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Osgood, Nathan.

An Oration, Delivered at Rutland.

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ORATION,

DELIVERED AT

RUTLAND;

IN THE STATE OF

VERMONT,

ON THE

ANNIVERSARY

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

JULY 4th, 1799.

By NATHAN OSGOOD, Esq.

RUTLAND:

PRINTED FOR S. WILLIAMS,

1799.

W8
Osgood.

THE Committee of Arrangement for the celebration of the 4th of July, in behalf of the Citizens of Rutland, and the vicinity, return their thanks to NATHAN OSGOOD, Esq. for his Oration delivered this day, and request a Copy thereof for the press.

T. TODD,
R. CRAFTS,
J. BUILER,
J. RAMSDEL,
M. WATKINS,
N. LEE,
S. GRIDLEY, } COMMITTEE.

RUTLAND, 4th July, 1799.

AN
ORATION.

My friends, fellow citizens, and soldiers,

TWENTY THREE years have elapsed since America wearied with repeated acts of oppression imposed by Great Britain, under impressions of the duty which she owed to posterity, made a solemn appeal to heaven for the rectitude of her intentions, and declared herself an independent nation.

To do justice to the merits of that worthy and honorable band of patriots, who in succession from the first settlement of America bravely withstood British oppression, and insured to the colonies the exercise of just and equal laws, would take more time than is allotted to me on this occasion. With a prophetic view they foresaw that this vast continent would at some future day be covered with inhabitants: And from a disposition discovered in Great Britain from the earliest infancy of the colonies not only to regulate their external but internal concerns, they judged that instead of those mild and conciliatory measures, which would have insured to her the friendship and affection of the colonies, and have been her interest as well as policy to cultivate; she would become jealous of their growing strength, and attempt by tyrannical measures to destroy that sensibility, for which the colonies had been distinguished from their first settlement in America. But with such wisdom did that firm band of patriots conduct their affairs that no measures formed against them were successful, which had a tendency to enervate public sentiment, or to prepare the way for the introduction of European despotism. Unawed by danger, steadily attentive to the interests of their country, every measure they adopted had the designed effect, and prepared the way for the introduction of that great and eventual day, which gave birth to the American Nation.

In tracing the events of this ever memorable day, the successes and victories obtained in a severe war of eight years, no nation could with more propriety pronounce those sacred words, "If God be for us, who can be against us." We began the war destitute of every military preparation. Agents and ministers were appointed to the different courts in Europe to procure military stores, and form such alliances as would be useful to America. During the severe struggles of war, patriotism gave law. The different States had confederated together, and a power was given to Congress to estimate the expenses, and make requisitions on the individual States for their just proportions. Some of them were punctual in obeying those requisitions, others were delinquent.

At the close of the war, the delinquent States were called upon to pay up their arrearages. The expenditures of the contest had nearly exhausted the circulating wealth of the country. Those States which had contributed their just proportions, and those which had not, seemed to be equally exhausted. That patriotism which gave rule during the continuance of the war, and influenced men to contribute to the loss of their property, now languished. — The brave old soldier who had fought the battles of America with success, now returned to his family poor and worn out in his country's service. Widows, and the orphans of those who had been slain in the field, together with those who had advanced their all to government, men who had been in affluence and ease, but now in poverty, all appeared petitioning for relief; setting forth that the faith of America was pledged to do them justice. — Commerce had now deserted our coasts, for want of commercial regulations: Agriculture had declined; and for a moment the fruits of our independence seemed to have been blotted.

But the American genius under the smiles of a kind providence, was not to be conquered but by insurmountable obstacles. A convention of the elders, men experienced in difficulties, was assembled from one end of this vast continent to the other, to consult on such measures as would give relief. Solemn were their deliberations: such a variety of difficulties were to be surmounted, and such different interests were to be combined, as seemed to

defy human wisdom--The necessity of union was strongly felt. A spirit of conciliation prevailed. A constitution was formed, and adopted by the people, which has been the admiration of the lovers of liberty, containing the fundamental principles of freedom, good government and social order--Europe was astonished at the policy and wisdom of America. They had then seen her carry on a successful war with one of the most powerful nations on the globe. They had seen her form two constitutions, and a change from one to the other effected without shedding a single drop of blood. History does not furnish one solitary instance of a similar nature. Attempts to effect even a change in the European constitutions, have at different periods drenched one half of their fields in blood. America once more began to flourish. Commercial regulations were formed, and the American commerce was extended to every part of the globe. Agriculture was revived, and infant manufactures were erected, which began to vie even with those of Europe.

France now became the theatre of war. France in aid to America had sent men who became enamored with American liberty. At the close of the war they returned to their native country, with the most laudable signs of procuring some amendments in their own government. Without considering the necessity of first disseminating the American knowledge and principles, among every class of the people, before the pillars of their own government were removed, they began the revolution, which like an overwhelming deluge swept the vast fabric of the French government to its foundations, that its traces could not be seen but in blood.

The tried friends of America were swept away in the deluge. The enormities which succeeded are too awful to be related among men: and in decency to religion, to virtue and morality, we would here draw a veil over her vices, had they not reached America and polluted some of her sons.

When the news of the revolution first reached America, an universal joy spread from one end of the continent to the other. And never was joy more generous and sincere. But when the evils became general, and instead of blessing their revolution became a sword in the hand of

the most profligate, and devoured the innocent and the guilty in one common destruction, the Americans who were attached to the purest principles of republicanism, and to those mild and gentle laws dictated by a spirit of philanthropy, began to shudder and abhor those devouring laws dictated by revenge, and sealed with the blood of the innocent.

THE contagion now threatened all Europe. The nations contiguous to France coalesced to prevent its baneful influence. Washington our president, who had fought the American battles, and seen the distresses to which our country had been reduced, was convinced of the necessity of peace, to give to the people of America an opportunity to recover from the distresses of the war just terminated; and resolved to steer the American ship through the storm that gathered, without becoming a party. Those talents so remarkable for wisdom and prudence were again exerted, and shone forth with redoubled lustre. A proclamation enjoining the duties required by the strictest principles of neutrality, and forbidding any practices not conformable thereto, was published. The conduct of Genet who had arrived in America, and before his arrival was known to our government, had enlisted both citizens and foreigners, and commissioned them to cruise against nations with which we were at peace, was a convincing proof that the French government meant to force us into a war, and awakened the keenest sensibilities in the Americans. Fauchet, his successor, finding our government determined to maintain their neutrality resolved on other measures, which the western counties of Pennsylvania, and the precious confessions of a Randolph can witness. Adet his successor, pursued measures as hostile as his predecessor. The conduct of the French ministers occasioned difficulties with the British nation, which threatened the destruction of our commerce. The American policy was to negotiate before an appeal to arms was made. An envoy extraordinary to Great Britain was appointed. The disputes between the two nations were adjusted, and a commercial treaty formed.

PREVIOUS to this period vast quantities of American produce had been carried into France, and sold in her ports, for which no other payment could be obtained but

assignats, a species of paper without value, which now gave such an alarm to the American merchants who had given them unbounded credit, that they avoided their ports. The French government now ordered the most piratical and indiscriminate seizures to be made of our vessels, and justified their rapacity on account of the treaty made with Great-Britain, which the conduct of their own ministers made indispensably necessary. Munroe, our minister then in France, an apostate from the true American character, represented to the French government, that the American people would submit to be plundered of their commerce, if it would be useful to France. Such unworthy conduct occasioned his recall. A minister whose integrity was unquestionable, was appointed; a man who would not barter his countrymen's property to the gratification of any foreign despotism. Integrity seems not to have been a necessary qualification for a minister in France: He was not received by that perfidious government. The President still inclined to peace, determined to make use of every expedient before he would recede from conciliatory measures: two envoys were appointed to join the one already there, with instructions, as liberal as the French government could have desired, if justice and peace had been their object. The fate of their mission has been delineated in the publication of their dispatches. The conduct of the French government is unequalled for corruption, and will remain a stain on their character to all future ages; and be recorded on the heart of every true American, characteristic of French perfidy, and serve as a caution to all future alliances.

THE measures of our executive to maintain peace have met with an almost unanimous approbation, and have been applauded in the addresses of the people to the President from one end of the confederation to the other, promising their warmest support to such measures as should be thought expedient for that purpose. Defensive measures have been adopted, such as prudence dictated, and the exigences of our situation required. Merchants have been allowed to arm in their own defence, a measure as rational as politic. Government has built several armed vessels which have given safe passages to our merchants. Although no declaration of war has been made

against France, such an actual state of hostilities exists between the two nations, that it becomes the good man, and lover of his country to give firm support to our government, and enable it to preserve our independence against foreign despotism. We deprecate a war with any nation, if it can be avoided with safety; but rather than become tributary to France, war would not only be justifiable, but the present generation could not justify themselves to posterity without resorting to it.

LET us examine for a moment, into the situation of the those nations which have been drawn within the vortex of French revolution, and in their fate learn our own, unless by timely exertions we avert the dangers which surround us. Let their conduct to other nations, serve as a caution against confidence in that nation of atheists, who spurn at peace, and from whose impious embraces have issued all those plagues which destroy human happiness.

HOLLAND, one of the most industrious and opulent nations of Europe, and under a republican form of government, had rendered herself respectable to all the nations of the earth. If we look among the ruins occasioned by French diplomatic skill, we shall find her name blotted from the catalogue of nations; a poor needy French colony, requisition after requisition, until her wealth has been exhausted.— Geneva a republic too small to excite the ambition of any of the monarchs of Europe, and too happy to wish for innovation, but too wealthy not to excite French licentiousness, is now robbed of her wealth and revolutionized — Switzerland, we compassionate thy unhappy lot! The mountains which surround thee have not been able to protect thee from the all-devouring armies of France. Negotiation benumbed thy exertions until French perfidy had ruined thee. We mourn the fate of thy hardy sons, who though too late, exerted themselves to save their country from impending ruin. Happy hast thou been for many years in thy retired situation, free from the contentions which have embroiled Europe. Thy freedom and hospitality have invited many of the destroying nations, to seek repose in thy happy country: But thy generous and unsuspecting temper has well suited the designs of thy rapacious enemy.

NAPLES sought by presents to satiate the desires of her

perfidious ally, until the king found himself surrounded with French missionaries alienating the affections of his citizens from their government, and too late roused by the dangers which surrounded, collected an army sufficient in numbers, to have drove the disorders of mankind from his dominions; but to the disgrace of his army they were corrupted by the promises of promotion, and the alluring prospects of plunder, to desert him. Such indiscriminate massacres and plunder succeeded, as seemed to touch the feelings even of the five-headed monster.—Rome and Sardinia two nations, who had sought by tributary contributions, to appease the desires of the French government, little thought that these desires would increase in proportion to their exertions to appease them. The pampered enemy excited quarrels among the populace and some French soldiers, and charged them upon the citizens; and under pretence of chastising them for the abuse which they themselves had occasioned, have destroyed the two governments, and plundered them of their wealth, and are now forcing their requisitions by standing armies.

In every nation in Europe which France has conquered, they have first gained a party in their councils, who were in favor of negotiating until a French army had arrived within their territory; introduced large numbers of incendiaries, whose business it was to excite jealousies and provoke contentions; and under some pretext of abuses, justified themselves in seizing on the government; and the plenipotentiary generals with constitutions in their pockets, manufactured by the French directory at Paris, have ordered the people to receive and adopt them, who at the point of the bayonet are compelled to become a military republic, under the control and direction of the French armies.

It has ever been acknowledged in America, that the views of the first movers of the French revolution were good: That there were radical evils in their government, and in the modes of administering justice among the citizens of that nation, have never been controverted. And the idea of the people's obtaining some amelioration in their situation, afforded to the freemen of America the most sincere pleasure.—The Americans had from their first settlement of this country, then inhabited by beasts of prey and men more savage, considered themselves as

martyrs for civil and religious liberty ; and as having sacrificed the ease and luxury of Europe to establish colonies where freedom might be triumphant. These ideas have been handed down from generation to generation to their present descendents. The genuine principles of religion and liberty, have been constantly inculcated among every order of people. Their effects were obvious : they regarded the rights of all nations, and their good will was extended to all men ; considering themselves in possession of liberty, they wished it to be extended to all others.

These sentiments and feelings of the people of the United States were favorable to the views of the French government. The conduct of the first French minister, who came to America was a convincing proof that he so considered them. The people expressed themselves in terms of the warmest approbation at his first arrival. The American government was the first of all nations to acknowledge the new government of France, and receive its ministers. Those persons who began the revolution with designs to give freedom to France were opposed to those violent outrages which began to be introduced, and were compelled either to suffer under the guillotine, or quit their country to preserve their lives. The succeeding parties have exercised a despotism hitherto unknown, even to the French nation. The people now found that instead of obtaining freedom and liberty, they had exchanged a mild and gentle prince for the most unprincipled tyrants, who by their acts of barbarous cruelty and murder had disgraced the name of man. These new crimes had not reached America. That irregularities would succeed for a time, every person of political knowledge foresaw.

The minister from France began now to dictate to our government the part they had to act in the great drama, which his masters had planned. The American councils were composed of men of too much knowledge and experience not to discern that the men of France would be intoxicated with the ideas of liberty, which were as little understood in France as in Algiers ; and that nothing but a thorough knowledge of the true principles on which the happiness of society depends, joined with great experience, could ever teach them. They gave them every privilege within the limits of a neutral station, and endeavored by the most friendly and conciliatory measures

to convince them that the happiness and prosperity of America greatly depended, on taking that ground. But French haughtiness was not to be satisfied with principle. They had now formed a party in America, who became obsequious to their wishes. This party, from that moment, have never ceased to revile our own government, and to oppose every measure adopted for defence. If Robespierre and Talleyrand, whose acts of cruelty and murder would blacken the pages of savage barbarity, had been representatives in our national legislature from the French government, their cause could not have been better advocated.

Among the many objects of their execration I will mention a few: The British treaty, on which the alarm was first sounded with so much vehemence from one end of the union to the other, what has been the effect of it? Has any mortal heard of any evil occasioned by it, except that France and her partizans have been disgusted by it? And what then? Ought not the freedom and happiness of America to be consulted? I do not propose this question, to have it answered by the French party: But I ask it of men, who have fought to establish the independence of their country, of men who are cultivating their farms to obtain their support. Among these I have from my infancy resided, and know their integrity, which I revere. Has the treaty with Britain contravened any article of agreement with France? And their right to object to it, never existed. Commercial men have approved of it, who are principally governed by it. My soul would abhor any connection with great Britain, or any other nation on earth, which could not be justified on the present principles of American safety and freedom. But that we should be obliged to ask leave of France, whether America may form commercial regulations with any nation with whom her citizens have intercourse, is a degree of degradation, to which I pray God, America may never submit.

The alien and sedition laws have also been execrated by the French partizans. The legislatures of the States which have had a session since those laws were passed, (Virginia and Kentucky excepted) have expressly declared their approbation of them; not only as constitutional but as expedient and necessary. Should it be demanded what is their use, the answer is at hand. The alien law was expressly provided to remove foreigners, who by their hos-

