

# ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

## CITIZENS OF BINGHAM,

ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, 1826.

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BY

SOLOMON LINCOLN, JR.

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1826.

MR. SOLOMON LINCOLN, JR.

SIR,—We have been chosen a Committee by a numerous meeting of the citizens of Hingham and vicinity, who voted unanimously that their thanks be presented you for your excellent Oration delivered before them this day, and to request a copy for publication.

LABAN HERSEY, JR.  
WILLIAM GORDON,  
MARTIN FEARING,  
JOSEPH WILDER, JR.  
JOHN KINGMAN.

*Hingham, July 4, 1826.*

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*Hingham, July 7, 1826.*

GENTLEMEN,—A copy of the Oration delivered to the citizens of Hingham and vicinity on the 4th instant, is at your disposal.

Respectfully yours,

SOLOMON LINCOLN, JR.

Col. LABAN HERSEY, Jr.  
WILLIAM GORDON,  
MARTIN FEARING, and  
JOSEPH WILDER, Jr. Esq's.  
Capt. JOHN KINGMAN.

## ORATION.

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FELLOW CITIZENS,—

WE have assembled this day to rejoice that our country is free. We come, from the fulness of our hearts to make a free expression of our gratitude to those venerable men who laid the foundations of this empire of civil and religious liberty; and to those whose valour, patriotism and intelligence have sustained its majestic fabric. We would come forgetting all animosities, burying every resentment, with a liberal spirit and an enlightened zeal, to call up those recollections of the history of our country, whose interest can be destroyed by no circumstances; and to retrace those hallowed impressions, which can be obliterated by no time.

More than two hundred years have elapsed since the little band of pilgrims abandoned that classic land where reposed the ashes of their fathers, to which they were attached by the most endearing associations; to seek, "on earth's remotest bounds, and ocean's wildest shore," the more perfect enjoyment of the rights of conscience. The settlers of Plymouth were distinguished for the possession of all those qualifications requisite to promote the success of their undertaking. Firm, intelligent and persevering,—fearless of danger, and patient of suffering, when exposed to the severest trials, and afflicted by the most distressing calamities, in their continual conflicts with nature and man, they triumphed. If the ardour of religious feelings imparted some portion of enthusiasm to their character; it also inspired them with a manly independence of thought, and a noble elevation of sentiment. It was long after the settlement of Plymouth, before the colonists acquired sufficient power to relieve them from the apprehension of danger from the revengeful sons of the forest. The red men when they saw the band of industry felling the fine ornaments of their hunting grounds; the favoured spots where they had kindled their council fires, occupied by an unknown race; and the progress of civilization urging them farther and farther into the recesses of the wilderness—felt, deeply felt the operation of a

power which they could not comprehend. It was not until they saw in the desolation of their villages and in the ravages of disease, that all their valour and invention could not save them from extermination; that their proud spirits yielded, "that the path of peace was laid open, and the chain of friendship made bright." The colonists not dispirited by the most deadly contests with their treacherous enemies, still increased in numbers and in power. The acquisition of new territory, the gradual developement of their resources, their own industry and perseverance, soon gave them an ascendancy over the savages. It was when they exhibited some indications of commercial and agricultural prosperity, that they more strongly attracted the attention of Great Britain. It was when success crowned the untiring efforts of your fathers; when the blessings of wealth began to accumulate around them; that the mother country formed the design of binding still stronger the ties of mutual friendship, and of exhibiting a striking proof of parental affection, by taxing the colonies for the purpose of replenishing the royal treasury. I would not allude to events that occurred in those days of great excitement before the Declaration of Independence, for the purpose of reviving any unkind feelings, or of cherishing any unworthy resentment. But it is our duty as freemen and as patriots, on this occasion to refer to the folly and

weakness of that mistaken policy of the British Cabinet, which led them to impose on the colonies tax after tax, and insult after insult, in opposition to the clearest principles of justice, and in violation of the spirit of the British Constitution. And when by the perverseness and obstinacy of ministers, measures were taken to enforce the arbitrary edicts of the crown, and the no less arbitrary acts of Parliament; when petitions couched in the most respectful terms, appealing to the sympathies of a kindred people, and to the magnanimity of a British Parliament, were treated with derision and scorn; who that is proud of the name of an American citizen can express any other feelings but those of honest exultation, that the arrogant, the powerful, and the corrupt, were not permitted to triumph over the free, the virtuous and the brave?

Fellow Citizens,—We have some local recollections that should be associated with revolutionary events, which justice to the living and the dead requires me to notice. The citizens of *this town* early participated of those feelings which were excited by the numerous aggressions upon the rights of the colonies. They devised every judicious and discreet measure to obtain a redress of their wrongs, as well as to heal the wounds which the cruelty of an unnatural parent had inflicted. They instructed their represent-

atives, "to take every *legal* and *constitutional* method for the preservation of their rights, and liberties," and they Resolved "That a *virtuous* and *steady* opposition to the ministerial plan of governing America, was absolutely necessary to preserve even a shadow of liberty, and was a duty which every freeman in America owed to his country, to himself, and to posterity." And finally, when every exertion to obtain redress had proved fruitless, every remonstrance unavailing, and every entreaty had been despised, with an independence, and a devotion to the cause of freedom, honourable to themselves and to us, within these walls, on the *Twenty-third day of May, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy-six*, they gave the following instructions to their representatives.\* "Ask nothing of Great Britain but *Peace, Liberty, and Safety*. You will *never* recede from that claim. And agreeably to a resolve of the late House of Representatives, in case the honourable Continental Congress should for the safety of the United States, declare themselves independent of the kingdom of Great Britain, solemnly to engage in behalf of your constituents that they will with their *lives* and *fortunes*, support them in the measure." And that pledge was nobly redeemed; for when the fire which had been kindled by

\* The Representatives were Enoch Lincoln, Theophilus Cushing and John Fearing.

the masterly eloquence of *James Otis* and *Patrick Henry*, burst into a flame with electric rapidity in every section of the country; when the Declaration of Independence was solemnly proclaimed, *your citizens* with distinguished liberality devoted their earthly treasure, and flew to the banners of their country to give their lives to a cause to which they were attached by every principle of duty and every sentiment of honour. Many of them acted distinguished parts in the perilous scenes of the Revolution,—and some of them, thank God! are yet living to enjoy the repose of honourable age; and to receive the thanks of a free and independent people.

The Declaration of our Independence, whether we consider the circumstances under which it was made; the energetic eloquence with which it was enforced; or the character of the distinguished patriots who pledged “their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honour” to support it, is a subject of great historical interest. But when we look back to it as the origin of *our national* existence, as clearly and undisguisedly exposing the wrongs of our fathers, and as declaring not only their unalienable rights but those of all mankind; we cannot listen to the sacred, the powerful pledge with which it concludes, without forming a firm resolution that the glory of such fathers, shall not be impaired by the degeneracy of their sons.



That instrument was an appeal to justice,—to the everlasting principles of truth,—and it remains, and for ever will—an imperishable monument of the fame of its illustrious author, and of the glory of his native land. It roused the master spirits of the age from their dark delusion; it touched the sympathies of the British people; and it elicited the most brilliant displays of eloquence for the American cause in Parliament. It wounded the pride, and it provoked the indignant invectives of Fox and Chatham against the perverseness and obstinacy of the cabinet.

The events of the war of our revolution are familiar to all of us. The history of that protracted struggle for liberty, and its glorious termination, is an everlasting beacon to warn tyrants of the danger of infringing on the rights of the people; its events finely illustrated the truth, that the energy and power of a free people when united in defence of their unalienable rights, are irresistible. Nearly all of those illustrious men who devoted themselves to the cause of their country during that noble conflict, are slumbering in their graves. Their names—their actions—are consecrated in our memories. A few only, a favoured few, whose laurels were won at Bunker's Hill, at Saratoga, at Monmouth—whose silvered heads and bended forms indicate that their earthly pilgrimage is short, are yet living to rejoice on this

day, and to reflect with honest pride on the glory of their deeds. They see in the

“Peace

That smiles on all they fought for, and the wealth  
That clothes the land they rescued,  
Monuments more lasting, than the fanes  
Reared to the kings and demigods of old.”

And shall we suffer any considerations of economy, any calls of interest, to repress those feelings of gratitude which prompt us to open the liberal hand of charity to any of those venerable heroes, who are repining in obscurity, or who feel the cold hand of penury and want pressing heavily upon them? Shall the man, whose arm, once raised to shield his devoted country from the attack of a mercenary and ambitious foe—is now enervated and palsied by age; whose eye once sparkling with delight, has now lost its lustre and its fire; upon whose hopes and recollections the cold dew of death, perhaps, has already been sprinkled; shall he not find all his wants anticipated, all his distresses alleviated, and the poignancy of every pang assuaged by the liberal offerings and the cheering voice of a nation’s gratitude? Shall we not, when eulogizing the virtues and valour of the *dead*, do something more to wipe off the stain of ingratitude to the few who are *living*, of our country’s best benefactors?

Let us pause and reflect a few moments upon the character of our government and country. We possess increased means of deciding whether our free institutions have disappointed the high, though anxious expectations of their founders; or whether they have confirmed the wishes of those who saw in the last traces of royal power over this beautiful land the shadows of its departing glory. The predictions of those high-souled and generous patriots who sounded the alarm at the era of the revolution, and of those who gathered doubt and fear from the pages of fallacious history; can now be reviewed by the light of a brilliant and complete experiment.

There were some among the distinguished, affluent and highly gifted men of this country, who used every effort to avert what they considered a national calamity—a Declaration of Independence—and who when they saw the cord which bound the colonies to the parent country snapped asunder, anticipated defeat and shame, or anarchy and civil war. Their fears had been excited and their imaginations darkened by contemplating the magnificent ruins of the republics of antiquity. The colossal statues of Egypt,—the shattered columns of Palmyra,—the stupendous ruins of Balbec,—the history of the overthrow of the most gigantic despotisms furnished them no refutation of their doctrine, that instability was

the characteristic of republican institutions. They were dazzled with the splendour of that government "*whose constitution and laws were considered the production of the accumulated wisdom of ages;*" whose resources and wealth were inexhaustible; whose literature had ripened almost to perfection; the valour of whose armies was celebrated in every land; and whose navies rode in triumph upon every sea.

But there was another and a more numerous class of patriots who dispelled these clouds of doubt and fear—who scorned all comparisons, and denied the justice of all conclusions, drawn from the history of the ancient republics. They contended that all reasonings concerning the future fortunes of any country, so far as they were founded *merely* on the experience of other nations, in other ages, were unphilosophical and inconclusive. They reflected on the general diffusion of knowledge, without which no nation can long be free; they looked to the unbending firmness and unyielding virtue of the people; they claimed something for the native energy of liberty; they declared the colonies free and independent, and appealed to the God of armies for succour. And we are this day proud to say, that their reasoning was sound—their principles well founded—their *confidence* justified by enlightened reason and sound philosophy,—and their success triumphant. The falla-

cious observation that every revolution contains the seeds of another, and scatters them behind it—which was received as a maxim by politicians of the school of Machiavel, has been exposed and conclusively refuted by the experiment in this country. That experiment has given a sanction to the principles proclaimed on the day which we now commemorate, and has satisfactorily tested their stability and power.

It is delightful to look around us and to witness the rapid developement of our national resources—giving strength and energy to the character of our government—the wide extension of our territory—the salutary effect of wise, mild and equal laws—the activity of enterprise—and the excitement which the richest rewards give to cultivate industry, and to cherish talent: science lending her aid to the arts—the inventive powers of man tasked to strike out new paths in which to emulate the improvements of the old world: our mighty rivers diverted from their channels to subserve the wants of a vast population, and covered by the magic of human genius, with a commerce that courts not the propitious gales of heaven to give speed to its course: every waterfall resounding with the voice of industry; and almost every wave that beats upon our shore bearing to us the rich commodities of every nation and every clime. All—all—made happy in the repose of honourable

peace, by the prosperity which smiles upon this home of the free and independent.

I would not, in attempting to describe the happiness of our country, use the language of inflation. I would not hold up to view a picture false and deceptive. I speak of nothing unobserved by any one who will look abroad upon the land in which he lives.—The simplest allusion to facts indicating the happiness of our country cannot fail of exciting a generous glow of American feeling, and of destroying a spirit of coldness or indifference toward our native land. We cannot reflect a moment upon the fact that we are permitted to exist at this epoch,—the witnesses of the triumphant success of that bold experiment of our Patriot fathers which affects not only our happiness, but that of all posterity, and all nations, an experiment which has given a new direction to the exertions of intellect, new vigour to the principles of virtue and religion, without being deeply penetrated with the consciousness of our high responsibility of handing down to posterity our blessings and privileges unimpaired—and of preserving the light and purity of our example.

And how, Fellow Citizens, shall we preserve our example? Shall we not look to the interests of learning? We believe that intelligence is essential to the permanency of a free government; and that

constitutional and well regulated liberty cannot long exist without it. The American people have never been indifferent to the interests, or insensible of the value of practical learning. If the infancy of our nation, the necessary and indispensable duties of our highly gifted men have in some measure precluded the cultivation of the higher branches of literature and science, we have no reason for self reproach. Our ancestors acted wisely in cherishing the useful, rather than the elegant arts. They were struggling with the elements—with uncivilized man, for a resting place in which to enjoy the repose of peace, and liberty of conscience. They were, instead of courting the muses, laying the foundation of a mighty empire. They left to posterity, the duty and the pleasure of embellishing the superstructure. They saw, in the melancholy ruins of ancient freedom, the most striking illustrations of the truth, that, the inspiration of poetry, and the finest efforts of eloquence, were not alone sufficient to preserve the liberties of a people. The literary character of our nation is rapidly developing itself. Our literature is advancing rapidly to a high degree of excellence: and we rejoice at its moral worth. Infidelity has not here called in the aid of genius to promote its triumphs, or to mask its danger; our poetry breathes the simple language of purity and truth, and eloquence finds few

admirers unless enlisted in the sacred cause of equal rights and common privileges. Fancy has gleaned from our history many scenes of romantic interest and moral sublimity, to weave into the gay web of fiction; for the purpose of exciting an enthusiastic admiration of the valour and patriotism of our ancestors. The influence of learning in enlarging the mind, and purifying the morals, is unlimited. It imparts a spirit of independence, and of enlightened patriotism to the character of a people. A well educated freeman will never breathe the air of despotism; he never will quietly surrender his birthright, nor tamely permit it to be rudely torn from his possession. A passion for the elegant arts should be cherished; that the most beautiful productions of painting and sculpture, may be among the many rich memorials of American worth. The Press should be free and it should be pure. There should be thrown around it the ample protection which is found in the wisdom and liberality of our laws. We should not forget that we live in a country, and in an age of religious freedom. It is our duty as patriots, and as philanthropists to perpetuate those laws which give to our citizens the perfect enjoyment of the rights of conscience; and which will remain the noblest monuments of the forecast independence, and liberality of the people. The



bigot may lament the overthrow of those stupendous fabrics of ecclesiastical tyranny, whose chilling influence tended to destroy all religion; but the enlightened philanthropist rejoices that man can here range through every shade of belief, from orthodoxy to infidelity, without molestation. Religion needs not the aid, and it borrows little lustre from a union of its institutions with those of civil power.

We should look to our military institutions. Although the spirit of our government is pacific: although we wage no wars for conquest or to gratify ambition; and amid the commotions of the old world adhere to the strictest principles of neutrality, universally respecting the rights of other nations; we profess to maintain our own. We would permit no interference with our domestic institutions, or great commercial interests. We should resist,—and our history bears testimony that in our *two wars for independence*, we have resisted with success any invasion upon our rights. We rely too, for protection, not upon corrupt and degraded mercenaries, but upon a standing army of freemen. The militia, and I name it with veneration, should be cherished, supported and honoured. One of our best patriots and most accomplished statesman has said, that whenever the militia is despised or neglected, he shall consider the union dissolved, and the liberties of North America lost.

for ever. Is it not a subject of alarm, that those whose duty it is to watch over its interests suffer them to languish and decay? Is there not a regenerating spirit among the people, to make the duty of the soldier as honourable, as it is necessary? Will the reputation of our militia be sustained with honour, when affected dignity or inconsiderable offices exempt large classes of free and able bodied citizens from an enrolment under the banners of their country?

As important as wise laws and liberal institutions, are intelligent, independent and honest rulers. They should be men who look with a single eye to the good of their country; who are capable of appreciating the nature and importance of the duties devolving upon them, and who fearlessly discharge them; neither deterred from the adoption of wise measures by the bitter sarcasm, and personal invectives of the ambitious and disappointed, nor seduced by the blandishments of flattery, or servility of intrigue, to project a policy injurious to the interests of the country, or disreputable in the estimation of other nations. The illustrious men who have been called to the highest office in the gift of the American people, have been distinguished as men, as patriots; and as statesmen; and, excepting him who is enjoying the richer rewards of immortality, whose fame is blended with that of his country; all are

living to receive the warmest, the most affectionate expressions of the gratitude and veneration of a free and happy people. And whatever have been our partialities, whatever our prejudices, we should make one magnanimous sacrifice, and give honour to the measures of our present national administration; which are elevating the character of our country, commanding the respect, and conciliating the good will of all other nations. We will not withhold from the statesman on whom has fallen the mantle of a father of revolutionary fame, the tribute of praise for the talent, learning, and independence which he has displayed in defending the rights, and maintaining the honour of his country.

Fellow Citizens—What is the prospect before us? It is gratifying to the American patriot to perceive in the prevalence of liberal principles, the strongest indications that the spirit of the age is friendly to republican institutions. The doctrines proclaimed by our fathers fifty years since have received the sanction of enlightened statesmen in both hemispheres. The age is one of intelligence; and if I mistake not the character of free institutions, they must soon displace those systems of pageantry and parade, which are upheld by the ignorance of the people. Rulers are conforming the principles of their government to the character of the times;—the

forms may remain unchanged, but the spirit is changing. The feelings that are spreading gradually, and which are occasionally expressed in France, in Germany, and even in Austria, must restore, by some violent convulsion, the sovereign authority to its only *legitimate* possessors—the *People*. The military power of France cannot long stifle the voice of liberty south of the Pyrenees. A parade of foreign bayonets may protract the moment when the rights of the people shall prevail over the prerogatives of kings; but—

“The holy flame, though sometimes slow,  
Is certain, as the deep tides roll;  
And who shall say it will not glow  
Around the brave Castilian soul?”

The Italians degraded, dispirited and oppressed, feel too sensibly the shame of their servitude; and are all too often reminded by their ancient monuments, of their duty as patriots, not to unite every heart and every hand in making one more noble effort to be free. The mind cannot be shackled by power; it gathers strength from confinement and a crisis must arrive when a reaction will take place. The longer that crisis is protracted—the stronger the arm of despotic power which prevents the free operation of the regenerating spirit of Freedom—the more violent

will be the change; and the more destructive its effects to the glory of royalty.

We wait with breathless anxiety to learn the issue of the contest for liberty in Greece. We there see the most elevated spirit of freedom, struggling with a power the most gigantic for its existence. The most enthusiastic love of liberty is spreading over that fair land, the light and glory of the ancient world; from whence sprang the beauties of art and the delights of learning; and is inspiring the breasts of her patriots with that resistless energy which in the days of her highest glory repelled the mercenary hordes of despotism from her borders. Shall the scholar, the republican, the christian look upon those descendants of a brave people, struggling over the graves of their ancestors, for the unalienable rights of man; and give nothing to their cause but unmeaning words and unavailing sympathies. Is there not in the whole civilized world, enough of philanthropy, enough of chivalry, to offer some generous succour, some substantial aid, that the cause of humanity may not fail and Grecian liberty expire? Will all mankind listen to the bitter sarcasm, "Greeks only should free Greece" and go not to the rescue? The new republics which have sprung into existence in our own hemisphere, afford the most cheering confirmation of the popularity and excellence of free princi-

ples of government. The emissaries of royal power and the ministers of superstition have vanished before the influence of a power which they could not control. The spread of intelligence and of a purer religion, will give stability to the character of those fabrics of free government, which we trust will long stand the cherished monuments of the wisdom and valour of their founders. And now fellow Citizens, animated by these reflections upon the history of the valour and patriotism of our fathers; and upon the happiness and prosperity of our country; cheered by the glorious signs of the times; let us cultivate the purest American feelings. Let us pledge ourselves this day, to use every effort to preserve our rich inheritance of freedom. Cherish above all things the Union of the States. Suffer no local prejudices, no geographical distinctions to blend themselves with your reflections on men and measures. Indulge no invidious comparisons; pay your honest tribute of applause whether it be to the Glory of the East, to the Patriotism of the South, or to the Valour of the West. Collisions of interest must necessarily arise from the habits, customs and wants of different portions of our extended republic; but it is the noblest effort of patriotism to make a generous sacrifice of local interests for the public good. Let the flame kindled in 1776, burn *pure, everlasting, unquenchable*, that those who come

after us may not blush at our indifference, or weep at our degeneracy: but that all posterity may gather around the altars of their country, and celebrate with higher interest and increased delight, *The Jubilee of American Independence.*