

AN  
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED AT WESTERN,

IN COMMEMORATION OF

\* 21425.4D3

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

JULY 4th, 1812.

By JACOB MANSFIELD, Esq.

PUBLISHED BY

W. B. ALLEN, AT REQUEST.

W. B. ALLEN, PROPRIETOR.

PRINTED AT WORCESTER, (MASS.)

BY HENRY ROGERS, 1812.

# ORATION.

MY COUNTRYMEN !

THE crisis under which we have assembled, is deeply interesting to our feelings, as Fellow Citizens and as Fellow Men. As Fellow Citizens, we have deeply to regret, that our common and beloved country has been compelled by the repeated and cruel outrages of foreign enemies, to appeal once more to the sword in defence of her hard-purchased and indispensable rights. As Fellow Men, entertaining a friendly regard to the universal happiness of our species, we must deplore those continually aggravated privations and distresses, which the personal and vitiated ambition of a few Tyrants is accumulating upon the human race. Humanity could have wished that this last resort of our abused and outraged country, might have been averted, but justice, the duty we owed to our oppressed countrymen, our solemn obligation to fulfil that sacred compact, which alone constituted and can preserve us as a nation, forbade a longer forbearance. Our patience has been drained to the dregs. Never was there a crisis in our national affairs, in which it was more necessary or useful, to combine a retrospective view of revolutionary principles and examples, with the requisitions of the present time. I shall not, however, as usual, call your exclusive attention to the virtues and characters of that memorable "period which tried men's souls"—all our thoughts are too irresistibly arrested by the importance of present events.

I know that many of my Fellow Citizens deprecate the idea of war, as at all times destructive of national happiness. It is honorable to their feelings. But I believe, that most of us, will acquiesce in the opinion, that "war is not the greatest of evils." The revolution was commenced on our part, and constantly supported upon this correct principle, that the abandonment of one right, which may be essential to our freedom and happiness, is more calamitous to ourselves and posterity than the most destructive war. There is a crisis in public affairs, in which war is the least calamity that a nation can choose. When a foreign power denies us the enjoyment of a right, without which neither the present generation, nor their children can be free and happy, it is our interest, it is our bounden duty to employ force for the recovery and defence of that right. I ask my Fellow Citizens whether this crisis has not arrived? Without enlarging upon the wrongs that have been long inflicted upon us, does not the impressment and bondage of our citizens, and the commercial edicts of France and Great Britain directly tend to sink us to the level of colonies, and deprive us of those rights which are essential to our independence as a nation and to our happiness as individuals?—Our Rulers have declared that they do, and that it is incompatible with their oaths, with the independence and liberties of the nation, any longer to submit. War therefore as the least of evils has been at last adopted. We have now Fellow Citizens, open hostilities with one of our enemies, and there is a moral certainty that we shall soon have open war or a settlement with the other. Our Government have at last determined, that we should no longer submit to an increasing usurpation of our essential rights.

SOME men have thought the present war unnecessary—some have thought that it originated from bad motives. To those who think it unne-

cessary, imputing a want of judgment, but no criminality to Government, I answer,—that principles are dependent upon and connected with each other—that the loss of one leads to the loss of another—that there are some, which every independent Government, by a duty it owes to itself, to its constituents and to strict justice, is bound to support. Without the support of them, our national independence and civil freedom is a mere name, and bondage, which may for a while exist only in form, would soon exist in substance. WASHINGTON, in his Farewell Address, appears deeply sensible, how much depended upon a rigid protection of these principles, and that the least encroachment upon them, if submitted to, would soon lead to the total degradation of a nation. That some of these fundamental principles have, for a long time, been violated and encroached upon by foreign enemies, no Citizen will deny. I cannot therefore doubt but that the present war, after so much pains have been taken to avert it, by some honorable adjustment, is necessary.

To those who impute a criminality to Government in the origin of this measure, I answer—1st. This criminality does not appear.—2d. This measure may have originated from the best of motives, from a regard to national principles, and from an ardent love of their country. As it does not clearly appear that it originated from bad motives, and as good ones exist sufficient to justify it, candor alone will exclude so gross an imputation upon the conduct of our Rulers. I can see no private interest that they can have in this war. On the contrary, even their opponents declare, that it puts in jeopardy both their popularity and interest. Nor can I believe that a fear of France had any operation upon this measure. France has not and may never possess the power to invade us. In a necessary selection between enemies, fear does not prompt us to

choose the strongest, but the weakest. England, of all nations, has the greatest ability to affect us by a war. The charge is, therefore, unfounded in the reason and nature of things. Nor could it arise from a predilection for France. The charge of French partiality in our government, has been a thousand times reiterated, without any competent evidence; and as often, confuted by stubborn facts. So long then as I can ascribe this measure to the best of motives, I will not, contrary to the duty of a citizen, search after bad ones, in order to criminate my rulers.

WHAT is now to be done? This question has been asked by some men, and a very different answer given from what I shall give. What is now the duty of every citizen? Shall I tell you, my countrymen, that it is your duty to embarrass your own government, by constantly vilifying the characters and conduct of your own rulers, and thus ensuring success to the black designs of those, who are enemies to you and your children? Is it your duty to heap disgrace upon your country? Would you exult at the prospect of seeing the present conflict terminate with loss, disgrace and defeat to ourselves? To see the despots of Europe triumphing over the ruins of the last and best of Republics? To see a way opened for the establishment of a throne upon the slavery and misery of innocent posterity? I hear a voice from the graves of Martyred Heroes, exclaiming, it shall not be! A Despot shall not exult upon our tombs! No, ye patriotic Martyrs! your children shall never suffer your sacred rest to be disturbed by the foot of a Tyrant! No, we declare by your blood, your tombs shall never be molested.

EVERY man, upon a moment's reflection, must be convinced of that course, which he ought to pursue. We have nothing to expect from foreign governments, but every thing to expect from

a preservation of our own. It is almost incredible, but yet it is a *known fact*, that there are men among us, who openly advocate a resistance to their own government, and justify measures that can lead to the disgrace of their own, and to the aggrandizement of a foreign country! If any one doubt my assertion, let him examine for himself. Treason, however, will soon be dragged out of darkness into light, to the confusion and disgrace of its authors. Foreign foes and domestic traitors will have but little reason to ridicule the weakness of Republican Government. If it has not energy enough to support itself, it is weak indeed. The guilt of murder is thought to deserve the worst of punishment. What then is the desert of Treason? A Murderer takes the life of but one man; a Traitor deprives millions of their lives, or, what is worse, he deprives them of their liberties. An infinite mind alone can measure the guilt of a Traitor. He shall live in agonies and contempt, and die under an insupportable load of curses and hatred. The howlings of the wolf shall alone be heard upon his tomb.

THE Union of the States will be the last prop to our expiring liberties. With the loss of our Union, all our political hopes and endearments must vanish. It is justly stiled by the immortal WASHINGTON, the palladium of our political safety and prosperity. Sensible of this, the intrigues of foreign and domestic enemies have been unceasingly and invariably directed to its dissolution. This has been the main object of all their open and covert attacks. Could they once dissolve the only bond, that unites the American people into one great family, interminable and destructive war among ourselves, originating from rivalships, local pride and ambition, would be the immediate consequence. A way would then be opened for the immediate introduction and establishment of a for-

ign influence, which, fluctuating as it suited its interests, from one division to another, would keep up a perpetual animosity and discord.

To effect their favourite purpose, our domestic enemies have adopted a variety of modes of attack. Two of them I shall mention. They have endeavoured to convince the people that the interests and views of the Southern, were directly opposed to those of the Northern States, and that the latter were always sacrificed to the promotion of the former. This was that obvious and most dangerous attack upon our Union, which was foreboded by WASHINGTON, against the insinuating and fatal influence of which, he left us a most solemn warning. No assertion could be more unfounded in fact. The Southern are as deeply interested in commerce, as the Northern States. So mutually and equally concerned are all in Commerce, Navigation, Agriculture, and Arts, that in all debates in Congress, upon these important topics, we never see any particular number of Southern or Northern States, universally united for or against the question. Are not the Southern, as greatly dependent upon Commerce and Navigation for the export of their Cotton and Tobacco, their Rice and Flour, as the Northern are for the export of their Beef and Pork, their Fish and Lumber? Is it the voice of patriotism that is continually inculcating upon us this pretended contrariety of interests? No, it is the voice of Treason. It can have no good for its object. Even were it true, a love of country, a regard for every thing that is dear to us and posterity, would induce a reconciliation of clashing interests, by mutual sacrifices and concessions. For, says the venerable father of his country, your National Union is of such immense value to your collective and individual happiness, that even a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned, ought not to be suffered. Let us guard ourselves

against the pernicious tendency of these false opinions.

They have likewise endeavored to convince us, that this or that particular State had engrossed the whole power of Government. Virginia influence and domination has been the theme of invective for a number of years. But they saw, or thought they saw, a speck of Federalism in Virginia, when they immediately turned the whole weight of their declamation upon the poor States of Kentucky and Tennessee. We are told, that eight or nine Representatives from these two States are presiding, like so many little Tyrants, alone over our national destinies. Can any man the least acquainted with human nature, believe this absurd tale? Can we believe as they represent, that the powerful States of Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York or Massachusetts, either of which is alone capable of outvoting the whole of those of the west, are thus brow-beaten and trodden under foot? Do we believe, that the whole Representation of ten or twelve States are at any time so indifferent to the power they possess, and to the consequence, which that power confers, as to surrender it; when their total insignificance would certainly, and their destruction might eventually result from such a surrender? This story argues a want of intellect or a want of honesty. These heart burnings and jealousies, are a dishonor to our national character. They justify too much the calumny of our enemies against a Republican Government. The name of a Roman was but another name, for ardent, heroic patriotism, and thence it became a terror to its enemies. And shall the proud name of an American be less significant or less powerful? Every thing, that can charm the affections and impel the soul to noble deeds of virtue, is combined in the happy institutions of our Country.

Let us repose a just confidence in our Rulers.



It is our duty. Our Country calls upon us in this hour of danger. We must and ought to obey. The die is cast. Our Independence has been again proclaimed. Unless our Government is vigorously supported by the fidelity and patriotism of its Citizens, we must retreat from the contest with incalculable loss and dishonor, leaving the redress of our wrongs to a braver and more indignant posterity. It is not now a time to discuss the propriety of commencing the war—it is begun, and must be ended—We are all deeply and momentarily interested that its termination should be honorable to ourselves, and that the objects, for which so direful an alternative was adopted, should be fully accomplished. Those who talk and act unlike freemen, and call it the liberty of a Citizen, who openly dissuade the people from their public duty, will sooner or later meet their deserts. Let the grovelling Merchant wrap himself up in his own contracted importance, feeling no interest but that of his own, and watching anxiously for an opportunity to rob the scarred veteran of his hard-earned pittance—no tear of gratitude and love shall fall from the eyes of his children to wet the sods upon his grave. Let the sot drown in his bottle all remembrance of his Country and the woes of his Countrymen—but the end of that man shall be infamy and death. Let the traitor attempt with his dagger to pierce the vitals of his Country—but like Arnold and Burr, he shall become a vagabond—his name shall inspire nothing but scorn.

THIS War must not be considered as a mere redress of wrongs, and a vindication of violated rights. There is another point of view, in which it must be contemplated, still more momentous to ourselves. It is the first important war, in which we have been openly engaged, since the formation of our national Constitution. The lovers and advocates of Monarchy, have contended that although

our political system might be found sufficient for all the exigencies of peace, yet they would be found wanting in that energy, which times of tumult and commotion require. They have insisted, that the people had not reflection and reason enough to support their government in such exigencies—that they would be actuated by momentary feelings and interests, not by permanent principles of political expediency. We are now to prove the truth or falsehood of these opinions. However ignorant a few individuals may be, yet considering the American people as one body, no nation possesses a superior fund of real intelligence. Every man is more or less acquainted with political subjects. We have misers and profligate men, who estimate freedom by no other standard, than by the facility of acquiring power or wealth—they would barter away their own rights, and the sacred rights of posterity for a *mess of pottage*. We have traitors, who look to the downfall of our Government, and the consequent degradation of the people, as the only chance for their own preferment. But these characters are to be expected. They often times, tho' unintentionally in themselves, serve a most valuable purpose. They rouse the honest and noble citizen to a more punctual discharge of his duty. Virtue and patriotism receive much of their lustre, and are often indebted for a true estimation of their worth, to their contrast with vice and treachery. Compare WARREN with an ARNOLD—WASHINGTON with BONAPARTE—Do we not, upon this comparison, feel an increased veneration for the noble and disinterested character of the one, while the other excites in us a double degree of contempt and detestation.

SHALL it be said, that within thirty years the American people have lost all relish for those invaluable rights, which our ancestors so highly esteemed, and which have been consecrated with so much blood? Shall future generations say, that we

Were the guilty authors of all their servitude and  
 woes? Shall we relinquish to Tyrants those inesti-  
 mable privileges, which are derived from "Nature  
 and Nature's God," which have been deposited in  
 our hands for mere use and enjoyment, to be after-  
 wards delivered over unimpaired to posterity? No!  
 This atrocious breach of trust shall never be fixed,  
 as an indelible stigma, upon the character of the  
 present generation. Sympathy, Gratitude, Piety  
 and Patriotism forbid it. If neither the fate of the  
 unhappy nations of Europe, nor the examples set  
 us in the Revolution, nor a love of ourselves, nor a  
 concern for the interests of unborn millions, can  
 arouse us to a punctual discharge of our public  
 duties—then we richly deserve the lot of the Gal-  
 ley Slave—the clanking of his chains, and the  
 groans of his hopeless agonies, are fit music for our  
 ears. But we will not doubt. The confidence re-  
 posed in our patriotism, will not be falsified. The  
 young men of the present day, when they return  
 from the chase of their enemies, shall glory, like  
 the young Spartans of antient times, that they have  
 outrivalled the deeds of their fathers. Discord  
 shall reign no longer among honest citizens—it  
 shall be succeeded by a generous and confidential  
 Union. Our little passions and interests shall all  
 be sacrificed upon the altar of our country. Con-  
 cord and patriotism among us shall universally pre-  
 vail. Then the American shall soar above the  
 Roman Eagle, and the Glory of our Country blaze  
 forth like the Sun, to the terror and confusion of  
 her enemies.