



MASON'S
ORATION.



A N
O R A T I O N,

PRONOUNCED BEFORE A RESPECTABLE AUDIENCE

AT BETHEL, (MAINE.)

IN COMMEMORATION OF OUR

National Independence,

JULY 4th, 1809.

BY MOSES MASON, JUNIOR.

Where LIBERTY dwells there is my Country.

FRANKLIN.

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1810.



A N
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FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,

LET us take a retrospective view of these United States, for which our fathers have fought, and have had to encounter, with many a hardship and difficulty, by being engaged with so formidable a power as Great Britain; but through the smiles of divine providence, they gained the victory, and we have obtained **OUR LIBERTY**, and of course have become **FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES**.

“And of all the revolutions, which have astonished the world of mankind, there is no one exceeds the Revolution of America. If we consider the greatness of the cause—the characters exhibited in the contest, the event which followed, the emancipation of Millions of people from the yoke of Tyranny, the prudent, wise, and steady conduct of the American Congress, the martial toils of all our brethren, in a long and glorious conflict, stand unexampled in the histories of mankind.”*

* See FESSENDEN'S Oration.

In taking a view of this grand scene, which is now laid before us, I did not hesitate to engage in a work of such dignified feelings, as the celebration of the birth day of our Liberties, my heart expanding on the wings of benevolence and philanthropy for the good of my country, I almost forgot the want of ability, and the experience of years, which would be necessary, to do justice on such an occasion.—But I flatter myself that a generous people will not censure *that* in me if well intended, though its want of merit, may prevent their being able to applaud it. It is not my respectable audience, the design of me to expatiate on the political disputes, which have arisen under our present form of government; but to take a retrospective view of the virtuous zeal of our valiant heroes, who, for the preservation of their freedom, rolled their garments in blood in the field of battle.

What heroes have bled, what invaluable lives have been offered up to redeem us from slavery? their names will never *die*, their *honors* will never *wither*. Here, we behold a Warren, a Montgomery, and many other valiant heroes: liberty wept over their tombs, and there would have remained inconsolate, had she not seen a succession of warriors and patriots, rising in the same spirit.—Rising in the same spirit, did I say? Yes! there was nothing, that could damp the ardour of Columbia's sons, “for they feared not death, (says Hancock) the pale-faced moon and the

stars which hurried through the sky, can witness that they feared not death." So, therefore, as the courage and efforts of our countrymen, were great, the event was glorious, for Britain acknowledged our Independence, the world wondered, and we became a **NATION !!** The *world wondered*, did I say? Yes! ever since that day, the blood of our countrymen ran through our streets in rivers, and the cursed emissaries of slaughter threatened to lay waste our Country, we may begin to date our importance.

For then the American Congress, (wearied with petitioning for a redress of grievances) pronounced that famous declaration, which has arrested the attention, and commanded the admiration of every nation under heaven. Yes, it was on the memorable fourth of July 1776, thirty three years ago this day, since the American genius assumed a glorious countenance, and Liberty erected her standard in this Country, the people flocked to it in crowds, and swore to live and die with her. Behold! **LIBERTY** is established upon the broad basis of Independence, and offers herself unadorned, and is accepted instead of slavery, in chains of gold. And, when, we contrast our present condition, with that of the former, there is a great difference; "for then taxes were levied, duties collected, and besides what privileges we did enjoy, were liable to be taken away from us by that government from which we revolted."—But now we

have the liberty of choosing such men into office, as will make laws by which we will be willing to be governed, and likewise live under a free exercise of religion, and enjoy the dictates of our own consciences. Fellow-Citizens, whether we consider them so or not, these privileges are very great. And we have the greatest reason to rejoice to think that the Lord God raised up such a man as WASHINGTON, to *redeem his Country* from slavery. It appears that he was destined by heaven to be the saviour of America. Had I the learning of a Celsus, and the eloquence of a Cicero, or a Demosthenes, fain would I form an eulogy on this illustrious character; but I forbear, and leave him here for silence to muse his praise. Let me remark again, I say we have great reason to rejoice, to think in all our dangers the God of heaven was nigh, and turned the machinations of tyrants into a blessing. We ought to rejoice that our lot is fallen in so favorable a spot, that in confirming our independence and sovereignty, we have had an opportunity of becoming a respectable nation. Will not that day wherein our Independence was declared, be ever had in remembrance as long as the continuance of time? Shall it be ever said we shall be subdued by any one of the powerful Belligerents, which do exist? we hope not. But when we behold the convulsions of Europe, when we see desolation, destruction, and all other concomitant evils of war, spreading wide their baneful influence over the

whole earth. Do we not anticipate the approach of that dreaded period, when we shall be involved in that calamitous whirlpool? The feats of the Macidonians become small, when compared to those achieved by the conqueror of modern times; the law of nations become obsolete, and national right is only acknowledged where power is possessed to enforce it. Under such circumstances, it becomes us to be united,—“the unity of government which constitutes you one people, is ever dear to you, it is justly so, for it is a mainpillar in the edifice of your real Independence, your peace at home, your tranquility abroad, and a prop to that LIBERTY which you so highly prize.”

But instead of being converted to this truth, which is quoted from WASHINGTON'S OWN words—I have verily thought, that by the licentiousness of bad citizens, that they will prove the destruction of our government. For is it not evident that there is men in the very bosom of our country, who take advantage of the liberality of our laws, to blaspheme democracy, and thus strike at the very vital part of our Constitution? They take advantage of our laws even to the prejudice and destruction of that instrument, which secures and promotes individual liberty. I say, it appears there are men who are in such a fever to destroy this government, and to sap the fundamental principles of our Constitution, that they are continually crying like the political

horse-leach, give, give. And if by their craft they *should* prove the destruction of this government, we may well in the language of the poet, bid a farewell, a long farewell to all its greanefs :

—————" O mourn Columbia,
When that awful day shall meet you ;
Put off your beautiful ornaments,
Hang up your harps on the willows ;
Gird thyself in sack-cloth,
Sit down in ashes ;
For peace has forsaken your land,
Your glory has departed forever."

I turn now to address myself to the fair daughters of America, whose forms are strikingly tender and delicate, whose gracefulness adds lustre to beauty, we call on you to join with us in the celebration of the birth-day of our liberties, and to mourn with us if these privileges should be taken away, you have great reason to rejoice, to rejoice that you are not condemned to wed a man you hate, or drag out a miserable existence with the same ; " but freedom of choice under the discipline of a virtuous education, constitute the bigger part of your happiness, your bosoms, therefore, will glow with gratitude, and your countenance will bloom with joy, when you consider, you are the fair daughters of America. "

One word to the Militia.

What are those forms which seem to hover over our heads on the present great occasion, and look down on the memorable transactions of this day ? Are they not the venerable Fa-

thers of Massachusetts, who, through innumerable difficulties, crossed the wide Atlantic Ocean, brought with them a broad Charter of liberty, over which they wept when it was arrested from them, and an insidious one placed in its room? With what pleasure do they seem to behold us restored to our pristine purity, "our Governors at the first, our Counsellors at the beginning." Do they not call on us to perpetuate their honor in the state and Liberty in which they planted? Especially, at a time like the present, when all Europe is at arms, and surprising revolutions take place almost every day. Ought we not to be well learned in tactics and discipline to be prepared to meet with the worst.

And if our Country's calamity should ever call us to her relief. Let us abandon all the pleasures of a rural life, and march dauntless to the mouth of the Cannon, and offer up our lives in defence of our Country's rights. It is true, it may look *discouraging* to some of you, to be obliged to encounter with the hardships and difficulties of war; but when we contrast this with the galling chains of slavery, will we not with the greatest rapidity seize our swords, and hazard our lives in the hottest battles?

We hate to wear the galling yoke,
We'll let the tyrants know;
The chains of slavery shall be broke,
Like fetters made of tow.

In one word Fellow-Citizens.—May it never be said that we are robbed of so pre-

eious a jewel as our darling Independence. "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon," lest the sound thereof should grate in our ears, and, the report of the same, plant daggers in our souls. So let us be wise in our deliberations, determined in our exertions, for the preservation of our liberty by making pride, party spirit, contention, and division to be strangers in our land—and if we strive to support our government in all cases, whatever, who knows but the dark cloud which hangs over our political Horizon, will finally blow over, and the sunshine of peace again illumine, our hemisphere, and we cannot forbear to anticipate the approach of that time, when liberty shall be made known, and held sacred in Europe and in the Isles. When the tawny inhabitants of Asia and Africa, shall bow her knee to her most sacred shrine and worship in her temple, "then all mankind shall cause incense to aspire to the God of heaven, from off an altar whose foundations is the whole earth, and whose arch the vault of heaven."