest your liberties from you. Submission or resistance were presented to your view. You saw no middle fortune. Heaven directed your choice, and the eternal principles of justice supported you, in an opposition to tyrannical power, which forever severed your country from foreign dominion.

Here commenced the unnatural conflict betwixt Great-Britain and the United Colonies. Here opened the way which led to the establishment of our present form of government. We might follow the blood-stained path from Lexington to Monmouth, and thence to Yorktown. We might behold our ports blockaded by an hostile fleet, threatening ruin and devastation to our commercial towns and cities. We might see our citizens murdered—our villages in flames—our innocent and defenceless friends, a prey to unbridled passion and insolence.

We still have a painful recollection of the scenes of horror and desolation spread among the inhabitants on our western frontiers by the unfeeling natives of this country, at the instigation of our enemies. At the still hour of midnight see the ferocious savage enter your peaceful habitation, armed with the bloody instruments of death—hear the cries of your innocent children—witness the murder of your tender offspring. Follow his crimson footsteps to the wilderness—enter his miserable wigwam—see it hung with the scalps of

your friends, and his feat besmeared with the blood of your brothers.

These things were witnessed in the past days of our revolution—they were then familiar to the inhabitants of this country. You have seen them described on the page of history; you have heard them related by the war-worn veteran, till the same spirit of patriotism was enkindled in your breasts which impelled to action the noble defenders of our rights, and which shall be transmitted, with increasing ardor, to millions yet unborn.

Though this contest was long and sanguinary; though slaughter had stalked through our streets, grimly triumphant; though “many” had been “the deaths of the heroes, and wide” had “flowed the blood of the valiant,” yet the victory was glorious—the prize was won—the invaluable blessings of liberty were obtained, as a rich reward for toil and bloodshed.

We, my fellow-citizens, now enjoy the fruits of this iron harvest. We can now sit down, under the shadow of our own olive branch, surrounded with plenty and peace, and chant, with exquisite delight, the songs of freedom and independence, while *exterminating war*, in all its horrid forms, is depopulating the fairest countries of Europe.

Are we not willing, on this occasion, to renew our faith and allegiance to our Constitution? Will we not swear to-day, on the altar of liberty, never to surrender our dear-bought privileges to a foreign power; but unsheath the sword in their defence, and hereafter to transmit them, undiminished and unimpaired, as a lasting blessing to future generations?

We are the only nation, at this period, who can boast, in truth, of rational freedom. We, alone, enjoy the advantages of a government, grounded in the will of the people.

All the governments in Europe, which once assumed the name of republics, are now erased from the catalogue of nations. Ancient Greece could once boast of her Solon and Lycurgus---her equitable laws and mild government ; but her citizens have since become the sport of passion, and the dupes of aspiring demagogues.

Rome was once the acknowledged mistress of the world. Formed to conquer and govern the nations, she extended her power equal to her fame. But since the days of her greatest glory, her heroes became ambitious, her citizens corrupt and ignorant, her just and equal laws powerful engines of oppression, rendered hostile to the interests of her subjects by their unjust administration. Patrician pride and Plebeian ignorance were a continual source of faction and danger. Hence her institutions were subverted, and their noble objects changed. The fairest ornaments of her government were defaced, its pillars loosened, and at length this towering edifice tumbled to the ground.

The government of Venice, once the seat of commerce and emporium of the world, is no longer enrolled on the list of republics. An imperious aristocracy and state inquisition became jealous of enterprize, cramped every exertion of genius, and afterwards opened the way to inevitable ruin.

The fate of unfortunate Switzerland is never recollected without a sigh from the legitimate son of liberty. This now unhappy country was once the residence of freedom and peace. Honor and industry were found on her mountains, and contentment was seen in her vallies. But whilst her unsuspecting citizens were listening to the songs of French fraternity, and her sentinel suffered to sleep at his post, her independence was taken away, and her government crushed by that gigantic power which exults at the writhings of expiring liberty.

From the disastrous fate of these unfortunate governments, let us derive wisdom and prudence to protect our own. Let us remember the rocks on which they have split, and avoid the whirlpools which have been their destruction.

Disjoined, as we are, from the corrupt courts of Europe, we have little interest in her revolutionary principles, which have overturned the governments of kings and princes, and are rapidly sweeping away, in their course, every vestige of liberty and law.

Under the administration of a government which combines the wisdom and experience of ages, our prosperity and greatness have increased far beyond the bounds of political calculation. A few years have given us the strength of a powerful nation; our industry has gained us wealth; and enterprize and success have made us bold and confident.

So excellent is the policy of our constitution, that no order of men can boast of privileges which another does not enjoy. All who are placed within the reach of our government have equal protection and equal encouragement. No imperious lords demand our labor, or filch the scanty pittance from the hand of industry. The mechanic has the fruits of his own invention. The farmer exults in his numerous herds and flocks, and cherishes the fondest hopes, on the rising glory of his fields—whilst peace is within his borders, harmony in his habitation, and plenty, with her copious horn, dispenses her favors in profuse abundance.

The superior advantages which we enjoy, have not escaped the attention of the inhabitants of the eastern continent. Many, disdaining the weight of continual oppression, and thirsting for that liberty which is never found in monarchical governments, have left the land of their nativity, and sought a residence in this happy country, with an assurance of the fullest enjoyment of freedom and peace.

The illustrious MOREAU, who has often conducted the proud armies of France to victory and glory, and whose fame has resounded to the remotest corners of the world, disgusted with the perversion of those principles which he once supported with zeal, has emigrated to the hospitable shores of America, and lately claimed the protection of our law of naturalization.

The unfeeling Turk, enervated with luxury and sloth, beholds with mute astonishment the operation of our government; and that natural desire for liberty which is implanted in the breast of man by the hand of Omnipotence may sometimes cause him to fight for that freedom which he never enjoyed; but the cold blasts of tyranny have so paralyzed the tender feelings of his soul, that he soon relapses to a state of indifference, and forgets the manacles which bind him.

The advantages of a republican form of government must appear to every one, when he considers the existing commotions in the monarchies of Europe. Here is an example of those dangerous evils flowing from corruption and injustice, which always exist in tyrannical governments.

Let me remind you of the French revolution, that continued scene of cruelty and horror, which is without a parallel in the history of the world. It has drenched Europe in blood—sapped the foundations of her strongest governments—dethroned emperors and kings, and at length produced a colossal power in France, which has established itself on the ruins of that ancient monarchy, and now draws its nutrition from surrounding nations. Look at the mangled and mutilated state of Germany, now basely dependant on the will of Bonaparte. That martial valor which once glowed in the breasts of the Prussian soldiery has since been transferred to the victorious armies of France; and the heroism which has lately departed from the circle of Austria is probably now sleeping in the royal cradle at Paris.

Turn to the miserable condition of Spain and Portugal. Humanity recoils at a recollection of the scenes of carnage and bloodshed which have recently been exhibited in these ill-fated kingdoms. As a subject of contention betwixt the powerful belligerents of Europe, their ruin must be inevitable. French fraud and fraternity had reduced them to the brink of despair, and British amity and intrigue must complete their final destruction.

The constitution of England is still protected against the violence of this revolutionary storm. But the systematic injustice which has characterized the administration of a corrupt ministry has rendered this government obnoxious to the interests of its loyal people. It is now an unwieldy vessel, tossing on the waves of a boisterous sea, manned by a mutinous crew.

Should our own government be supported, and remain unimpaired by the political convulsions which still continue to shake the empires of the world; how shall we express our boundless gratitude to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe for such great and distinguished goodness towards us?

But amidst the innumerable blessings of freedom with which we are now surrounded, unseen and formidable dangers exist. That power which is generated in a free government, always contains the seeds of its own destruction. They are dormant, so long as the nation is brave and virtuous; but when the people become corrupt and indolent, they shoot forth, like noxious plants, in wild luxuriance, and anarchy and despotism immediately succeed.

Revolutions always begin at the foot of society. Here arise those popular commotions, which are the sure bodings of evil to a free government. Here the aspiring demagogue makes his strongest hold—here his labors and his mazes tend. By artful delusion, he

alienates an unsuspecting populace from an attachment to their government and sets his revolutionary wheels in motion. And before the ambitious design is discovered, the hour of retraction is past, and the bonds of slavery are strongly fastened on a miserable deluded people.

A republican form of government has ever been a subject of jealousy in the view of despotism. Charles II. of England was restored to his throne by the king of France, to prevent the transmutation of the British monarchy into a formidable republic; and Helvetic liberty was taken away to prevent the possibility of its hereafter proving to the world that tyrants have not their power from the will of heaven, or that a nation might exist in the possession of freedom.

But a tyrannical government can never be imposed on us until we ignominiously submit our own necks, and suffer our chains to be rivetted. The ivy will cling to the oak, and until we extinguish the lights of knowledge and suppress the valor of the warrior's heart, our liberties can never be taken away.

Despotism never did, and we humbly trust never will vegetate in the United States. It is a plant of foreign growth; it withers and dies in the soil of freedom. Our religion, education, and our common interest, conspire to increase our attachment to a free government, and raise our indignation and abhorrence against usurpation and tyranny.

At this eventful period, when the smoke of political collision is spreading around us, we are urged to the strongest union, both for the safety of ourselves and the happiness of posterity. This is the only anchor, which can save our political bark in tempestuous times. Foreign partialities should be banished from us. They are poisonous to the nature of a free government. If we indulge them, we acknowledge a cowardly weakness, which is inconsistent with the character of a brave and powerful nation.

Unless we support the dignity of our own government, we shall be the continual sport of European politics. Other nations will regard their own interests; we must trust in our constitution. Our fathers established it on sacred principles, which were poured out in torrents of blood. If we cherish and invigorate those principles, we may behold, without dismay, the enterprizes of foreign powers, and strengthen the foundations of our future glory.

Though our domestic peace is undisturbed, and our prosperity has been unequalled by any people, yet our commercial intercourse with foreign nations has been subjected to innumerable obstructions and embarrassments. The neutral rights, assumed by our government, have been disregarded by the contending powers of Europe. Depredations have been made on our commerce. Our citizens and our property have been stolen from us, in direct violation of every principle of justice. This guardian genius of liberty has torn the bandage from her eyes, and held forth unequal balances.

Consider, for a moment, the wretched situation of our unfortunate countrymen, now in foreign service and confinement. They are the brothers and the sons of those heroes who bravely fought for our independence, cruelly torn from the bosom of their country, and doomed to drink of the cup of misery to the very dregs. Shall the condition of our captured friends be disregarded? Shall Columbia's sons be forgotten in bondage? Shall indignity to our government and violations of the laws of humanity be unable to arouse the energies of this nation? Shall the sword of justice slumber? Shall the thunder of our cannon be still, which once could silence the roaring walls of Tripoli, and spread fear within its battlements? No, my fellow citizens. We will not belie the blood of our fathers. The ghosts of our immolated heroes, of Warren and Montgomery, of Mercer and Nash, now seem to remind us that we are the descendants of a brave and

virtuous people, who wrested our liberties from the grasp of tyranny, swore an eternal enmity to usurpation and established our government on the broad basis of law and justice, and that it now becomes us as freemen and the friends of humanity to defend our rights and privileges against the aggressions of every invading foe. In this let us cheerfully unite, with our lives and property, and we shall have the strongest assurance that our government will remain as unalterable as fate, and our liberties as durable as time.