

Samuel Beane

AN

ORATION

PRONOUNCED

AT

PARIS, OXFORD COUNTY, MAINE,

ON

THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1805.

IN

COMMEMORATION

OF

American Independence.

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BY NATHANIEL HOWE.  
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P O R T L A N D :

FROM THE ARGUS-PRESS. BY N. WILLIS, JUNR,

1805.

ORATION.

RESPECTED AUDITORY,

ASSEMBLED to celebrate the *birth day* of our happy Republic, and commemorate the virtues and talents of the Sages, Patriots, and Heroes, who gloriously achieved our Independence. It becomes us to temper cheerfulness with manly, thoughtfulness, and to be careful to preserve decency and propriety through the festivity and hilarity of the day. A Day, which will ever be kept sacred by every friend to Liberty and his Country, throughout these United States. Twenty-nine revolving years have passed away since the Fathers of our Republic, dared proclaim in the face of the world, that these States “are, and of right ought to be Free and Independent.” Their patriotism inspired them with the pious determination to risque their lives and fortunes for the salvation of their Country; and gave them the courage to throw the gauntlet at a nation, whose recent victories were coextensive with the earth, and whose prowess, and unparalelled naval skill and bravery, were the dread and scourge of the most powerful nations of Europe.

HERR let us pause, and reflect for a moment on that love of Country, that ardent attachment to its Rights, that Godlike Patriotism, which at that eventful period glowed in the breasts of our immortal Whigs of 1776—Which, (under the blessing of Heaven) enabled them to protect, and defend those invaluable Rights and privileges, deprived of which, men become little superior to beasts of burthen. Had you then, immortal Patriots and Heroes, tamely submitted to an exasperated foreign Government—we, my Fellow-Citizens, at this time, instead of rejoicing and exulting in our great and distinguishing national privileges & prosperity, had been bowing the neck to the ignoble and galling yoke of a merciless foreign Tyrant: We had seen our beloved Country crouded with hordes of Court Sycophants, Excise Officers, informers & spies, those damnable appendages of Tyranny:

We had seen our Sons and Countrymen, without ceremony, impressed to serve on board ships of war, and in foreign armies, those hot-beds of vice and immorality, those sinks of woe and wretchedness, doomed reluctantly (merely to gratify the vile ambition and avarice of a corrupt and vicious nation) to traverse the globe to perform the destroying Angel's tour of duty ; to butcher, to enslave, to brutify their fellow-men : We had seen our verdant and fertile fields, which we are now permitted to cultivate for ourselves, turned into Lordly Parks, and accursed Manors, Earldoms and Dukedoms : We must have cultivated our lands, and foreigners would have devoured the products of our labor ; and had any of our brave sons, who weary of a foreign yoke, and sickening at the view of their Country's wrongs, presumed to attempt a restoration of their dearest Rights, or even manfully asserted them, they would (as is now the case with ill-fated Ireland,) have been given to the Gibbets, or banished to Botany Bay.—Such, my countrymen, and much worse than I am capable of pointing to your imaginations, would have been the fate of our beloved country at this time, had not our Champions of Independence, our WARREN, HANCOCK, SAMUEL ADAMS, WASHINGTON, FRANKLIN and JEFFERSON, and a countless band of their Co-Patriots, possessed those virtues and talents, which gave rise to this glorious anniversary. For we may rest assured, that the character of Kings at this day, is the same as represented by that venerable Prophet and Republican, SAMUEL, to the Elders of Israel, when they gathered themselves together at Ramah, to ask a King to rule over them : “ But the thing displeased SAMUEL, when they said, give us a King to judge us. And SAMUEL prayed unto the LORD, and the LORD said unto SAMUEL, hearken unto the voice of the People in all that they say unto thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not rule over them. Howbeit, yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the King that shall reign over them. And SAMUEL told all the words of the LORD unto the People that asked of him a King. And he said, this shall be the manner of the King that shall reign over you ; he will take of your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen, and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him Captains over

thousands, and Captains over fifties, and set them to cut his ground, and reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his Officers, and to his servants. And he will take your men-servants and maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. And he will take the tenth of your sheep, and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day, because of your King which ye shall have chosen you, and the Lord will not hear you in that day."—Yet such was the infatuation of the People of Israel, that notwithstanding the solemn protest of SAMUEL, and the true and glaring light in which he held up to their view the character of Kings, that they still persisted in asking a King. It appears that a leading motive of the Elders of Israel in asking a King, was to put themselves in a situation to conquer their neighbors; they were aware that the peaceable genius of a Republic, was not suited to foreign conquest and arbitrary domination—they said they wished to be like other nations. It seems they could not be content to be Free, while others were Slaves. What protestation, what expostulation then, shall we offer to those apostate Whigs, who leagued with those Parricides and incendiaries, the Tories of the Revolution, are carried away by the same fatal delusion that bewitched the People of Israel, when they sacrificed their Republican Government at the unhallowed shrine of Monarchy; when they renounced the Sovereign of the Universe, that they might do homage at the footstool of a Creature of their own creation. If the experience of past ages, the testimony of God himself, by his Prophet against Monarchy, do not convince them, "neither would they be convinced, though one should arise from the dead to testify unto them." Surprise & sorrow must fill the bosom of every rational friend to Liberty, to behold the coward meanness of the man, who would yield up his inestimable privileges of Self-Government for the paltry consideration of the pomp and parade of Slavery and Despotism.

BUT, my Fellow-Citizens, to return, and cheer and animate the mind by a cursory view of the prospect before us. In the full enjoyment of those rights and privileges for which we so gloriously contended. Possessing a country almost boundless in extent; situated in the most salubrious and temperate climate; abounding with all the most useful productions; the most delightfully variegated with the most stupendous mountains and most pleasant vallies; the most extensive lakes and most fertile islands; the most advantageously watered by rivers, brooks, and innumerable springs for medicinal and ordinary purposes; favored with a vast extent of sea coast, indented by an almost infinite number of gulphs, bays, inlets, and navigable rivers; giving to us superior advantages in Agriculture and Commerce, to any other nation in the known world.

AND, although some few of our Countrymen, who possess ambition without merit, conscious they shall never obtain the esteem and confidence of a Free and enlightened People, are strongly pre-disposed to "the King's evil," and sigh deeply for the "Onions and Fleshpots" of that Egypt, from which we were delivered "with a strong hand, and a stretched out arm."— Though some of our Clergy are in love with that uniformity, that rigorous and strenuous attendance on ceremonies, that tithing not only of "mint, rice, and anise," but also of the more substantial articles of corn, grass, sheep, and cattle, which takes place in those European countries, where forms of Religion are established by law; where the Pope, the Emperor, or the King, is stiled head of the Christian Church, according to the superstition and imposition of the times. And although a few haughty Chieftains may wish to involve this Country in war, that they, like other madmen, may wade through seas of blood to a Throne. Yet we trust, and believe, that the great body of our Citizens are sincerely and warmly attached to our Republican institutions, to the privileges of thinking, speaking, acting, and using their private property, with no other restraint, than to avoid injuring our fellow-citizens.

ON the firm basis of just, and equal Constitutions and Laws, we hope to edify, and build up a monument lasting as time, and far more grateful and honorable to those Worthies who achieved our glorious Revolution, than Mausoleums of stone and lime,

or Monuments of brass. Here the mind of man, dignified, ennobled, and expanded by a view of the past, and prospect of the future, will act a part worthy of the sphere in which we are placed by an over-ruling and beneficent Providence. Here the Arts and Sciences, will probably receive their last, and highest improvements; and we trust that the inverted sun of Freedom, which beams its effulgence over our happy land, and has cast a glimmering light to the Eastern hemisphere, will eventually cheer and enlighten all the dark and benighted haunts of Slavery and Oppression throughout the world. That Tyrants will ere long be taught to assume their equal rank in society, and learn that they are but men, and that in assuming to be God's, they make themselves less than men.—What tribute of gratitude can we offer to the memories of those Martyrs and Heroes who bled and died for the salvation of their Country, so worthy of them, as an adoption of their principles, and an imitation of their glorious and patriotic deeds? Then, let us, on the Altar of Freedom, most devoutly swear, that we will never tamely, or basely resign our Liberties, the price of the precious blood of so many of our Fathers and Countrymen, into the hands, of any foreign or domestic Tyrant whomsoever. Such, my Fellow-Citizens, being our determination, though our Constitution and equal Governments are not of eternal duration, yet we trust they will prove as durable as time. An argument frequently made use of in this Country of late years to induce us to abandon our Freedom is, that “Republics are short lived, that all other Republics have fallen, and therefore ours must.” We are aware, that such are the laws of God and Nature, that all human systems shall contain within themselves, the causes of diseases and dissolution; that the most useful institutions, and fairest structures of human invention, must in time crumble to pieces and decay, however wisely contrived, firmly supported, and beautifully adorned. Yet, is it rational, is it manly for us to say, because Republican institutions, in common with all others are fated to decay, that the innumerable blessings resulting from Freedom, are not worth a sigh or a struggle? God forbid! Rather let us adopt the sentiments of a celebrated ancient Roman Patriot—“A day, an hour of virtuous Liberty, is worth a whole eternity of bondage.”—We might as rationally argue, that as every earthly

blessing bestowed upon us by indulgent Heaven (even life itself) are temporary, and come to an end sooner or later : therefore, we will make no use of means to preserve life or restore health, or any other blessing, but heedlessly suffer ourselves to be destroyed without making the least effort for self-preservation. Depend upon it, that the man who suggests the idea that the People will not support a Republican Government, does not wish they should, Mark him for an enemy to Free Governments. Have not Republics been at least in point of duration, equal to Monarchies, and much superior in contributing to the glory and happiness of the nations, where they have been established ?

It has uniformly been in Republics, that human Nature has raised and elevated itself to the most sublime pitch of greatness & excellence. It is in Republics, that the Arts and Sciences, have been brought to the highest degree of perfection. It is in Free Governments you find the man of Science, the Philosopher, the Orator, the Poet, and the Statesman. It was ancient Greece and Rome, which produced a Socrates and a Plato, a Demosthenes and a Cicero, a Homer and Virgil, an Aristides & a Cincinnatus. Liberty elevates and enobles the mind of man, while Slavery depresses and debases the mind of its unhappy subjects. Despotism is founded on ignorance and fear. Its devoted victims, enveloped in darkness, derive no benefit from the sun of Freedom ; they seldom struggle to better their situation, because they are ignorant of the benefits which result from just and equal laws ; and when they groan under the evils of Tyranny, they accuse blind fate or some evil Deity, as the cause of the calamity which they suffer.

EVEN under that Monarchy from whence we derived our origin, and from whence we so gloriously separated ourselves by our Revolutionary war—" His most gracious Majesty" finds great relief from that mock representation of the People, " His most faithful Commons," as they induce the People to submit without resistance, to the complicated calamities of unnecessary wars, starvation, and oppressive taxes. The King is invested with the sole authority of declaring war when he pleases, and his faithful Commons must grant him all needed supplies for carrying it on, or the nation must be conquered by an exasperated

foreign foe. Not so in the United States ; here none can involve us in the calamities of war, but the Representatives of the People, frequently, and freely elected. It is not in the power of any madman here, to plunge us into war, and deluge the Country in blood, to gratify his pride and ambition. Our Magistrates claim no inheritance in their offices ; we have the same interest in both our General and State Governments ; they are alike dear unto us, the idea that the People will not support them with equal firmness and zeal, is not to be listened to for a moment ; it is Treason against Liberty to indulge the base idea. He must indeed be blind to truth and his own interest, who does not clearly discern and frankly acknowledge, that on the Union and harmony of the General and State Governments, depend the peace and prosperity of the nation. It may not on this occasion, be improper, to reflect for a few moments on the causes which produced the greatness and prosperity of the Republics of Greece and Rome, and to enquire what were the causes which reduced them to their present state of slavery and degradation. We learn by perusing ancient history, that the Greeks and Romans were not so sordid and selfish, as to regard nothing but their immediate interests ;—they wisely discerned that the prosperity of the country and individual prosperity were inseparably connected ; they considered every calamity of the State as involving themselves ; they were taught from their infancy, to consider themselves and their families, as parts of a greater family, to wit, the State to which they belonged ; they were from their cradles taught to look upon their country as their common parent—thus educated, they, the People, believed themselves capable of Self-Government ; their laws were in general, equal and just, and wisely calculated to promote the public good. One great advantage of their Republican Governments was, that the People loved their Governments the better from transacting their own affairs, for their own benefit, and from being all capable of holding offices of honor and profit in the State—a manly emulation was excited who should best deserve those honors and trusts. The condition of returning to private life upon the expiration of their public employments, and that at short periods, restrained their Officers from abusing that power and authority of which they should so soon be deprived : Whereas in the permanent

possession of power, men become haughty, unjust, and tyrannical. Besides, in the days of their Republican purity and prosperity, their industrious and correct habits preserved them from those vices which often overthrow States and Empires; they led laborious and active lives, constantly intent upon the cultivation of their lands, and improvements in Arts and Sciences: the most useful, industrious, and virtuous citizen, not the most wealthy, idle and vicious, was deemed the most honorable and meritorious; their manners were simple and natural, without vain parades or foolish ostentation;—he who commanded in their armies one year, submitted himself cheerfully next year to be commanded. Would you, my Fellow-Citizens, continue free, prosperous and happy, imitate then, the virtues of those ancient Sages and Patriots; educate and form the manners of your children as they did theirs; teach them early those principles which are so proper to refine and exalt their tender minds, and inspire them with manly and noble sentiments; 'tis education forms the common mind; the same concurrent means will in all ages of the world produce the same ends. In every respect we have equal advantages for supporting our Freedom with those ancient Republics, and in point of the trial by Jury, the Representative System, and the important art of Printing, (which art was utterly unknown to them) we have much the advantage of them. The benefits resulting from the art of Printing, are incalculable in a Republic; the quickness and ease with which, by means of that art, and the establishment of the Post-Office Department, information can be disseminated among the People, and the great and increasing attention which is paid to the education of American youth, give us supremely the advantage of any free State that ever had existence upon earth; for the safety of a free State does not depend on the wealth, learning and talents of a few, (as in Monarchies) but upon the general distribution of learning and property among the many. For power and influence naturally follow wealth and talents, and when property and talents are divided among the great body of the people, as in the United States, power and influence will also be distributed among the many; and these will prove useful and safe “checks and balances” upon the designs and ambition of one another, and much cheaper and better calculated “checks and balances” to

promote the prosperity and rights of the People, than "Nobles in holes," or Princes in Palaces. A People well informed, will be able to keep a watchful eye on those whom they have elevated to places of trust and profit, and will approve or disapprove, according to their respective merits. Public Officers of uprightness and integrity, will feel a conscious pleasure from knowing that their public acts will be investigated by their Constitutents, to whom they are always ready to render an account of their Stewardship.

THE idea of being observed, and approved if meritorious, will be an excellent excitement to public servants to act well their parts. On the other hand, the designing and arbitrary, will anxiously strive to draw a veil over their public conduct, to hide their dark intrigues from the public eye: with them the maxim is, the more ignorance, the more peace—say they, "Let the People plough and hoe, and go to meeting, and let that suffice them." We can take care of their public affairs for them without their troubling their heads about them in the least—say they, "the mysteries of Religion & Government are too dark and intricate for the multitude to understand, let them pin their faith on our sleeves." But what individual does not know that if he intrust his private affairs to others, and neglect to keep books or call his Agents and Clerks to account with him, that he may know for himself how his business is conducted, that his fortune will soon go to wreck and ruin. If this is true with regard to private concerns, it is much more strikingly so with respect to national affairs, as all the enslaved and oppressed nations of the earth can bear a melancholy testimony. Every individual ought to consider himself as deeply interested in the affairs of the public; every free citizen is in duty bound to endeavor as far as in him lies, to inform himself of the nature and principles of our municipal Constitutions and Laws; he ought to know what the spirit and intention of our Constitutions are, to be able to compare the spirit and tendency of different Administrations with the spirit and meaning of the social compact. Many measures of a designing and corrupt Administration, may be within the letter, but directly opposed to its spirit and intention. By the Constitution of the United States, Congress have power to levy and collect Taxes, to declare War, and raise and support Armies—

Yet, should Congress levy an unnecessary Land or Stamp Tax, in order to enure the People to Taxation, and acquaint them with the insolence of Tax-gatherers, or in order to create Supervisorships, Clerkships, and Collectorships for their adherents and partizans, is not the spirit of the Constitution thereby grossly violated? Should Congress involve this Country in an unnecessary and offensive war, in order to confer enormous wealth upon a few favorites, by opening the floodgate of speculation, or to gratify the ambition of a few haughty Chieftains; should they raise Armies in time of peace to overawe public opinion, or to crush the spirit of the People, do they not thereby aim a death-blow at the vitals of the Constitution? What are your Constitutions, but inanimate paper, unless you animate and give them life? Will your Constitution, however correct and specious in theory, protect and defend your Rights and Liberties while you sleep in careless security? No! my Fellow-Citizens, the spirit and patriotism of the People must see to it, that those Constitutions are preserved in the spirit of them from the rude touch of every unhallowed hand.—Here let us enquire for a moment what was the principal cause of the overthrow of the Liberties of ancient Greece and Rome, and may God grant that we may be wise enough to profit by their experience, and correct our own errors by observing the fatal consequence of theirs. We shall find upon enquiry, that a thirst for foreign conquests was the most efficient cause in reducing the Greek and Roman States to absolute Despotism. Their domestic feuds, party discord, and local prejudices never could have done this without the aid of mercenary troops. Philip and Alexander, these butchers of their fellow-men, well aware of this, determined to arrive at absolute sway, not only over Greece, but also over the world. Those crafty Tyrants, in order to accustom the Greeks the more readily to shameful slavery, coloured their designs with the idea of avenging them upon their ancient enemies, the Persians, spurring them on to victory by the delusive hope of enslaving other nations, and thereby enhancing their own freedom—Thus they set a fatal seal upon the grave of their own Liberties.

Thus, likewise the Romans could not become absolute slaves till they became the Tyrants of the world, aspiring at the sovereignty of other nations, they lost their own. The Roman Re-

public had its artificial and arbitrary distinction of the People into Patricians and Plebians, a division that seemed directly calculated to foment discord and jealousy, and which in fact frequently produced tumults and insurrections, that were indeed terrible for the moment of their existence, but they always soon found means to reconcile their clashing interests and jarring passions. Their popular tumults, like the hurricane and thunder-storm, purified their political atmosphere, and like them were uniformly succeeded by a calm and delightful season; and they retained their Freedom until they imbibed the fatal ambition of ruling the world. They then furnished their commanders with troops to make conquests and support arbitrary Governments abroad, until they, by acting the Tyrant over those nations which they vanquished in war, lost that sacred regard for Justice and Freedom, which marked the Roman character in their happier days. The melancholy period of retribution then arrived, when the Roman People drew down upon their own devoted heads, that slavery and ruin which they had been measuring out to the nations around them. The gloomy hour had arrived, when if they presumed to deny to their Commanders abroad any supplies, honors, or offices which their ambition prompted them to demand, they immediately turned their armies against Rome itself. After Julius Cæsar in the space of ten years had hewn and cut to pieces more than a million of men in his wars in Germany, Gaul, Spain and Britain, to gratify the vile ambition of the Senate and People of Rome, nothing would satisfy his mad ambition, but conquering his parent State. That State which had been for centuries the admiration of the world, for the patriotism and bravery of its citizens, Cæsar with his hireling veterans, was able to vanquish and enslave; even the Roman Republic. Standing Armies uniformly have entailed misery and servitude on those nations which have employed and supported them. In a Free Government, too much care cannot be taken to equip and discipline a Militia composed of the body of its Citizens; on those we may with safety rely; they have families, connections, and interests which bind their affections to the community; in their bravery, confidence may with propriety be placed. They will defend their Rights, their Families, and their Altars, at every hazard—witness *Bunker's* awful mount! *Bennington's* ensan-

guined fields! and *Saratoga's* memorable heights!—We have also a very recent instance of the fatal tendency of ambition for foreign conquests in the fate that has awaited the eventful Revolution in France: While the French nation confined themselves within proper limits, and were intent on the means of self-preservation and defensive war, the prospects in the interior of France to the lovers of Freedom were promising and fair; but when the designing and ambitious, found means to turn the attention of the French people from their internal affairs, and dearest interests at home, to the wicked and cruel design of ruling the world; flattering the People by reminding them of the great and heroic deed they had performed, when they vainly hoped they were contending for Liberty; firing their minds with the wild design of conquering their enemies, the British, that their Tyrant at home might seize the opportunity while the eye of the French People was fixed upon the invasions of Egypt and England, to rivet upon them the adamant chains of Despotism. Leaving to the world, the solemn admonition that when a Free People commence or continue a War, upon any other principle than self-defence, they fight against their own dearest rights and most sacred privileges—for how can any people retain a high sense of justice, of humanity and equality of rights among themselves, when they become familiar with the horrid practice of butchering, robbing and enslaving their fellow-men, though they may be taught to call those they war against their enemies. Hence the killing and plundering which takes place between contending parties in time of war, must lead directly to murders and robberies at home when peace succeeds. Long continued wars always render the many poor, powerless and wretched, and the few rich, powerful and oppressive—for whatever distresses and burthens a People may be doomed to suffer and bear in time of war, there are always in every community a few speculating unprincipled men, who will ever contrive to turn the distresses of their country to their own advantage; and if heavy taxes must be collected, it demands a numerous train of officers; if numerous armies must be kept up, they must be fed, clothed and paid; and a wide field is opened for speculation in army supplies and governmental securities.

HAPPY for us, a wide and dangerous ocean separates the United States from every nation that is able to annoy or intrude upon our rights materially. The wide field that is open before us, for improvements in the arts of peace, must lead our citizens to form industrious habits, which make for peace and domestic felicity—and we believe, that every nation having ability to check our progress in useful improvements, will find it for their interest not to rouse the sleeping Lion in America, for many years to come. Therefore (under the blessing of Heaven) we with confidence calculate on a long series of descending years of peace, liberty and prosperity—and may a double portion of that godlike spirit of patriotism, which glowed in the bosoms of the fathers of our Republic, rest upon their sons to the remotest ages of time. May our State Governments continue to revolve in order and harmony around their common centre, the General Government of the Union, until the Planets shall cease to obey the attractions of the Sun,

“ And fly lawless through the void,
 “ Destroying others by themselves destroyed.”

THE END.
