

ORATION,

DELIVERED BY APPOINTMENT,

BEFORE

*Fammany Society of Colambian Order, Hibernian Provident Society, Columbian Society
Union Society of Shipwrights and Caulkers, Tailors', House Carpenters', and Masons'
Benevolent Societies.*

UNITED TO CELEBRATE THE

41st Anniversary of American Independence.

BY

M. M. NOAH.

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New-York, July 11th, 1817.

SIR,

At a meeting of the general committee of arrangements for celebrating the 4th of July last, the Subscribers were appointed to convey to you the thanks of the committee, on behalf of their respective societies, for the eloquent and appropriate Oration delivered by you on that day, and to request a copy of the same for publication. In complying with those instructions, we beg leave to assure you, that we feel happy in performing a duty so congenial with our individual feelings,

We remain, with the greatest respect, &c.

JOHN P. HAFF,
DAVID BRYSON,
I. S. MARTIN,
I. DICKY,
WM. ROBINSON,
DAVID HOPE,
JOHN BUSSING.

M. M. NOAH, Esq.

AN ORATION, &c.



Friends and Fellow Citizens—

WE assemble this day to commemorate the 41st year of our Independence ; to exchange congratulations on this memorable occasion ; to rehearse the events of our Revolutionary War, and to return our grateful acknowledgments to divine Providence for having protected us in our rights, pre-eminences and privileges. Such are the blessings which we now enjoy—such is the exalted character to which our Country has attained, that it becomes a solemn duty, on this day, to look back on those scenes which represented our great struggle for emancipation ; to call to mind the privations and sufferings, the dangers and the constancy of our Revolutionary Fathers ; to point out to the rising generation the perplexing difficulties which they encountered for our sakes, and to awaken and keep alive that spirit of patriotism which is to protect the heritage achieved by their valour and perseverance. Such are our duties—such the pleasing theme of grateful hearts. We enjoy, at this day, more national happiness and individual prosperity than falls to the lot of any people on the face of the globe. A country the most extensive, embracing all the varieties of climate and fertility of soil ; a

rapidly increasing population, an honorable and just government, a moral and enlightened people, wealth, power, and liberty.

We owe all these blessings to Providence and to our Revolutionary Fathers. Let us gratefully acknowledge our obligations to the living, and rehearse the deeds of the noble dead; let us unite in a solemn compact to preserve, unimpaired, the freedom which they have handed down to us; let us prove ourselves the worthy descendants of a race of heroes, by a never ceasing watchfulness over the rights, the interest and prosperity of our country.

It is on this day, Fellow-citizens, when the asperity of party feelings is hushed; when the great American family unite to celebrate their joyful independence; when the song and the shout of liberty re-echo through our fertile valleys, that we feel, most sensibly, the happiness of being a free and independent people; it is at this moment, when all is sunshine around us, that we turn back to those gloomy periods when our ancestors, groaning under the oppressions of a powerful foe, resolved to break the chains which bound them to their oppressors, and to sacrifice their lives and property to emancipate their country from tyranny and slavery. We have heard of revolutions produced for individual aggrandisement, of struggles; not for freedom, but for power; not for

liberty, but for wealth. Our Revolution partook of a more noble character : we were free long before our independence was acquired, because a moral and honorable people knew how to appreciate the value of rational liberty. It was under the most perplexing difficulties, and surrounded by the darkest prospects, that the sages of our Revolution first assembled to vindicate the rights of their country, and to defend their children, their homes, and their firesides. They had to contend against fearful odds ; against a powerful, well-organized, well-disciplined people ; a government, rich, intolerant, and a foe to liberty. Yet they did *not* shrink from the contest.

They were poor, without resources, weak in numbers, unused to the horrors of war, or the privations of a soldier, yet they assembled manfully in defence of their liberties. They knew well the dangers which they had to encounter. If they succeeded, they would give freedom to millions yet unborn, and descend to the grave, surrounded by a halo of glory ; if they failed, they were prepared to encounter persecution, privation or death, the inevitable consequences of failure. They did not weigh the evils ; they saw only the blessings in perspective which their valour was to achieve ; they disdained to shrink from the contest ; they were united, decisive and vigilant, and knew well, that "he, who dares greatly, does

greatly." Thus prepared, the kindred spirits assembled, and solemnly declared to the world the causes which impelled them to appeal to arms; they recapitulated their grievance, and in the mild accents of truth, they told a piteous tale of numberless acts of oppression under which they had long and patiently suffered. The gordian knot was to be cut, and a blow was soon struck, which aroused the nation, and awakened feelings of inextinguishable patriotism. The battle of Lexington, where the first blood was shed in the cause of freedom, cemented the confederacy by the strongest ties; and the clarion of war brought into the field the hardy yeoman, who left his peaceful cottage to join the ranks of his countrymen in arms. Soon were our shores invaded by the host of Britain and hired mercenaries, and to these were shortly added the savage of the wilderness, whose repast is blood, and whose mercy is death. On the one side was a powerful and well-equipped army, commanded by the most distinguished generals, and aided by a strong and effective fleet; on the other, a force composed of raw militia, poorly armed, imperfectly organized, and deficient in almost every thing that constituted the elements of war. Yet, under such manifest disadvantages did our revolutionary struggle commence; under such auspices was it conducted. Nothing but the firmness of our political father; nothing but the

constancy of a brave people ; nothing but the rectitude of an honorable cause, carried us through triumphant and victorious--gave liberty to our country, and an illustrious proof to the world, that Providence never deserts those who fight for freedom and personal rights. This struggle for emancipation was long and arduous. The enemy had all the comforts and luxuries of life ; our poor soldiers wrestled with hunger and cold. They possessed our large cities--their tables groaned with plenty, and the smoke from their camp kettles gave token of a well-furnished and provided army ; our men fought under severe hardships—they ascended the snow-capped mountains, and had to contend with the wolves of the forest, and the more civilized, yet equally ferocious animals in the shape of men. In rags and tatters, their track was traced by their blood ; sleeping in swamps, exposed to the chilling blasts of winter, and the horrors of famine, they presented a noble picture of want and energy, misery and perseverance. Their limbs were numbed, and their bones racked with pains, but the fire of patriotism burned bright in their hearts ; it warmed them to deeds of heroism, never exceeded in the annals of the world ; they struggled and conquered—they suffered, but were victorious. We live to enjoy the fruits of this immortal victory,—and never let us forget the gratitude we owe to the noble spirits

who died in this contest, nor neglect the war-worn soldier, or the Patriot of the Revolution. We have but few left---let us cherish them in their declining years, and smooth their passage to the grave by the liberality and confidence of a free and generous people.

After our independence was achieved, and our enemy acknowledged that we had bravely earned it, we found ourselves possessed of liberty, an extensive country, and growing population, but without an established form of government on which reliance could be permanently fixed. Great sacrifices had been made in the contest for freedom, but the work was *not* completed. War had ceased, and the eyes of the world were fixed upon us, to ascertain distinctly by our measures in council, whether we were deserving the liberty we had earned. It was then that the pure principles of patriotism acquired a stability and character which has never yet deserted us. The sages of our Revolution assembled to establish, on principles of equality and justice, a form of government and civil institutions suited to the character and condition of the people. During the war, the conflict had been maintained by the constancy of the people, whose union was supported by the common ties of interest, sufferings and sympathy. The peace found us with a heavy national debt, and we had local jealousies to quiet, and personal

views to remove. The convention assembled, and after mature deliberation, gave us the Constitution, under which we now live, by which we ever hope to be governed; the Magna Charta of our liberties, and the admirable instrument of wisdom and patriotism. It was on the adoption of this Constitution by the different states, and the tranquil operation of the laws passed under its auspices, that the civilized world acquired confidence in the duration of our liberties. They had seen us during the war, stained by the appellation, and suffering under the punishment of rebels; they had witnessed a contest, maintained on our part with perseverance, but with humanity; we had committed no excesses; we murdered no prisoners; we wronged no person; defeat had not appalled us; victory had not corrupted us; it was a well-grounded hope, that a people who could thus acquire independence would be sufficiently enlightened to govern themselves with respectability and success. The adoption of our Constitution confirmed this favorable sentiment. This instrument, on which the labor of the experienced patriot has been so well applied, is a compendium of every thing free, great, and glorious; it secures to us all the essential rights of freemen. Freedom of speech and of the press; freedom of conscience and of election; protection of person and property; a representative government, and a trial by

jury : here, at once, we have all the attributes of liberty, secured to us and our posterity, inviolate and for ever.

In forming this Constitution, we surveyed the world, to glean the harvest of civil institutions; we have improved upon their excellencies, and rejected their defects. Where, on earth, is there a constitution like ours? What additional advantages are left to ask for? Freedom of speech and the press, secures a faithful appeal to the people against any encroachment on our rights; freedom of election gives to the people the power of designating the citizens who are to administer the laws, and makes *all* power emanate from the people alone. Trial by jury, secures to the Country an impartial administration of justice, and freedom of conscience secures to man the great temporal privilege of worshipping the Almighty according to the dictates of his own conscience. Such are the blessings which an inestimable Constitution guarantees to us; they cannot be too highly prized, for they are without parallel on earth. Be it our task, Fellow-citizens, to guard it pure and inviolate; to construe it according to its letter and spirit, and transmit it to posterity with the same integrity as it has been handed to us.

The adoption of our Constitution was succeeded by a train of peculiar advantages. Foreign powers entered into treaties with us, founded on a

reciprocity of interest, poured into our Country a stream of treasure, and enriched our people by the purchase of our agricultural products. Confidence was created, and was every where apparent; the load of our national debt became gradually lighter; the states encouraged arts and sciences, and established seminaries of learning; emigration brought to our shores the enterprising of every clime; our wilderness began to soften under the hand of the cultivator, and our country acquired strength, and was rapidly advancing to the height of power and consequence. It was at this period, that the events of Europe first began to extend their influence to our shores. Separated by a world of waters, we took no interest in the disputes of foreign powers, or contests for dominion among monarchs; it was our wish to remain neutral; it was our honest determination to continue so. The jaundiced eye of jealousy was cast on our rising prosperity, and we shortly began to feel its effects by the operation of decrees, which eventually assumed a tone of hostility no longer doubtful. Aware that an appeal to arms by a young country, hardly relieved from the confusion of a revolutionary struggle, would be deemed rash and inexpedient, we resorted to every prudential measure which could avert the blow; we remonstrated until remonstrance was ridiculed; our flag was insulted, and our power defied. Situ-

ated thus, we had but one alternative left. War has been described as the greatest of evils ; it is not *always* so ; it brings with it, indeed, a sacrifice of blood and treasure, but in a just and honorable cause, it rarely fails to secure the blessings of liberty, and an acknowledgment of right. A nation sunk into effeminacy, and unused to an appeal to arms, will be subjected to encroachment on her rights by every ambitious neighbour who has the power and will to act unjustly. We may be admired for the purity of our civil institutions, the mildness of government, and the morality of our people, but, trust me, we will only be feared from our *power* and disposition to resist aggressions promptly. The war for our second independence was declared under your auspices, and waged in part by your arms, and peace was eventually conquered by a steadiness and valor which proved us not unworthy of our great ancestry.

The events of our late war are fresh in your memory ; they form the admiration of the world ; and from a love of freedom, and a desire to perpetuate its blessings, we blend them with the incidents of our revolutionary struggle ; we present to the remaining patriots of the revolution a proof that they have not fought in vain for us ; that we are able and determined to preserve our inestimable institutions inviolate, and to drive invaders from our soil.

Our late war, however, did not find us fully prepared to encounter its difficulties; our resources were adequate, but they were not sufficiently developed; we had stout hearts to maintain the contest, and some equally stout to oppose us; our cause was just, and we had men of unquestionable integrity, and persevering industry, at the head of our government. Our military operations were checquered with those victories and defeats which are alternately the fate of battles, but it was on a new element, where victory, on equal terms, never deserted us; it was on the ocean, the common highway of nations, where we had been so unjustly treated, that we acquired ten fold retribution and everlasting glory. Our little navy, a miniature representation of our great enemy's and our private armed vessels, rode triumphant on the waves, scoured the ocean, searched distant seas, hunted the foe into their very ports, carried triumph and captives in their train, and shed a lustre over our country which time will never impair. Succeeding ages will not credit the page of history. The British navy, the conquerors of the Spanish Armada, the same which gave a death blow to the marine of Holland, in defeating her Van Tromps and De Ruyters, which stormed the batteries at Cöpenhagen, and swept her enemies from the ocean by the victories of the Nile St. Vincent, and Trafalgar, shrunk from our star span-

gled banner, and had her glories crushed by the grasp of our infant Hercules. Wherever we met in squadrons or single handed, victory was ours, save a few exceptions, which left nothing for the enemy to boast of; our very defeats, which circumstances could not control, was a stain on his former achievements, and the last blow to his naval supremacy was struck by the ministry, in giving orders to their ships not to engage Americans *single-handed*. These are proud triumphs; we have a right to exult in them though war has ceased; it was a fame bright and glorious that we acquired—may we maintain it while our flag continues to wave, and our ships to ride the billows.

By land, the increasing experience of our army, and the powerful stimulus of patriotism, contributed to give us many decisive advantages; and, while rapidly developing our resources, presented to us a list of military heroes, whose promptness and individual bravery, carried dismay into the ranks of the enemy.

No state in the Union sustained a part so active and patriotic as the state of New-York; it was the rallying point in defence of our cause, and her citizens from every quarter hastened, at the first call, in support of their rights, and sacrificed every personal comfort and consideration to contribute to the general defence. This City, the emporium

of commerce, and the great key-stone of the Union, gave distinguished proofs of devotion to our Country; with an enterprise and perseverance worthy of freemen, you left your homes, to labor with incredible industry, in fortifying our heights against that foe who was about invading our soil. This activity and energy alarmed the enemy, who, not daring to attack a united and determined people, avoided the contest, and proved to the world, that in the hour of danger all local divisions and party considerations were absorbed in the great name of American.

In the course of this war repeated advantages were gained, and the several prominent and severe battles fought gave tokens of a rapid improvement in the military science, but the last great contest at New-Orleans, equal to that at Thermopylea, appalled by its character and consequences the hopes and constancy of the enemy, and gave to us the palm of victory with the olive of peace. Success had crowned our arms, and a Treaty, honorable in all its provisions, terminated the war; and while it left us sovereign and independent, it developed our means of defence, and evidenced a bravery and invincible firmness on the part of our citizens, which will effectually shield our rights hereafter from attack. The advantages gained by the late war are strikingly apparent; we have seen the necessity of maintaining

a military force sufficiently numerous to guard our frontiers and provide means of defence for our fortifications; to form, as it were, the elements out of which future armies may be organized. We see and acknowledge, the importance of a naval force, competent in size to cause our flag to be every where respected. We are aware of the necessity of being wholly independent of foreign powers for supplies of indispensable articles, and the consequent necessity of encouraging Domestic Manufactures. And we feel ourselves so far safe from foreign aggression, that we have only to be prepared for war to keep at peace with the world.

The time is past when our rights will be attacked with impunity by any power; and the knowledge of this fact, will induce nations to be cautious in their measures relating to our Country. It is not only in reality that we enjoy this state of things, but we are tempted to set a double value on these blessings by the comparison we are daily constrained to make with the fallen state of other nations.

The great contest on the continent of Europe, which for more than twenty years agitated the world, has been terminated in a peace by which all the rights of man have been sacrificed to the ambition of monarchs, who have entered into a confederacy under the denomination of the Holy

League, for the maintenance of their power and legitimacy, which strikes at the root of liberty, and takes from the people almost all the attributes of freedom.

France, after the fervency and horrors of her revolution had abated, while yet a Republic, withstood the attacks of all Europe united; she had at her head a military chief, whose brilliant exploits amazed the world, and whose noble example of bravery attracted around him all that was great and glorious in that fine country. Victory never deserted him, and he saw the Republic the first of powers on the continent. Not content to be the elective chief of the nation; not satisfied in deriving his power from the people; blinded by ambition, and dazzled by a false glory, he changed the order of things, placed on his brow the diadem of Charlemagne, became a terror to surrounding nations, and to his own people. The power of France, transferred into the hands of an individual from the nation, was wantonly sported with; the rights and territories of other nations were unnecessarily invaded; he "felt power and forgot right." While marching his armies in the heart of Europe; while dethroning kings, merely to return their crowns, and rearing thrones for the individuals of his family, he was forming, by his measures, the materials of a vast confederacy against himself; and, on marching into the frightful

wilds of Russia, the thunder burst over his head, his army melted around him like the snows of spring, his enemies increased, his friends abandoned him, defeat and losses followed each other, and at last the lion got entangled in the toils of the hunter. He could have avoided this fate by more prudence and less ambition; "he played the boy, dropping his counters in the stream, and in striving to regain them lost himself." Even in adversity, and chained to a rock by his unrelenting and still affrighted foes, his very name a terror to Europe, he is at this day, humbled by misfortune, an object of admiration and regret, a noble ruin, bearing all the traces of its former grandeur and magnificence.

The power of Russia increased with the downfall of France. This nation, hardly emerged from barbarism, and just commencing to encourage arts and sciences, sees herself, by a strange revolution, placed as the first power on the continent, with possessions the most extensive on the face of the globe, bordering on the Caspian sea on the one side, and gazing on the Pacific ocean on the other, with millions of devoted slaves, and a young, active, and respectable monarch as their chief, that power defies control, and is placed beyond the reach of conquest. It remains to be seen, whether this power will be applied, to correct and beneficial purposes.

Spain, as a legitimate possession, was restored

to Ferdinand by the valour of his peasantry, and the co-operation of the allies. He revived the inquisition, and incarcerated in its dungeons all the worth and talent within his grasp; he prohibited general education by a royal decree, and shut the door on learning and civilization. This is the sovereign so decrepid in mind, so gloomy in character, and cramp't in resources, who hopes to keep in chains the people of South America—who vainly hopes to keep in bondage twenty millions of people. The time, however, is fast approaching, when the descendants of Ataliba and the Incas will prove themselves worthy of their illustrious ancestors—when the fertile plains and rich valleys of Mexico will echo with the shouts of liberty, and when the western world will be wholly released from the sway and control of European powers.

The struggle for freedom by the patriots of South America is, at this period, peculiarly interesting; the work of emancipation is fast progressing, and the time is not far distant, when our brethren in the South may shake off their chains, and enjoy the blessings of a pure and rational liberty. If they are regulated by prudence, and imitate our civil institutions—give to their fellow citizens a constitution founded on equal liberty and equal law—banish intolerance from their councils,—lay aside personal jealousies, and create public

confidence, by a correct and impartial administration of justice, we hope to see them taking a distinguished rank among the nations of the earth; and while the powers of Europe, worn out by wars of ambition, their strength decayed, and their resources checked, America shall rise in all the majesty of freedom, and defy the world.

Friends and Fellow Citizens,

WE assemble at a period the most prosperous and happy that our country yet has witnessed. Peace abroad, and tranquillity at home, the nation rich and powerful, the people moral and happy, our agricultural products more than sufficient for all our wants, industry encouraged, education supported, good faith rewarded, and liberty perpetuated. These are the fruits of our republican institutions. We have heard them decried as visionary, incapable of controlling an increasing population, or bearing up against the encroachments of luxury and ambition. Experience, the test of governments, has proved the fallacy of such doctrines. For near twenty years our country has been governed by the republican rulers of our choice, and under the illustrious Jefferson, and his successor, the patriotic Madison, we have advanced with a rapidity unparalleled to the proud station that we now enjoy. Satisfied with the prosperous issue of their administrations, we have wisely de-

terminated to adhere to the same principles, and have selected a chief magistrate whose past services are the best guarantee of his future measures. The termination of the official duties of President Monroe will be an epoch in the history of this country : he will be the last patriot of the revolution whom we shall have in our power to elect as Chief Magistrate of the Union. May his years and his services be prolonged and prosperous.

When we look round and see the pre-eminent height to which we have attained ; when we look into futurity and see the high destinies which, as a republic, are reserved for us, we have no reason to be dissatisfied with those republican principles under which we have prospered, and which, I trust, we never shall abandon.

While the spirit and high tone of party are hushed ; while tolerance in political opinions, like tolerance on all dissenting points and conflicting interests, is every where promoted and encouraged, still, it would be vain to expect a perfect unanimity in political opinions. It may, indeed, be questioned whether the interest of this country would not be materially affected by a unity of sentiment on every proposed point of national policy, as having a tendency to promote a supineness and indifference to public events, instead of a spirit of liberal investigation, a laudible and active examination into all public measures, and their effects,

from whatever quarter of the union they may emanate. This spirit of inquiry tends to consolidate our liberty by keeping our civil and political institutions and the controlling power of the people constantly in public view; and, by a tolerant disposition, leads us to speak of things as they are—frankly, as becoming citizens, justly as becoming men. The greatest struggle should be, not for power or office, but to see who can render the most effectual service to the commonwealth.

Emigration continues to land on our shores the oppressed of every clime; tempted by the equal liberty and rights which our institutions hold forth; tempted by the luxuriance of our soil, and the reward of industry, they abandon the sickly regions of poverty and slavery, to breath the pure air of a land of plenty, peace, and liberty. This country is the asylum of the unfortunate, and the common property of the oppressed—here they find protection, comfort, and consolation. The laws and institutions give no priority of rank, no exclusive privileges or distinctions to citizens, native or adopted—all are viewed alike; we ask from all a devotion to the country, an abandonment of foreign prejudices, a peaceable demeanor, and a cordial and habitual attachment to the government of our choice. Under our political father, the immortal Washington, the most illustrious emigrants have fought valiantly for our liberties.

Ireland gave us Montgomery; France La Fayette; Germany, Steuben and De Kalb; Poland Kosciusko and Pulaski; and others no less brave and patriotic have freely shed their blood to seal those liberties. To their posterity, to the friends of freedom and equal rights in every quarter of the globe, do we extend the hand of fellowship and brotherly love—do we invite to participate with us the blessings of emancipation, to join in support of our laws, and sit with us under our vine and fig-tree.

The encouragement afforded to education in this country is the best guarantee of its prosperity. Men, to be free, must know how to estimate the blessings of liberty; this can only be done by the cultivation of the mind. With us, the throne of government is the intellect; he who is sufficiently enlightened to know the value of his rights, never yields them but with life. Governments founded on tyranny, repose safely on the ignorance of the people—our government can only be supported by the wisdom of our citizens; *they* grope in eternal darkness! *we* are warmed by the sun of science, and acquire vigour from its rays. It is, then, education, science, literature, and the arts, which are to give an unrivalled name and character to the western world.

Cast your eyes around, fellow citizens, and you will see how effectually ambition, faction, and ty-

ranny have swept every republic from the face of the earth. We stand alone, united and independent, powerful and just. We have been spared by the hand of time, which sweeps in its course nations and countries—we have been left like a golden column, standing firmly erect, and surrounded by the crumbling fragments of other republics.

Be it our task to perpetuate, to the latest posterity, the blessings of our admirable government; let us continue to glide smoothly on in the paths of honor and industry; maintaining with foreign powers our obligations and treaties with fidelity, and exacting the same justice from them—keeping bright and durable our chain of union—supporting each others rights—respecting each others opinion, and proving to the world how false is that maxim of tyrants which declares that man cannot govern himself.