

8 (2. 14)

1000000

AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED BEFORE THE

INHABITANTS OF PORTLAND,

JULY 4th, 1803,

BEING THE

TWENTY-SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY

OF

American Independence.

BY TIMOTHY HILLIARD, A. M.
Pastor of the Episcopal Church in Portland.

PRINTED BY E. A. JENKS:
Gazette-Office,
No. 7, FISH-STREET, PORTLAND.

1803.

Value

Isaiah Thoma

PORTLAND, 4th JULY, 1803.

SIR,

THE Selectmen of the town of Portland, return you thanks for the judicious, sentimental, and well adapted Oration, you have this day delivered. It was heard by them with pleasure; and has met with general approbation. They think a perusal of it will be useful as well as pleasing to others who may have an opportunity to read it— They therefore request a copy of it for the press.

SAMUEL FREEMAN,
JOSEPH H. INGRAHAM,
JOSEPH TITCOMB,

REV. TIMOTHY HILLIARD.

PORTLAND, JULY 5, 1803.

GENTLEMEN,

UNCONSCIOUS of deserving the flattering epithets you bestow, yet willing to gratify your wishes, I cheerfully commit my piece to your disposal, with a hope that your expectations may not be wholly disappointed.

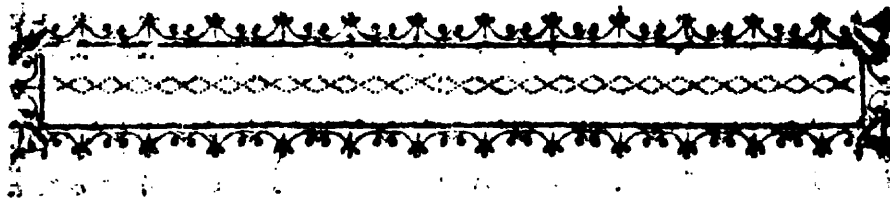
I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

And faithful Friend,

TIMOTHY HILLIARD.

The SELECTMEN of Portland.



ORATION.



THE birth-day of American liberty should never be forgotten. Let it be observed to distant ages as a feast of gratitude, and decent joy.

But what has a person devoted to retired and grave pursuits, to do with the celebration of political eras! How shall he bring up to your lively recollection scenes which he did not witness; which therefore cannot be described by him with the peculiar feeling and glow of experience. Happily for me, a retrospect of those great events which this day is calculated to revive in your memory, has so often been indulged on similar occasions, that it becomes a less necessary branch of the duty I am now

to perform. But, our country still lives, and claims an affectionate regard from every citizen. Patriotism is universal in her operation. Her sacred flame may warm the breast of a hermit. The walls of his lonely cell may resound the public praise, or listen to the lamentation of public crimes.

Every period of national existence furnishes events upon which contemplation must love to dwell. Whatever have been the peculiarities of our former condition, yet when they are made to pass in review before the mind, they ought not so far to absorb our attention, as to prevent our noticing the occurrences of every day, or suffering our imagination, guided by probable conjecture, to wander into futurity.

The American States were founded to be free. They possess largeness of territory, and exuberance of soil; while they command an extent of coast which allows them to transport the fruits of their industry to the most distant regions. The first fathers of our country were a band of freemen; and in the cause of independence they embarked on an ocean of dangers. The principle which they brought in their bosom from their native

soil, grew with their years, and ripened as they advanced in strength and prosperity.— The kingdom from which they emigrated, for a long time, claimed the right, as they discharged the duties of protection. In this state, the infant colonies made rapid progress in those attainments, which prepared the way for their becoming a great and powerful people. But soon a period arrives of the highest consequence, both to the parent country, and her favourite child; who was now near being of age, and had begun already to anticipate the pursuits, the pleasures and cares of an independent life. Like all other questions of importance, that of emancipation from a state which had now grown irksome, created a division of sentiments. But, notwithstanding some exceptions, it was the general voice among the colonists—“let us live free or die.” The resolution was bold and determined; and their subsequent conduct exhibited a display of the same spirit by which it was breathed. Under the direction of a gracious Providence, their untaught, yet nervous aim obtained the object which had long occupied their thoughts, and roused their most ardent exertions. The scale which finally

turned in their favour, on some occasions was balanced; while on others, it equally vibrated between the two fatal extremes.— At length the passions of the contending parties, wearied with their own convulsions, sought tranquillity in the bosom of peace.— The welcome guest arrives;—after the most dreadful scourge of mankind, for years, had been scattering every where terrors and desolations.

By contemplating some of the advantages which have followed a revolution so inauspicious in its commencement; so precarious, yet enterprising in its progress; and so glorious in its conclusion; we shall be easily led to survey the ground on which we stand at the present moment.

No sooner had our citizens begun to respire from the confusions of war, than we find them bent upon framing a constitution of government, which should embrace, as far as possible, the wishes, the habits, and interests of a numerous and diversified people. These conspired to point out the republican form of administration;—a form which has the singular recommendation of being the middle way between the extremes of despot-

ism and democracy. In recollecting the splendid abilities displayed on this occasion, as well as amidst events immediately preceding; we naturally advert to a sentiment which alleviates, in some measure, the calamities of war. Goods and ills are often found to exist together, in the same series of events. Thus war, though to be avoided as the greatest of evils, yet, with all its ravages and alarms, is often productive of eminent advantages. It elevates the soul of a nation, and calls her hidden powers into action. It creates great talents, and great men. A single name is sufficient to exemplify this remark. WASHINGTON, whose highest praise is not to attempt his praise;—WASHINGTON stands first on that phalanx of illustrious men, who led your armies to victory and to freedom.—Blending in his character the different properties of a military and political life, he cooled the ardors of battle amidst the calm deliberations of returning peace. He was called to preside in the assembly which gave existence to our present constitution;—an instrument, which, amidst opinions the most divergent, forms a central point, where all are finally mingled and lost.

After that system of organization had taken place, which, during its progress, cost so much anxiety ; the free suffrages of his countrymen placed the man, who was eminently the father of the people, in the civil chair. This situation he retained with equal glory to himself, and happiness to his fellow-citizens, until he chose to indulge the distant and sweet recollection of his toils, in the shades of his beloved Vernon. But before this final retreat, he called his children about him, and like JACOB, gave them his solemn counsel and blessing. They proved the words of a dying friend ; for he was soon subjected to that destiny which greatness cannot avert.

A numerous catalogue might be made of names, who were distinguished in the course of the revolution, or have risen to eminence in the management of public affairs since that period. But, if the lines of national greatness were thus sketched upon the face of tumult ; if the rays of American glory darted through the glooms of war ; what might not have been expected from the uniform fire of freedom, from the regular pursuits of a secure and honorable peace.

One of the noblest effects of patriotic exertion has appeared in preserving our States from being involved in the confusions and blood of Europe. Dangers have threatened on every side. By a single false step either to the right hand or left, we might have plunged beyond the hope of recovery. But through calm and prudent measures, with ^avigorous execution, the evil has hitherto been avoided which there was every reason to dread. All have professed themselves the lovers of peace, yet have differed about the means of its preservation. Since, however, the method pursued has been crowned with success, we experience a happy proof of the wisdom and discernment by which it was suggested.

The continuance of this tranquil state has furnished an opportunity for the spirit of liberty to expand, and to put forth its genuine fruits. How amply have the natural wishes of the human mind been gratified in this respect? What various experiments have shown the benefit which results from the delicate, yet powerful sentiment of freedom? Far from being limited to mere condition, it pervades the public mind. Transfusing itself through the political body, it not only regulates all the springs of activity, collected at

the seat of life, but reaches the most feeble and remote extremities.

Genius is daily becoming less dependent upon foreign helps, by searching the depth of her own resources. She has already distinguished herself in many useful branches of knowledge and invention. Her efforts have excited attention in the world of antient letters ; and specimens of her early skill have been sought and granted. Americans, possessed of strong mental abilities, as well as of every exterior advantage, promise, in the course of years, to supply many defects in the volume of discovery ; while they are rapidly clothing themselves with the most substantial improvements of foreign learning.

It is true, a great proportion of the useful arts find a powerful check in the easy communication which subsists between the United States, and the most commercial nations of the earth. But, what is lost in one way is gained in another. For the free and extensive trade carried on by our citizens, preventing that necessity which is always most fruitful of invention, has its origin in their enterprise and industry, and finds its protection in the national strength. From this readiness with which most of the manufactures in use are

obtained, multitudes are saved from sedentary and unwholesome labours, and devote themselves to agriculture; the most pleasing and honourable employment, in which the body of a community can be engaged. The spirit of cultivation, assisted by an astonishing increase of inhabitants, forces emigration into our immense *interior*, so that the most distant and impenetrable wilds begin to *blossom as the rose*.

It is a happy circumstance, that the nature of our government demands the diffusion of knowledge among all classes of people; and at the same time is calculated to promote this desirable object. While the antient seats of literature retain their former prosperity, how pleasing is it to behold the seeds of learning scattered among forests; to see science and civilization walking hand in hand, and mixing their influence for the improvement and happiness of society.

The inhabitants of Maine should indulge their mutual congratulations on the favourable aspect of their new, yet flourishing settlement. Remote from the seat of government, and the center of population in the State to which you belong; having an abundant territory, and a rapid growth; the time cannot be distant when a separation must take

place, and the District shall rear her head in the grand council of the Union. Any impatience on this subject, however, would be unreasonable, since the interval of delay will be a period of preparation for the great duties of government.

There are several circumstances which conspire to open before you the views of extensive improvement in civil and social life. It is with pleasure we mention here the young and rising establishment for education in our neighbourhood. The liberal endowment and flattering appearance of this institution, should not prevent that encouragement which it is in the power of many to bestow. It is not easy to see how a considerable proportion of individual property can be better applied, than for the purpose of promoting knowledge. Those who have sons coming forward for a public education, may at least so far allow the claims of this infant seminary, as to contribute to the number of pupils; instead of yielding to a preference for others, as of longer standing, or as offering, in some respects, superior advantages.

The necessity of doing every thing in our power for the encouragement of learning, in this portion of our community, is perhaps greater than is at first conceived.— New settlements are subject to floods of emi-

grants, who are destitute of regular habits. These, finding in the places where accident has thrown them, no system either of education or religion, become confirmed in their vices ; and bring up their families with views and manners equally degrading as their own. Even those who leave their native spot from good motives, and with sober morals, to join a corrupt society, often relax from the rigid principles of virtue, and even become as depraved as their new companions. I have heard an old man, whom misfortune had driven from his home into a new region, lament with tears, from his own experience, the fatal propensity of the human mind to conform itself with the corrupt practices by which it is encompassed.

Man, from a natural disposition, as well as other causes, pays some kind of homage to a supreme power. Where wholly unenlightened he sinks into idolatry ; while supernatural advantages, when obstructed by ignorance, leave him exposed to the wanderings of fanaticism. Inconveniences of this kind have been felt within our own knowledge and observation. Every day, however, brightens the hope of their gradually subsiding. Such a change will depend upon the

ease with which men of talents and letters are to be obtained, both as public and private instructors. With the increase of knowledge, regularity may be expected to prevail both in civil and sacred concerns.

I shall be excused for introducing these local observations, when the importance of the present moment to this detached part of the commonwealth is calmly considered.—Your territory furnishes room for a great population. The public manners are just forming; it is of the highest consequence that they should be constructed upon the best principles. Societies, like individuals, long retain the impressions of youth. Hence arises the necessity of beginning well, that the result may be honourable and happy. Futurity is veiled from our view. Though small now, you know not what part you are to act, or what examples you are to display to your country and the world.

Before we conclude the remarks suggested by this occasion, let us once more stretch our eye over the rising republic of America. The bounties of Heaven have been lavished to crowd the resources of her enjoyment. Her prosperity is unexampled in the story of nations. But, amidst the splendors of her

condition, are there not some dark spots upon which reflection fixes the gaze of regret and alarm. It may seem pleasing forever to dwell upon the brilliant parts of a subject; but truth, though melancholy, still is truth, and still demands respect. The strides of dissipation have not been less mighty than those of wealth. Antient principles, native manners—whither have ye fled? Gone, it is feared, no more to return; while there remains only your faint image and recollection! With the escape of these, have not the seeds of dissolution already searched their way into the heart of our society?—Americans! will ye not be warned by the fall of other nations; who, when best defended against foreign powers, have immerged the fatal dagger in their own blood?

The citizens of these States, though enlivened by the same sun of liberty, though engaged in common and successful pursuits, are far from showing the union and the affection of brothers. Such is the complexion of the human mind, that freedom of thought and speech necessarily implies, not only the existence, but the profession of different opinions. Ignorance and despotism alone are capable of creating a perfect uniformity.—But, let me ask, is it not possible to differ

and yet be friends ? Should politics rend the peace of families, and destroy that social harmony which they are intended to cherish ? Should they plant pangs through the circle of private life, and poison the springs of public happiness ? In our zeal for the rights of citizens, shall we forget that we are men ? It is a fatal error to suppose, that we can discharge the duties of patriotism, while we neglect those of philanthropy. The true patriot is a lover of the human race ; he knows no other way of promoting the good of the whole, but by consulting that of all its parts.

I congratulate my fellow-citizens in this place, on the exertions which have been made to allay the ardors of party, by uniting all, if not in the same sentiments, at least in the common feeling of kindness and confidence. We hope your efforts have not been fruitless, though they may have failed of complete success. Your example will be followed by wise and good men, wherever it shall be known. Let it then be handed abroad without any tarnish from the remaining transactions of this joyful day. While engaged in the festivities produced by the occasion, regard with gratitude and awe the notices of that God, who gave you independence, gave you peace, with all their train of blessings. Remember too,

that in your most relaxed and incautious moments, you act not for yourselves alone, but for your country, for mankind, for posterity.

Respected and beloved friends of every description, let us not separate, without reflecting on the conduct we are severally to pursue, in order to advance the glory and happiness of an immense people for ages to come. Whatever be the station or employment Providence may have appointed you, let the national peace, prosperity, existence, be the subject of your daily and fervent prayers. Let correspondent exertions and habits recommend your petitions at the throne of heavenly grace.

Notwithstanding occasional levies which are sometimes forced by the exigence of events, it must still be granted that militia are the bulwark of *Independence*. It is a subject of agreeable reflection, that you have been suffered to lean quietly upon your arms, since the moment when the proclamation of peace, in connexion with freedom, gladdened the ears of American citizens. Long may your repose continue ; or only be interrupted to awaken our recollection of your stupendous and successful struggle for rights and for happiness. Long, very long, may it be before you shall be driven into a new contest for the protection

of those blessings, which so many veins have been opened to purchase. Never, O never, let Ambition force his way into our councils ; never let him stalk over this fair and flourishing land, to fill the peaceful breasts of our citizens with his fierce and cruel fires ; and deposit the blood of thousands, as the price of some distant, worthless conquest. But at the same time, in proportion as you value the continuance of freedom and security, cherish the principles and the skill of defence ;—since it has become a maxim, arising from a correct knowledge of the state of the world, that preparations for war are the best pledge for a lasting peace. In your military capacity, let order, let decency, let soul combine to prove that you are worthy the honor of defending a Republic.—Rulers, be faithful ; citizens, be calm. Let the teachers of religion, and the instructors of youth know and feel their duty.—Ye flowers of creation, ye, whose office is to sooth both private and public care, let not your soft, yet mighty influence be used for a meaner object than the good of millions. Let each one, let all add something to that sublime, and universal principle of *Truth*, which alone can prolong existence, and make happiness worthy the name, worthy itself.