

AN
ORATION

IN

COMMEMORATION OF THE INDEPENDENCE

of the
United States of America
by
James Milmore
of
Stratford, Conn.
Federal America.

DELIVERED IN STRATFORD,

JULY 4th, 1806.

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By JAMES MILMORE, A. M.
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EXETER:

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1806.



ON the fourth of July, inst. being the anniversary of American Independence, the following Oration was delivered, in commemoration of that event, by request of a number of the respected citizens of Stratham. In compliance with pressing solicitations of the hearers it is now submitted to the perusal of an intelligent and candid public.

Stratham, July 8th, 1806.



An Oration.



FATHERS, FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,

THE anniversary of American Independence has once more returned ; and with it have returned heart-cheering recollections, gladsome emotions, fraternal salutations and friendly festivities. Thousands of our fellow countrymen have, like us, convened, to celebrate this auspicious event. I fervently wish that its celebrations may accord with the magnitude of the object, and our own obligations. That the event is highly important and interesting, is a fact that cannot, for a moment, be controverted. It is no less than the nativity of a nation...the birth of the triumphant republic in which we live...the political jubilee of our American Israel.

“ Hail ! thou vast, ennobling blessing,
Giv'n of God to man below ;
Hail to Freedom, Independence,
Boundless, boundless may they flow !
Bless Columbia, new-born nation,
Freedom, Peace, be ever thine.”

Brethren, this day is, assuredly, one of the most eminently memorable in the annals of our country. It is a day which her genuine sons have long delighted to hail and to celebrate, as the birth-day of our public liberty...the birth-day of that public liberty, which was purchased by the blood of an illustrious list of undaunted heroes ; and nurtured by the care of renowned patriots and statesmen.

Men and Brethren, the anniversary that has this day returned, recognizes our national existence, our emancipation, our freedom, our independence, Yes, and it revives the recollection of scenes that are, at once, tender and interesting, vast and astonishing. It bids us remember that on the fourth of July, one thousand, seven hundred and seventy six, the august and patriotic Congress of these United States, gave to the world indubitable proof of their fortitude and magnanimity. On that day, dark and discouraging as it was, that body had the courage to declare American Independence, in defiance of the public danger, and as it were, under the unabating discharge of the enemy's artillery.

The stile of that admired instrument by which this fact is announced, should be familiar to every true hearted American. It is in the hands of thousands of our fellow citizens. To the recollection of every hearer it will, it is presumed, very readily recur. But you will permit me, without any apology to repeat it in this place.

“We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in general Congress assembled, appealing to the supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, Do, in the name, and by the authority of the good people of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be free and independent States: that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connexion between them and Great Britain is and ought to be, totally dissolved. For the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honours.” Thus brethren, that deed was done which dissolved all former compacts, and proclaimed our country free. With such declared reliance on the power of God did Congress act on that never

to-be-forgotten day. I hail the heroes and the statesmen, who, to that mighty deed, could dare affix their country's seal. On the tablet of your hearts, Americans, let their names remain inscribed while memory holds its empire there.

Already this memorable event has been celebrated in ten thousand forms. Fathers have talked of it to their youthful, listening sons. Saints have recognized it in their grateful orisons before the domestic altar. Christian preachers have descanted on it in the public assembly. Historians have recorded its wonders in their instructive pages. Orators have delineated its causes and effects in their polished periods. And soldiers, wounded soldiers, halting on the friendly crutch, or waving a ball-broken arm, have recited in the social circle, the efforts which achieved this glorious end. And is this interesting subject entirely exhausted? No, my brethren, it is not. This theme still lies before us as an extended and productive field. In it some pleasing, precious fruits remain yet to be gathered. I wish, I cordially wish, I could help you in collecting on this occasion some sentimental gleanings.

The return of this auspicious day, which recognizes the confirmed sovereignty and independence of **FEDERATE AMERICA**, has already awakened a variety of joyful emotions. You, my respected hearers, have shared the pleasures of this memorable occasion. In mutual gratulations, you have to day hailed and addressed each other. You will now permit the speaker to give vent to the fulness of his heart, in sincere felicitations of you, and himself and our common country. But, let no individual, for a moment, imagine that such sentimental effusions as these, include the whole duty of this smiling day. To mutual felicitations, let us add patriotic affections. To patriotic affections, let us add God-exalting adorations. So let us consecrate our liveliest gratitude to that Supreme Power, whose



prerogative it is to "plant and to pluck up...to build and to destroy" the nations of the earth.

We are assembled, my friends, in the house of our God, not to fan the fire, or increase the flame of national vanity and national pride, but to meditate our obligations, and familiarise the duties to which we are called. Before the throne of the most high we professedly bow, not to boast of our achievements, or our greatness, but to recognize the hand that has conducted our country to liberty, independence and peace. At the altar of American freedom I stand, at this time, not to cast among you the apple of discord...not to cherish the spirit of party, nor widen the distance between those who are already divided, on questions of state; but to encourage the exercise of a laudable candour between those who differ merely in matters of opinion...to contribute the mite of my feeble endeavours to perpetuate the freedom and independence of my country...to tender to you my aid in setting up *anew*, our American Ebenezer, and in inscribing upon it, in capitals indelible, "HITHERTO HATH THE LORD HELPED US."

It has long been the subject of remark, that "a frequent recurrence to those causes, whose effects terminate in mighty political revolutions, is the best means of perpetuating liberty." Accordingly in the exercise of a laudable spirit of joy, the nations of the earth, have often commemorated those events which have tended to restore, or secure to them, their liberties and their privileges. In a practice like this the speaker believes, he scruples not to say there is, if it is conducted with propriety, a fitness and a beauty. He will therefore take a transient glance at some of the prominent facts which led to a dissolution of the political bands, which had connected our country with the British nation...facts which finally terminated in our national existence and independence.



It is no part of my present design, to explain to you the wrongs of which America complained. This has already been done in various forms, and by the ablest hands. I will only invite you to look back to the commencement of our revolutionary war; to the 19th of April, 1775...that memorable day in which the temple of Janus was opened, and the flood-gates of civil war were lifted up. It was then that the sword of a power was actually drawn against us, to which we had hitherto trusted for protection. It was then that the executioners of British measures, in their way through Lexington to Concord, began the work of shedding American blood. It was then that our aroused citizens, flying to arms, dared to repel force by force. There fell the first martyrs to the cause of our country. There flowed the blood of our fathers and brethren, that first moistened the roots of the tree of American freedom. From the blood-stained fields of Lexington... from the crimsoned plains of Concord, echoed to every corner of our country, the sound of that clarion, which reached the ear, and arrested the attention of every American. To those encrimsoned heights, I throw back, to day, a retrospective eye... I there behold a most stupendous scene...there methinks I see, the millions of my countrymen, clustering around the exanimated men, their fathers, their brothers, their neighbours and fellow citizens, who had recently been immolated on the altar of liberty. There I hear unnumbered multitudes solemnly declaring, before God and the world, "that they will never tamely surrender that liberty which they received from their gallant ancestors, and which their innocent posterity have a right to receive from them." I hear millions of every class, deliberately resolving "that they will employ with unabating firmness and perseverance, all their energies, for the preservation of their natural rights and privileges." Hark the deeply solemn and impressive sound! it is the



voice of my country, pledging her faith at the altar of freedom. It is the blended voice of heroes, patriots and statesmen; of the high and the low, the aged and the young, the rich and the poor mutually tendering their vows, under the impressive formalities of an appeal to heaven. I hear them solemnly swear "that they will defend the unalienable birth-right of freeborn Americans, or perish in the attempt; resolved to die freemen, rather than to live in ignoble subjection and servitude."

Astonishing spectacle! it is an infant nation rising in defence of that freedom which is the birth-right of nature. It is a vast and extended country, uniting for the protection of every thing dear and important; taking up arms, not with ambitious designs, nor to fight for glory or for conquest: but to defend and secure, peace and liberty, safety and life.

Thus, brethren, did our country embalm with her tears and her vows the smoking ashes of immolated fathers and brethren, neighbours and friends, on the plains of Lexington and Concord. I turn now from this impressive scene. I follow with astonished eye, the bands of patriot heroes, who rush undismayed to the field of blood, and ascend undaunted, "war's gore besprinkled car."

I called the men who volunteered their services in the field of blood, bands of patriot heroes; nor will I recall the appellation. But hardly, however, could those intrepid bands be called an army. They were composed, if I may apply to them the representation given by a distinguished general of our own, they were composed of raw lads and undisciplined men, half armed, devoid alike of knowledge and experience in the art of war; ruled without order, and commanded, God knows by whom. Yet this was the force that dared to oppose the career of British legions. These were the patriot bands which had the gallantry and the courage to resist a body of troops inferior to none, either in point of

spirit or discipline; headed by officers of experience, intrepidity and decision.

Here, my brethren, let us pause a moment and contemplate with astonished minds the inequality of the combatants. It is a feeble, undressed infant, rising to resist gigantic strength and prowess. The greatest power in Europe was then armed for our depression, if not for our destruction. Her resources we knew were vast and incalculable. Her legions were instructed and disciplined, and accoutred for the field. Her navy rode mistress of the ocean. Her armies were accustomed to war and to conquest.

On our part, we were very illy prepared for such an arduous and unequal conflict. We had neither the sinews of war, nor the sources of self-defence in our own hands. We were without an army, without a navy, and without arms or military apparatus. We had neither money nor revenue, nor needful resources for war or sustenance. Unconnected with the nations of the earth we were without correspondent, ally or friend. We were detached from every other part of the world. A widely extended ocean rolled between us and every other power. We knew not a single friend in whom we could confide, or who would reach out to us the supporting hand. Thus unfurnished and unprepared, we had little to hope from an arm of flesh. Yet, with these unflattering prospects...in this unpromising state, we had the greatness, the heroism, the magnanimity to resolve that we would repel force by force...that we would live free or die.

But whence, my brethren, arose such bravery; such boldness of enterprise; such grandeur of design and achievement? Did it not spring from the justice of our cause? Did it not spontaneously grow out of our native love of liberty? that love of liberty which we inherit from our fathers, and which is twisted with every fibre of our nature; with every nerve of our heart? Yes, it is conscious integrity

ty that animates the human bosom with an intrepid and manly spirit. It is innocence that inspires the sons of men with genuine courage. It is the power of heaven-born freedom that nerves the arm for deeds of greatness and renown. It is thy presence, O daring liberty! it is thy presence that strengthens the band of union, that swells the coffers of revenue, that conducts the chariot of defensive war, and binds to its victorious wheels the minions of despotism. It is thy presence—but I repress what I was going to say. My conscience and my heart require me to return, and take another view. It was God, my brethren, the guardian God of our ransomed country, who was the author of our astonishing union. Could any thing short of the agency of that God, in whose hand are the hearts of all men, harmonize the views and the resolutions of a people so numerous, so dispersed and diversified; direct them to the same end, and induce them to make a common cause with the more immediate sufferers? Who was it, my brethren, that inclined all ranks of men, with such alacrity to fly to the high places of the field, and pledge their lives in defence of their rights? Who directed our Congress to the choice of a commander in chief, the ILLUSTRIOUS WASHINGTON, whom heaven had signally qualified to fill that place? Who enriched the mind of WASHINGTON, with all those rare accomplishments, in which he shone unrivalled in the cabinet and in the field? Who commanded a noble constellation of heroes to arise and surround their beloved chief, with bosoms beating for the field, resolved to conquer or die? Who led our armies to the field, and covered them in the day of battle? Who taught their arms to war and their fingers to fight? Who presided, over the storm of war, and stood amidst “the pillar and the cloud?” Who conducted our country, by steps unthought of, and through difficulties, seemingly insuperable, to an exalted rank among the nations of

the earth; to glorious independence, liberty and peace? I need not, I am confident, wait your answer to these enquiries. Reason, the Bible, and every American proclaims with one voice, that God hath done it. Yes, these are the works of universal nature's Lord.

“ Who was seen in day of battle,
 In the cloud and pillar stand?
 Who extended for our safety,
 An all gracious, pow'ful hand?
 'Twas JEHOVAH, 'twas JEHOVAH,
 Universal nature's LORD.”

Neither my fathers in years, nor my coevals in life, need now be told what were the scenes which we commemorate to day. Nor need they be told what were the measures which accomplished the American revolution. But our children, perhaps, may ask, like the posterity of Abraham in another case—“What mean ye by this service?” And for their information you will permit me to go into a brief recital.

My children and youthful friends, we who are your fathers and neighbours, have seen your naked and defenceless country invaded in its infancy by powerful armies. During that bloody and destructive war, which heaven permitted to continue so long in America, we have seen vast armaments engaged against us, whose numbers I will not venture to record, employing in their service, thousands of ships of various kinds, and warlike stores beyond calculation. We have seen our principal cities along our extended coast, from Georgia to New-Hampshire, closely besieged; our sea ports blocked up, and our fortresses reduced. We have seen Indian savages infesting our frontiers...aged men and helpless babes, yielding their breath to their relentless rage. We have seen sixteen flourishing towns wantonly laid in ashes, and others partly destroyed... seven colleges demolished or broken up, and num-

bers of houses, set apart for the worship of God, defaced or ruined. We have seen fifteen sieges; thirty three important battles, and bloody skirmishes almost without number. We have seen twelve brave GENERALS, numbers of excellent officers, and multitudes of gallant soldiers, whose amount my heart bleeds to meditate, fall in the high places of the field.

Seven tedious and painful years rolled over our heads, while scenes like these afflicted our eyes. The days which your fathers have seen, dear youth and children, were often dark and distressing; and their souls trembled between hope and despair. They were indeed days of doubtful expectation; many an heart faltered, and many a face gathered paleness. But the God of battle was on our side. He who can cause "one to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight"...who can martial "the stars in their courses, and command them to fight against Sisera," was America's refuge and deliverer. Supported by the arm of omnipotence, your fathers nobly persevered in defiance of every danger and of every fear.

To that Supreme Power, who is called the God of peace, as well as a man of war, be ceaseless praise ascribed; his arm was made bare for our support, protection and salvation. His hand was extended from heaven to earth, to conduct us through the labours of a long and perilous war, to national existence, national independence and national peace. Blessed be our all-gracious guardian, we have seen, after the various fortune of war, we have seen one powerful army, under the command of a Burgoyne and a Reidezel, checked at Bennington, defeated at Still-Water, and taken at Saratoga. We have seen another, which had marched through the Carolinas and Virginia, commanded by a Cornwallis, with the ball of victory at their feet; conquering wherever they came, obliged at last to bow to the victor, and

wear themselves, the captive chains. We have seen the tedious and distressing scenes of war, terminated by a safe and honourable peace. We have seen our liberty secured; our unconditional independence established; our territory enlarged; our expectations gratified; our country blessed with an admired, efficient, national constitution of civil rule, condensing every thing essential to a free government. Yes, and to day we see you, our young friends and children rising up to receive, through our hands, this inestimable gift of heaven. But a little while, and we must bid a long, a last adieu to our beloved country; to our dear bought privileges, and to you. But we bless God, we have no fear of being tortured in that hour, with the thought of having riveted on your necks the galling yoke of slavery. We thank the God of America, that when we quit our pleasant and peaceful houses, for which we have laboured, we shall not leave them to be possessed by the minions of power; but by our own children, the fruit of our own bodies. When we resign our fields, subdued to fruitfulness by the sweat of our own brow, we shall not resign them to clothe, to pamper or enrich the tyrants of the earth; but to you our sons and our daughters, the pledges of our conjugal love, for whom we now are willing to spend our days in labour, and our nights in care. Thus, my dear young people, thus have the perfections of God triumphed in our favour; triumphed as well over our own ill desert, as over the hostile attempts of all our foes.

Here then, respected hearers, here you behold the end to which the reflections of the pulpit are now devoted. They invite, they would constrain you to acknowledge, that the establishment of your country in liberty and independence, is assuredly the work of God. Come then, my fellow citizens, and join with your grateful countrymen; prostrate yourselves before JEHOVAH's footstool, and say, "Not

unto us, not unto us, but to the Lord alone be all the glory given: not to our own wisdom nor skill; not to our own swords nor bows be this work ascribed: to the unmerited goodness of the Lord our God be ceaseless praise addressed. He girded his sword upon his thigh...He rode from conquering to conquer...The Lord hath blessed our people...It was the work of his own power...The finger of God hath done it."

In this dutiful manner let us religiously adore the governing providence of God. Thus let us gratefully ascribe to him all the honour of those great events which swell our bosoms with joy, and which we are engaged to celebrate to day. Thus let all the praises of America's salvation, independence, freedom and peace, crown the head of her GUARDIAN GOD, through this, and every age to come.

Citizens, Fathers and Brethren, the station you occupy is all-interesting: the present period is highly important to you, and to posterity. The era is now revolving, which will have the most happy, or adverse effect upon succeeding generations. May God grant that from it, a bright and illustrious ray may be reflected on millions that are yet unborn!!

Americans, you now enjoy a day of political probation. The outstretched arm of omnipotence has rescued you from foreign dominion. The unmerited goodness of indulgent heaven, has admitted you to the honour of an independent existence. The all-gracious hand of divine providence, has raised you to a high point of elevation, and given you a distinguished station in the list of nations. You are permitted to day to exclaim, "The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage. Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like to thee, O people, saved by the Lord!"

It is not pride, my brethren, it is a just acknowledgment...it is a dutiful tribute...it is pious

gratitude to say that America enjoys as completely, the blessings of freedom, as any nation on earth. But is it impossible to forfeit...is it impossible to loose the rights and the privileges we now enjoy? Stands our mountain so strong that it can never be moved? Far otherwise. Should America follow the course of other republics, which heaven forbid: Should iniquity abound and impiety prevail: Should we ungratefully forget God, and trifle with his religion: Should we neglect the day, or forsake the ordinances of the Lord, and shut family worship out of our houses: Should churches be unmindful of their covenant with God, or their members be inattentive to their mutual stipulations to walk together in love, and to watch over each other for good: Should error and delusion deluge the land: Should wild superstition or infidel philosophy be caressed and honoured, while the most precious truths of God lie unfriended and bleeding in the streets: Should disunion and jealousy, should party spirit and party rage prevail, our national institutions will...they must crumble to atoms. But God forbid...It must not be. That deprecated day I hope will never come. The Regent of the skies will still be America's Guardian God. Never, I trust, never will the liberties of my country be cast out to be trodden under the feet of licentious men, or seized by the hand of a bold usurper. But I must have done. My heart, however, forbids me to close the present exercise without bowing the knee of supplication before the throne of grace.

My prayer to the God and Father of America is, that he would keep our ransomed country under the shadow of his own most glorious throne.... that he would excite us to a faithful and happy improvement of the day and means of grace...that he would make us a humble, penitent and obedient people; allure and draw us to a cordial acceptance of the gospel of God, and to a tender reliance

on the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus may a secure foundation be laid for a lasting enjoyment of temporal prosperity! Thus may our temporal prosperity be crowned with eternal salvation! Most fervently will I address my supplication to the God of love that he would strengthen the hands of union, and draw the cords of amity more closely than ever, around these favoured States! Thus may the peace of America be secured; its liberty perpetuated, and its independence maintained as long as the sun and the moon shall endure. And from ten thousand tongues may praises ardent and unceasing be addressed to God the Saviour of our country.

“High exalted, firmly seated,
Independent, sov'reign, free,
May Columbia's grateful millions
Glory, glory give to thee.
Might, dominion, praises, blessing,
All the glory, Lord, be thine.

Ev'ry nation, all the kingdoms,
Bless! Oh bless, ETERNAL SIRE!
Men adoring, angels hymning,
Sweep as one the golden lyre.
Rapture feeling, transport shouting,
Hark! they cry, Amen, Amen.”

And let all the people say, Amen.