

AN

ORATION,

ON THE MEANS OF PERPETUATING

INDEPENDENCE.

DELIVERED AT EAST-SUDBURY,

JULY 4th, 1815.

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ORATION.

THE stated commemoration of interesting national events, stands justified at the tribunal of history, sacred and profane. Should this anniversary be observed by our descendents, till the extinction of their liberty and independence, another unit will be added to a long list of examples, ancient and modern.

INDEPENDENCE is the word. And what is this enviable, this celebrated boon--this boasted heritage of nations civilixed & savage, this boasted heritage of millions who never felt its value or knew its meaning? What is national independence? It is no more--it is no less than sovereignty, or the power of managing public concerns without foreign controul. However small a community, and wherever situated, while unmolested and uninfluenced by foreigners, aliens, in its national measures, it realizes independence.

We now commemorate a solemn act, by which the thirteen United States, on the fourth of July, 1776, renounced the dominion to which they had been subject, and by which, appealing to Heaven and the sword, they assumed the rights, powers and privileges of self government, independent sovereignty.

The valor, the generous and distinguished patriotism, the personal sacrifice, the BLOOD, this heritage cost, are naturally passing us in review. While our observing and religious posterity shall enjoy the blessings thus purchased, they will not cease to acknowledge with gratitude, the remarkable interpositions of Providence, so impressively visible in the history of our revolutionary war.

The painful struggles, the laborious exertions by which our independence was achieved, are so generally known, even to children now on the stage, we may very consistently leave the road already beaten to sterility, and devote this hour to the enquiry how can we preserve and transmit this precious inheritance to succeeding generations?—How can it so be fenced that our distant posterity may walk securely in the rich enclosure?

This question might well employ a life. It demands not a page, but a volume. But I am now permitted to say, while it lives, general habits of *industry* will be the vitals of independence.

Industry is a parent—a wet nurse of every virtue. Among its natural offspring, we find contentment, submission to salutary laws, temperance, economy, an enlightened and controlling sense of duty to God and man, habitual cheerfulness, mutual kindness and benevolence. For its greatness Rome was indebted to certain officers called censors, whose commission obliged them to inspect the citizens, to observe their habits, to chastise and cor-

rect any form of dissipation, prodigality, licentiousness, or any departure from the ordinary mode of living.* That ancient law which exempted the child brought up in idleness from supporting his parents in their old age, operated as a powerful stimulus to family industry, and shews us the exalted rank then assigned to this virtue.

The virtuous education of youth, is essential to the support of independence. Whatever unthinking men may alledge to the contrary, patriotism, love of country, no less evidently than religious duty, enjoins on parents moral and religious education of their children. Each generation must look among themselves for all the officers, which their civil, political, moral and religious interests require. From among themselves they must select individuals, for sacred, for legislative, executive, judicial and military distinction. If unprincipled men and such only can be found to occupy those social eminences, the state of the community must be deeply and awfully deplorable. What will liberty or independence be worth—how long can they exist? What will property or character, nay, what will *life* be worth, how will either be secure, when public officers, judges and executors of law, shall be disposed to borrow language of Lysander and say, “children are cheated with cockles and men with oaths?”† What will be your sons’ security, what his prospects, when the oppressed, the injured, the defrauded citizen, for redress of wrongs, shall look to witnesses, jurors and judges, who view an oath

* Plut. vol. 2d p. 322. † Plut. vol. 2d p. 96.

as a feeble web, formed to entangle insects, but beneath the notice of superior animals? When a cause important to us, is depending, doubts of one juror's, or one witness's integrity, are painful: the faintest, the most feeble suspicion of sacred reverence for an oath in the judge, would fill us with horror. Why should the oath of office—why should any oath be administered to unprincipled men?—What then can be more evident, than that posterity requires of parents, the moral and religious education of youth—that principles and habits of virtue may grow with their growth, and strengthen with their strength? Such early instruction appears necessary, not only to the support of independence, but also to the security and enjoyment of individual citizens. Nothing short of sacred regard to the distinction between right and wrong, can justify public confidence in any officer, civil or military. Are any parents present, so destitute of Piety and Patriotism too, as to neglect the moral principles, feelings and habits of a rising family?

The election of worthy men to offices of influence & responsibility, promises health and long life to Independence. While Moses lived, an order issued from the God of Israel, to promote such as rulers over thousands, over hundreds, fifties, and even over tens. In public estimation, a degree of dignity attached to every grade of honorary distinction, & the smallest reward conferred on real merit, encourages virtue. Vile men, clothed with authority,

will *of course*, sacrifice public to private interest, and *always* betray their trust, for what *they* think an adequate reward. Come to their price and you are sure of their influence, till you are outbidden. But another evil, still more alarming, results from their elevation. It tells the aspiring youth, whose laudable ambition, whose talents, rank and patronage, point him to eminence, that vicious habits, flagrant immorality, gross obliquity of character, are not obstacles to promotion; and that brilliant and endearing virtues form not the ladder on which men must rise to distinction and public confidence! This, perhaps, is justly acknowledged the most deplorable consequence of such elections. Did the voice of the people clothe none with honor, but correct, deserving and virtuous men, the race for distinction would be run in virtue's path, and the public voice would restrain licentiousness, hold up a lure, a reward to laudable emulation, and throw an important weight into virtues' scale.

It has been said, the characters of candidates for public office cannot *always* be known to electors. Is this correct? Can an instance be named in which proper and seasonable enquiry will not furnish a voter with all the information requisite to the discharge of his duty? I can conceive of none. In this case, however, the sources of correct information, I have *no* reference to *Newspapers*. In times of political dissention, every press naturally takes its side, and then very plausibly proclaims its own impartiality. But, it is well known, the support

and patronage of a paper, must depend on its meeting the wishes, gratifying the political appetite, cherishing the feelings, and justifying the opinions of a certain class of citizens. We readily admit, that the editor of a paper may be actuated by very ardent patriotism, especially when his exertions are stimulated by want of character, want of business, and an empty purse. But the grand object of his patriotic efforts is attained when his list of subscribers is handsomely filled. To inflame the ardor of his readers, *and get his paper up*, he can *impartially* publish one side of a popular dispute, while he suppresses the other for *want of room*;— and when his patriotic fever is on, he can *as impartially* give to his readers that half, precisely *that half* of a certain truth, which promises to *them* enjoyment, and to *him* as much additional patronage. A certain Hibernian traveller loudly complained of the sanguinary laws of Ireland, and alleged as a proof, that his dear father was executed for taking the end of a bridle in his hand; but when questioned on the tender subject, he observed, “there was a horse at the other end of the bridle”! You will permit me to say, with more justice than pleasantry, editors of Newspapers, for electioneering purposes, often take ~~the~~ liberty to shew the bridle and conceal the horse. ~~When~~ When perusing an inflammatory electioneering paragraph, we should always enquire for the horse at the other end of the bridle. Called by the constitution to create an officer by our suffrages, we ought to recollect that very

little if any confidence, is due to publications, relative to the rival candidates, to which no responsibility is attached ; but generally, if not universally, all the information necessary to his acting discreetly and like a good citizen, is attainable, within the circle of the voter's personal acquaintance.

Obedience to the LAWS, submission to the majority, is another pillar on which independence must stand, and without which it must fall. Whatever, at any period, may be justly or unjustly said, of the timidity, ~~corruption~~, weakness, or wickedness of rulers ; resistance of laws, violent opposition to the major voice, of men constitutionally authorized to legislate, may be called one thing or another, but it is CIVIL WAR. From this greatest, this most distressing of all calamities, I cannot see what public good would probably result ; or arise, under our present constitution. It appears to me, no struggle more or less bloody, could secure to us more, than the privilege of freely and frequently electing our rulers, and this we *now* enjoy. If the community is so ignorant, so heedless or so corrupt, as to exalt the vile by their suffrages, and repose confidence where reproach is due, the sword promises no remedy for this evil. If the public interest requires amendments of the constitution, shall those amendments be written and established by the point of the sword ? If arguments would not produce them, they are, in that case *forced* upon the majority, and the minority governs. Is it probable, that on the whole, a better constitu-

tion would be formed in a state of fermentation, in a period of general effervescence, than was framed by the talents and integrity of the Union, in a season of national tranquility? Whatever the instability the eddies, or whirlpools of the popular breath, in all changes of public opinion;—tho' the best men be driven to obscurity or doomed to banishment *for their virtues*, and the worst are loaded with public applause; and appear flaunting in purple, when the minority attempts to seize the reins of government, liberty and independence are jeopardised. While our constitution exists, that evil which cannot be removed by elections, ought to be acknowledged remediless, whatever its weight, complexion or magnitude.

A well organized Militia, is a corner stone of this grand edifice. But its organization consists, not barely in the correctness of its rolls, or the completeness of its equipments. Every officer may appear at his post, every man in his rank; splendid uniform and dazzling arms may display laudable military ambition, and excite general admiration, envy, and applause; but without a spirit of subordination the body is destitute of nerves. It is a collection of men, not a band of soldiers. The officer must *feel his commission*—feel the spirit of his station, and with equal cheerfulness, render homage to his superiors, and receive it from those below him—and be equally cheerful in giving as receiving orders. *This spirit*, actuating of-

ficers and men, in their several grades, is military organization.

Fabius was the Washington of the Romans. When an old man, his son was chosen Consul, or first National Magistrate. On the field Fabius had occasion to speak to his son, then Consul, and advanced on horseback. The Consul sent an officer, and ordered his Father to dismount, not to address *his son* but to approach the first Magistrate of Rome. The venerable old General instantly obeyed, ran to the Consul, and embracing him said, "I applaud your sentiments and your behavior, my son, you have a just sense of the dignity of your office."

The military code ought to be the standard, the visible rule of military proceedings: order, and the energy of discipline, cannot otherwise be preserved among the troops. Unnecessarily excusing a man from duty not only increases the fatigue but sours the minds of his companions in arms. The prospect of idlers, wantonly rioting in the shade, gives additional heat to the ray, under which the exhausted laborer is sinking. To render his men patient of service, the officer must not only bear his part with his command, but firmly and impartially insist that every man shall stand in his lot, and that no improper or insufficient excuse, shall avail the dispirited fellow, who is always dragg'd reluctantly to the parade. The ready and ambitious sold' should never feel him-

self a loser, by the prompt alacrity with which he takes the field.

A spirit of dignified subordination, prevailing harmony among the officers, mutual and endearing attachment between officers and men, a beautiful uniform, and an impressive, and commanding military appearance, have acted jointly in elevating *this* Regiment to a distinguished and envied rank in the Massachusetts Line, Gentlemen of eminence among generals, have openly and voluntarily acknowledged *this* among the first, the very first in the Commonwealth. The great exertions, the liberal sacrifices both of officers and men, have not been lost or overlooked, but gained the prize always dear to soldiers, *merited applause*.

That preparation for war is the best security of peace, is a precious and memorable maxim. *But* ~~That~~ citizen-soldiers, who constitute the physical force of a community should, at least as deeply venerate another maxim—a maxim found in the declaration of independence, and sanctioned by the calm reflections and the best feelings of *Washington*—a maxim worthy an impression on the heart of every soldier, and every citizen—but a maxim too often buried in the fumes of party dissension “ENEMIES IN WAR, IN PEACE FRIENDS.” Attachment to one foreign nation and hatred to another,—partiality *for*, or *against*, can be no part of patriotism. The well informed and well balanced mind of a soldier or citizen, of

any rank, is *equally* friendly to every foreign nation, *as such*, with which his own country is in amity. Situated as we are, every citizen is evidently and sacredly bound, with all his influence, greater or less, to calm down the public mind, and as far as possible to suppress, in his own and in the hearts of others, all prejudice for and against nations at peace with us. Such prejudices, however necessary in war, are dangerous, they are hurtful in peace. It will not be denied that our past struggles have very naturally excited and cherished such prejudices in the hearts of many honest and excellent citizens known to us, whether *we* have shared them or not. And all history testifies that such feelings, and the mutual jealousy, the party spirit they naturally produce have been the heaviest and most destructive scourge, of nations once respectable, prosperous and happy. Still we find many a man, whose vices are polluting and poisoning the community of which he is a member, cannot reconcile his feelings to the maxim—"Enemies in war, in peace friends." *His* patriotism prompts him to heap curses on one foreign nation and blessings on another tho' correct feelings would constrain him to say of *both*, I will neither curse them at all nor bless them at all.—

Gentlemen, Friends and Fellow Citizens ; when the celebration of this anniversary, shall degenerate to a riotous scene of noisy festivity—when public notice of this memorable day, shall cease to improve the minds of our citizens—cease to

cherish harmony—to excite pleasant and useful reflections ; when the joys of the day shall no longer be enriched with gratitude to heaven, and with purposes of heart, which tend to preserve and perpetuate our national independence, more especially, when the **FOURTH OF JULY** shall nourish the habits and ripen the nauseating fruits of *intemperance* ;—most of all, when the professed object of this annual concourse of citizens, shall be so grossly perverted, as to become fuel to the devouring flame of *party spirit*, and set a keener edge to mutual jealousy between worthy men of *equal* merit and *equal* patriotism ; THEN if processions must be form'd, let them be compos'd of noisy, disorderly, intemperate, base, unprincipled men.

From the celebration of independence, lovers of order, friends to the moral and religious as well as to the political interests of society, have sometimes retired with deep disgust. If the countenance and the company of truly reputable and venerable men, give to this scene additional dignity and enjoyment, we shall hear them silently say, “ Let all things be done decently and in order.”

The tender and candid participation of the Ladies, in the transactions of this delightful day, is no less grateful than flattering to our feelings. We cheerfully acknowledge their interest in the peace, the prosperity and independence of our country, no less sincere than our own. Tho' exempted from the perils and hardships of the tent-

James Currier Jr Copy
Providence, R. I.
From the Author

GREENE'S



ORATION.

JULY 4. 1815.

From