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ORATION

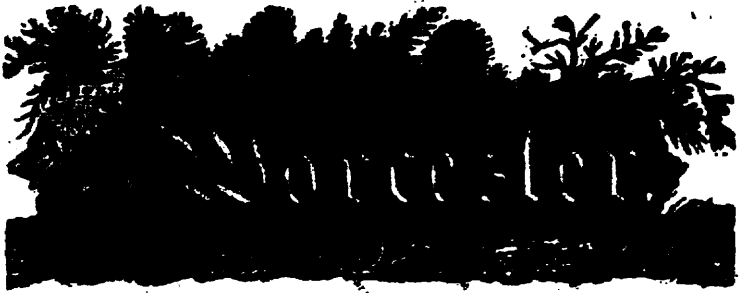
ON THE

ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE

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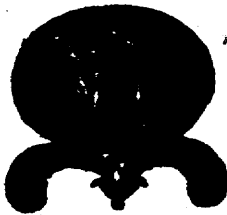
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

PRONOUNCED AT



MONDAY, JULY 5, 1802,

BY ZEPHANIAH SWIFT MOORE, A. M.



WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS,
FROM THE PRESS OF ISAIAH THOMAS, JUNR.
JULY—1802.



AN

O R A T I O N .



AMONG the most interesting events, recorded in the history of the world, is that, which gave rise to this day's festival. The Declaration of the Independence of the United States of America, on the **FOURTH** of **JULY**, 1776, involved in its consequences the happiness of millions, will extend its influence to the latest ages, and ought to be had in everlasting remembrance. We then emerged from our colonial and dependent existence, and took a rank among the Independent nations of the world. To maintain the rank, we had taken, was deemed impossible by the nations of Europe; and they with confidence asserted, we were preparing for an exemplary punishment. That they should not realize what they so confidently expected, wisdom, fortitude, and union were necessary, and the protection of Him, who is the **GOD** of armies.

COMPARED with our enemies, we were few in number. We possessed little property, except the soil and its appendages, and were thinly scattered over an extensive country. We were destitute of an army, and a navy; were without any bond of general union; and without any coercive method to raise money, or levy troops.

THE nation, with whom we had to contend, was opulent, numerous, powerful, and warlike. They were furnished with all the apparatus of war, both by sea and land; and, if they found it necessary, could add to their strength by forming alliances. The disparity was, indeed, great. It was seen, it was known; it was felt by all.—We look back, feel a kind of astonishment, and are almost ready to say, that the courage and intrepidity of the United States were rashness and frenzy.

BUT the cause was important. It was the cause of justice and rational liberty against the unjust encroachments of arbitrary power. A consciousness of this animated every heart. We were encouraged by able patriots; we raised armies without compulsion, and supported them almost without means. From various sources we procured arms and all the furniture of war, and were soon able to meet the veteran troops of Great Britain on equal ground. In many instances we were successful; in disastrous seasons we retained our courage; and, putting ourselves under the protection of Him, who made the stripling David victorious over the brazen shielded

Goliath, we captured whole armies of invaders, reduced our enemies to the necessity of withdrawing their forces and acknowledging our Independence, and negotiated and established a peace on terms equal to our wishes, and superior to our hopes.

THE most critical period of our national existence had now arrived. Without law and without government, every man did that, which was right in his own eyes. Our firmest patriots trembled for our safety. But anarchy, that many headed monster, under whose ravages we must soon have been wasted and destroyed, for a moment, kept without his chains.

PUBLIC opinion was not contaminated by the poisonous draughts of foreign influence. Modern sentiments of liberty and equality, which are designed to inflame the corrupt and dissocial passions of the human heart, to exhibit the restraints of social order, law, and religion, as unjust and tyrannical, and to render men hostile to every thing which opposes their inclinations, were then unknown.

THE revolutionary war had not its origin in the blinding influence of corrupt, insidious, and designing men. It was not excited by the lawless and ambitious desire of rendering America mistress of the world. It does not name for its leaders a DANTON, a MARAT, or a ROBERSPIERE, — but a WASHINGTON, an ADAMS, and other worthies, whose patriotism was pure, and whose only object was their country's good. The American revolution owed its life and progress to a just sense

in the Americans of their civil rights, of what was due to themselves and posterity, and to a virtuous and patriotic determination to resist the first encroachments of lawless power.”

So soon, therefore, as the war was closed, and an honorable peace obtained, the great object of the states, individually and collectively, was to form and adopt constitutions of government, which should preserve to the citizens the free enjoyment of their natural rights, under the protection of equal laws, and impartial justice. Simplicity of manners, habits of industry and economy, together with increasing means of information and moral instruction, afforded a flattering prospect, that government and the blessings of rational liberty would be permanent.

WHEN the government of the United States was organized, and commenced its operation, force and elasticity were given to all its motions by the great and dignified characters, who presided, and to whom its administration was entrusted. We saw with pleasing astonishment the revival of confidence, credit and commerce. The merchant, farmer and mechanic rejoiced under an impressive sense of the vivifying effects of the wise arrangements, which were made.

UNDER the Presidency of WASHINGTON and ADAMS, our rulers, without the useful aid and instruction of precedent and experience, exploring a new and untried path, in which it would require more wisdom and foresight, than fall to the lot of man, to commit no errors, established peace, and

formed advantageous treaties with the nations of Europe, and with the tribes, who inhabit the western wilderness. They preserved our neutrality in midst of the conflicts of the European powers, and their artful, and even violent attempts to involve us in their contentions. They reduced our deranged finances to a regular system, and raised a revenue, which, though little felt by the people, has been sufficient for the support of government, has answered many unforeseen demands, and effected a considerable reduction of the public debt. To the same wise and judicious system may we attribute the existence of our navy, which has repelled many wanton encroachments upon our neutral rights, and been the principal means of our present commercial prosperity.

WITH great propriety did President JEFFERSON observe, in his Inaugural Speech, that our national Government, at the close of the late administration, was “in the full tide of successful experiment.”

SINCE that period, it is acknowledged by all, a new order of things has been introduced, and many deviations from the prosperous path of the former administration. To determine with accuracy the ultimate effect of these upon our national happiness, time and experience are necessary. While we wait the decision of these, we ought not to forget, that confidence is one of the principal nerves of republicanism, and that circumspection ought never to be changed into jealousy.

Our progress, since the revolution, in population, in wealth, and, in the useful arts, has never been equalled by any nation, of which we have an account in the records of time. In tracing this progress, and the causes, which have had influence in raising us to a high state of prosperity, and a dignified rank among the nations of the earth, there is a kind of pleasure, which is more easily felt than described. We cannot but devoutly wish the progress may continue, and that future generations may not point back to us, as another example of those, who have in vain attempted to perpetuate a popular government.

In tracing the rise, progress, and consequences of the American revolution, we cannot but admit, that our freedom from political corruption and the purity of public opinion, have had commanding influence. In the revolutions in Europe, and in the rise and decline of empires, the invariable influence of public opinion is clearly seen, and its intimate connexion with national happiness, or misery, is strikingly exhibited.

For a nation to secure and perpetuate their prosperity and happiness, they must be in favor of those means, which are connected with prosperity; and in order for this, the public mind must be uncontaminated.—For a moment, therefore, let us turn our attention to the influence of public opinion, and the importance of its being rightly formed.

In the formation of laws and constitutions of

civil government, public opinion is the capital director. To conform these to the humors, habits, and opinions of a people, is deemed an important part of legislative wisdom. Legislators ever have been and ever will be influenced by the public mind. For a legislative body to act in opposition to that, is an Herculean task, which has seldom been attempted, and, when attempted in elective governments, has never been followed with success. Men in their legislative capacity will strongly incline to omit those virtues, which are disagreeable, and to spare those vices, which are agreeable to those for whom they legislate. In proportion, therefore, as laws and systems of government affect the happiness of a people, so does public opinion. From this they receive their complexion.

So powerful is the influence of public opinion, that it will direct the conduct of a community against its own laws. Hence, in almost every country, we find statutes which are obsolete, and the breach of which cannot be punished. Hence, also it is, that statutes, which operate against public opinion, have very little effect. We may instance in the statute against duelling, which has no effect in places, where the public voice is against its execution upon offenders. As the administration, therefore, of the government of a people, has influence upon their prosperity, in the same proportion is their prosperity affected by public opinion.

THE opinions of a community must be revolu-

tionized, before a revolution can take place in the form or administration of their government. The ancient monarchy of France could not be overthrown, till public opinion was in favor of its destruction. The Swiss Cantons must be revolutionized in opinion, before a change could take place in their government, and political state. The same is true of Geneva. The Declaration of our Independence was an expression of the public will. Without that, it could not have been asserted, nor supported.

IN the various stages of the Roman Republic, not only the form and administration of government, but those to whom the management of the Republic was entrusted, were varied and changed, according to the variations and changes in public opinion. The same is true of all the popular governments, which have ever existed. In such governments, where the people are the source of honor and authority, and the election of rulers frequent, a change of the officers of government is effected by a change of the public mind. From a corruption of that, the virtuous, patriotic, and faithful may be neglected, and the affairs of state entrusted to the corrupt, the selfish, and the unfaithful. The noisy demagogue may triumph over the man of eminent talents and unfulfilled patriotism. The wickedly ambitious may be raised to the chair of state, while those who have devoted their time and talents to the service of their country, are rejected and loaded with calumny. Hence, as the

public mind is pure or corrupt, so will be the character of those, who are chosen to places of honor and authority. Do the character and conduct of rulers hold an intimate relation to the welfare of a community? Public opinion must, then, be important.

THE actions of nations, as well as of individuals, are more frequently determined by their character, than by their interest. Their conduct takes its complexion more from their acquired habits, principles, and opinions, than from a deliberate regard for the public good. It is with the great body of a people in a community, as with individuals. On great and important occasions only, do they take an extended survey of the whole course of their conduct, and admit the dictates of reason to impress a new bias upon their movements. As the prevailing habits and opinions of a people are, so will their conduct be directed, either for, or against their interest and prosperity.

THESE observations are verified by the known principles of human nature, and the general history of the world. Opinions have directed the conduct of communities. Under their influence they have pursued those means, which have raised them to dignity and happiness ; or those, which have sunk them in misery and ruin.

PUBLIC opinion being thus powerful, and its influence so great upon the condition and happiness of a people, whatever has influence in its formation, must be considered as highly important. To guard

against its corruption, and to use every effort for its purity, is the part of a faithful citizen.

To be free from political impurity, and friendly to the means of perpetuating our prosperity, it is necessary that we be virtuous. Virtue is the life and support of a free government ; for none, but a virtuous people, can long be governed by persuasion.

IF we look back to the ancient republics, we find that their years of prosperity continued no longer, than they retained their virtues. While they retained these, they were free from political feuds, and public opinion was properly formed and directed. With their vices they began their decline, and hastened to their exit.

THERE was a period, when the Athenians were active, brave, and polished in their manners ; when their increase in numbers and wealth was rapid ; when they were without a rival in their knowledge and improvements in the arts and sciences ; free from broils and contentions, and in a state flourishing and highly prosperous. This period was while they were virtuous. Their customs, manners, and opinions became corrupt. They ceased to be in favor of the means, connected with their prosperity. They were disturbed and broken by factions. They were enfeebled and enslaved, reduced to the lowest stage of savage stupidity and ignorance, and became an easy prey to their enemies. The Romans, after they had subdued the Greeks, and all other nations within the reach of

their arms, subdued and enslaved themselves by their vices and political corruptions. These subverted the foundation of their civil liberties and freedom, prepared them for the rod of arbitrary power, and involved them in ruin.

VICE is to the body politic, what a gangrene is to the natural body. This destroys the cords and ligatures, which unite the parts, and strengthen the members to perform their office ; and brings on an extinction of life and motion. That destroys the numerous moral ties and connexions, which, like veins and nerves, give strength and freedom to the body politic, and, by dissolving these, brings on great and fatal convulsions, and hastens to dissolution.

VIRTUE, then, is necessary to the existence and preservation of a republican government, and the perpetuity of public happiness. The real importance of virtue to the welfare of society consists in this, that it is an uniform direction of the public will to that which is good. When a people are virtuous, their disposition and opinions, the source of their conduct, being steadily directed to that which is good and right, their conduct must, of course, be right and good. Virtue of necessity aims at the public good ; invariably seeks the common welfare ; and gives no pain, where it is not necessary for the promotion of that welfare. Wherever, and how long soever it exists, the happiness, of which it is the parent, will also exist. Under its salutary influence public opinion will be uncontaminated,

and the body politic retain a state of health and vigor. The public mind was never corrupted on the soil of virtue. On that soil grows nothing, which is impure.

How, then, is the public mind to be formed to virtue? How is the public voice to be influenced to speak in its favor? Is it to be done by disseminating the principles, and pursuing the practices of philosophical illumination? Is it to be done by teaching, “that death is an eternal sleep? that reason dethrones both the kings of earth, and the kings of heaven? that man, when free, wants no other divinity than himself? that every republic, but a republic of atheists, is a chimera? that the end sanctifies the means? that moral obligation is a dream? religion a farce? and the founder of christianity the spurious offspring of pollution? Is it to be done by sending abroad the fairer part of creation in the attire of a female Greek? by making marriage the mockery of a register’s office? and by enrolling your sons as conscripts for plunder and butchery?” Are a people to be made virtuous, by teaching them to contemn every thing that is virtuous, and to abhor every thing that can make them virtuous?—No, fellow citizens, virtue never was promoted by these means. It never was the offspring of these principles. They engender corruption. They enkindle a flame, not to be extinguished. Their spread is devastation and ruin. Their influence is death to every republican virtue.

As if designing to warn us against these princi-

ples, and to persuade us to be friendly to the means of virtue, that great and excellent man, President WASHINGTON, in the language and character of a father, observed, "of all the dispositions and habits, which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect, and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connexions with public and private felicity. Let it be simply asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if a sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education, on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect, that national morality can prevail, in exclusion of religious principle."

"It is substantially true, that virtue, or morality, is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule, indeed, extends, with more or less force, to every species of free government. Who, that is a sincere friend to it, can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?"

In opposition to these sentiments of our political

father, much is said by utopian projectors in favor of knowledge, as what, if universally disseminated, will promote the purity of public opinion, and ensure national prosperity. Great expectations have been raised, that an end will be put to wars, and universal good will pervade the earth, in consequence of philosophical illumination, and certain systems of education, and modes of government. But these speculations proceed upon false data. They suppose, that the cause of political corruption, and of the evils that exist in society, is the ignorance, and not the depravity of man.

BUT we ask, Was ignorance the cause of the decline and downfall of the ancient republics? Was it ignorance, that rendered the Romans an easy prey to the Goths and Vandals? Was ignorance the cause of the cruelties of Nero, or the barbarities of Roberspiere? Is that the cause of contentions in common life? The source of discord in families, neighborhoods, and societies? Have the bloody scenes, acted in France, been the production of ignorance? If not, let us treat with merited contempt the visionary theories of the GODWINS of the present day, and cherish a respect for the religion of heaven.

IN the formation of the public mind, much is done by education. Impressions, made in early life, are not easily erased; and habits of thinking and acting, formed in youth, are seldom laid aside. By education the tender youth may be fitted for treason, stratagem, and death; or they may be trained up

for order, peace, and happiness. Much depends on the systems of education, which are adopted, and carried into practice. If these be right, they will be directed not only to the improvement of the intellectual, but of the moral powers, and to the formation of a virtuous character. Virtue will be exhibited in all its charms; vice in all its deformity. The social affections will be strengthened, and that tenderness, humanity, and benevolence taught and enforced, which cement mankind together, and without which the whole fabric of social institutions would be dissolved.

AWARE of the influence of education in forming the public mind, the disorganizers of the present day, and such there are, and ever will be in every popular government, whose love of licentiousness and hatred of law and justice are perpetual, in their endeavors to corrupt the minds of the young, have manifested a zeal, which would highly become a better cause. Instead of imbuing the mind with right tastes, affections, and habits, which is the great effort of practical wisdom, they have used every exertion to infuse an everlasting hatred to the laws of social order and virtue. Fatal, indeed, must be the effect of such exertions, if they be not counteracted. A more direct method to destroy the sacred and civil institutions of our country, cannot be named, than that of infusing into the minds of the young the principles of disorder, and training them up for anarchists.

IN Egypt, Persia, and Rome, when they were most

famous and prosperous, the education of youth occupied a large portion of the time and attention of their legislators and magistrates, as well as of parents and teachers. Their efforts were diligent and successful, and worthy of imitation. “The children of the Persians, during the period of their national glory, were taught virtue, as those of other nations were taught letters.”

So great is the influence of education, that it demands the attention of every citizen, of every friend to our national prosperity. It may be made a source of our corruption and final dissolution, or a means of the purity and perpetuation of our republic.

ANOTHER cause, which operates with great force in forming the public mind, is the information communicated from the press, through the medium of newspapers and pamphlets.—In this country, almost every man considers himself a politician, and a judge of the affairs of state ; and the political sentiments of a large proportion of the community, are derived from the information and essays in the weekly papers. Hence, these papers are of the utmost consequence to the public, and ought ever to be vehicles of truth. The public good ought ever to be their object ; and that never can, for a moment, be promoted by falsehood, calumny, or deceit.

THE editors of papers must view themselves in a high sense accountable to their country, as the formation of public opinion, in no small degree, depends upon them. In their power is it, to do much

in corrupting, and much in promoting the purity of the public mind. They cannot answer it to their own consciences, nor at the bar of their country, if they become the dupes of a party, the tools of the wickedly ambitious, the contemners of virtue, or the calumniators of the wise and patriotic.

A *free* press is one of the greatest blessings of our independence, and one, which we ought highly to prize. But a *licentious* press is a sink of iniquity, a poisonous fountain, whose streams are more to be dreaded, than the ravages of war, or the destruction of the pestilence. It is to be regretted, that any of the presses in this country, should ever be prostituted to the vile purposes of strengthening foreign influence, of corrupting public opinion by weakening the ties of religion and morality, and of calumniating those, who have devoted their lives to the service of their country, and to whose wise and faithful exertions we are, in a very high degree, indebted for our present state of prosperity. While the encouragement given to the publications of such presses, argues that the opinions of many are already corrupted, it tends to increase the corruption with great rapidity. If the streams of truth and patriotism flow from the press, they will have a most salutary effect, in cleansing from political impurity, and promoting the health of the body politic.

So great is the influence of the information communicated from the press, in the formation of public opinion, that it ought not, it cannot be viewed

with indifference by any, who are friendly to public happiness.—It is ardently to be wished, that undiguised truth might ever shine in the columns of the weekly gazettes ; and that candor, honesty, and patriotism might be the steady guide of those pens, which are employed in political discussion.

ANOTHER source of the corruption of public opinion is to be looked for in the exertions of those, who are under the influence of restless, unworthy, aspiring ambition.—In every country there are those, who wish to rise to places of honor and authority, to which, from their merit, they can have no claim. Under a popular government, like ours, the number of such is likely to be great. While steady virtue reigns, and the public mind is pure, they have no prospect of obtaining their object. Hence, they do not hesitate to use their influence, and all the arts of which they are capable, to contaminate the public mind, that they may rise on the tide of corruption to places of honor and power. Men of this class are apt to proclaim their own patriotism, and to say with a rebellious son of old, “ O that I were made judge in the land, that every man, which hath any suit or cause, might come unto me, and I would do him justice.”

THE arts and intrigues of such men, were among the principal causes of political corruption in the ancient popular governments ; and the principal means of hastening their decline and final ruin. They were the deceivers of the people ; the leaders of faction ; the destroyers of their country.

So long as the laws, by which the moral world is governed, remain as they now are, the character and example of rulers will have influence in forming the public mind. The opinions and conduct of rulers extend their influence through intermediate steps to the lowest class of citizens. The licentious conduct of Charles II, of England, in a very few years, corrupted almost every class of people. It gave a fatal blow to their morals, enfeebled their minds, checked their spirit of enterprise, and made their progress in corruption exceeding rapid. To his we might add the example of many others.

ON the other hand, we adduce the character and example of an ALFRED and a WASHINGTON, as having had a most salutary influence upon the opinions and morals of their respective nations. The example of such rulers checks the progress of political impurity, and tends to form the public mind to that which is right. Before such characters licentiousness retires, and vice dares not rear her brazen front.

SUCH being the influence of the character and example of those, who are in places of honor and authority, it must be highly important, that they be such, as tend to the purity, and not to the corruption of public opinion.

As those, therefore, who justly appreciate National Independence, and who wish to transmit to future generations civil and sacred institutions, the most valuable, let us be vigilant against every source of impurity, and every thing, that tends to vitiate. The

necessity of this does, and will increase with our numbers and wealth. Let us trace, and retrace the means of perpetuating our national prosperity ; and pursue them with the order of freemen, and with that zeal, which true patriotism never fails to inspire. Let us use every effort to promote the purity of public opinion. The motives to this are infinite. On this depend the preservation of our freedom, and those constitutions of government, of which we boast. Upon this depend the condition of unborn millions, and the future glory of our country.

IN looking over the historical map of the world, we see empire, for many centuries, has been travelling from the east toward the west. Nations have successively risen to their height of grandeur and prosperity ; and in succession have they hastened to their dissolution. In their turns they have boasted of their indissolubility, and fondly dreamed that they lived on the confines of a golden age. Arms and wealth, national pride, a high sense of honor, and deep policy, have been pursued by the magistrate and politician, and esteemed the sure means of perpetuating national existence and happiness. The history of the world evidences, that none of these have been sufficient to give the public mind its proper direction, and to obtain the end in view.

THE fathers of America chose a different path, in which to seek the desired object. The cultivation of science, the dissemination of religious knowledge, and the practice of virtue, were by them pursued,

