

**AN**  
**ORATION,**

**DELIVERED,**

*AT THE REQUEST OF THE OFFICERS,*

**BEFORE THE**

**FIRST REGIMENT IN THE SECOND BRIGADE OF**

**THE SECOND DIVISION OF MILITIA**

**IN THE COMMONWEALTH,**

**AT**

*BYFIELD, JULY 4th, 1805.*

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**BY ELIJAH PARISH, A. M.**

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.....Hail, O hail,  
My much loved native land! New Albion, hail!  
The happiest realm, that, round his circling course,  
The all-searching sun beholds.....  
Our Sires established, in thy cheerful bounds,  
The noblest institutions man has seen,  
Since time his reign began. *DWIGHT.*

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*S A L E M :*

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**1805.**

AN  
O R A T I O N .

**I**N the celebration of this day, fellow citizens, we act in concert with all parties of our great Republic. This day, when, like a new star in the heavens, we appeared among the governments of the world, gives hilarity of spirit, and elevation of sentiment, to every class of the American people.

**T**HOUGH in the smaller concerns of life we have our interfering claims and opposite views, yet in the orb of day we have one harmonious interest, one common felicity. So on other subjects we have our different political opinions ; but in the celebration of this political jubilee all parties have an equal interest ; here we all meet on friendly ground. May harmony of feelings gladden the passing moments.

**T**HE

THE antiquity and benefits of anniversary celebrations, a few objects of the American revolution, and an address to the military, now invite your friendly attention.

ANNIVERSARY celebrations have been considered useful from the early ages of time. The first event commemorated by stated festivals, which has come down to us from antiquity, is the deluge of Noah. With sacred rites and solemn processions this event was celebrated in Egypt, Syria, and Canaan.\* This for ages was a standing evidence of the event, kept alive a fear of divine judgments, was a pressing argument to a holy life.

A COUNCIL from all the States of Greece met *annually* at Platae; the inhabitants were consecrated to the service of the gods, to be employed only in offering prayers and sacrifices for the welfare of Greece, because to them was ascribed the honor of a victory over the Persians.† This had a tendency to keep alive a martial fire in  
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\* See Faber on the Cabiri, and Bryant's *Analysis of Ancient Mythology*.

† Plutarch.

those ancient republics. The Passover of the Hebrews, the Christmas of Christians, and the Hegira of Mahometans, have had their influence on society.

IN modern times anniversary celebrations may be numbered among the permanent institutions of society. The birth and death of distinguished personages, the revolutions of states, and various other events, are publicly celebrated. Among these, none perhaps are more important than revolutions in government. No revolution in the records of history has higher claims to lasting remembrance than the establishment of the American Republic. Not one has had a more reasonable cause, juster principles, or a more happy issue. So definite was the object, so noble the design, so profound the measures of our country, that a recurrence to the revolution itself must always be salutary, and sometimes necessary.

THIS is the birth day of our nation. This day our fathers *declared* they would be free and *independent*. Immediately the government assumed a new form, the laws a new direction, public opinion a new impulse, and the people a new character.

character. A retrospect of first principles, like a college of censors, may restore the purity of other times. We see how the corner stones of the government were laid, how the fabric rose, and what was the original form.

THE liberty which our fathers fought was not an imaginary phantom ; it was not the destroying demon, which in some countries has broken all the bonds of society, and then bound its votaries in the iron chains of despotism. Our fathers were too wise to pursue, too honest to wish, such an object. They only desired to be faithful stewards, affectionate children ; to execute the trust, to preserve inviolate the sacred inheritance, they had received from their renowned ancestors.\* They fought not innovation or change, but from necessity. Of new and unknown privileges they had no idle dreams. To defend their agriculture and commerce, their institutions, sacred and civil, was their highest ambition. Their rights were tyrannically assaulted ; they indignantly repelled the assault. Accordingly, in the far-famed Declaration of Independence, complaints

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\* See Addresses of the American Congress previous to July 4, 1776.

plaints of injuries are multiplied, but no paradise of new pleasures is described ; no era of new felicities is named. Though it was an object to rouse all the energies of the country, the people were not flattered with any Utopia of novel privileges. The thought was too absurd, too wicked, to be whispered to the populace. Our fathers were never amused with the chace of political rainbows ; nor seriously employed in fabricating volcanoes for the sport of seeing villages, towns and kingdoms blown to the four winds of heaven.

AMONG the reasons of the Declaration was, The king of Great Britain “has made judges dependent on his will for the tenure of their offices, and erected a multitude of new offices ; he has kept standing armies among us in time of peace ; he has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution ; he has cut off our trade, taken away our charters, altered the forms of our government, and excited domestic insurrection.” Here is evidence conclusive, that the object of the revolution was not a new field of possessions, but the enjoyment of the ancient inheritance, beyond the reach of a tyrant’s

rant's arm. Our fathers were not enchanted with a fairy land, where a political millenium shines; where no altars burn, no temples rise, no God is owned, and family names are lost in universal licentiousness;\* but they were attached to the rights they had possessed, to the manners they had adopted, to the venerable institutions which had made them what they were. These they were determined to preserve, or perish in the contest.

THEY had always defended themselves, when assailed by their savage neighbors, or threatened by European powers; with disdain, therefore, they saw British armies landing on our shores, "without the consent of our legislatures." This right they secured; this day we enjoy it. In New-England alone are probably more than one hundred and fifty thousand troops, completely furnished for the tented field. In this Commonwealth are upwards of sixty-four thousand. Ranks of more vigorous men breathe not the air of any country; legions of more courageous soldiers form not the armies of any prince or commander.

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\* See Godwin, and Speeches in the National Convention of France.

mandet. Ye would, my friends, smile at invasion, and defy the glittering arms and thundering artillery of any foe.

It was an object of our fathers in the revolution to establish the right of legislating for themselves, free from the *degrading* weight of foreign influence and *domestic slavery*. This they had always claimed; this they had demanded; this they had possessed. Therefore was it an article of formal complaint in the declaration of independence—The king of Great Britain “has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of the people, unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in the legislature, a right inestimable to them, and formidable to tyrants only.”\*

An independent judiciary was another jewel in the crown for which we contended with one of the most formidable powers of the world. Therefore it was complained, “He has made judges dependent on his will.” To secure *all* the

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\* Is there any conceivable difference between the ignominy of relinquishing the right of representation, and giving imported slaves the power of nullifying that right?



immunities and privileges purchased by the virtue, the valor and blood of their fathers, was the object of the revolution. To give permanency to their literary arrangements, their schools and colleges; to place their religious institutions beyond the unhallowed touch of foreign influence; to give all possible security to evangelical ordinances; to preserve the simple manners, pure morals, and sanctifying religion, of other times, our fathers put in jeopardy their property, their reputation, their liberty and their lives. What they wrested by violence from the paw of the British Lion, let us not lose by sloth and indifference. Let us not, like Esau, sell our invaluable birthright for a moment of fatal indulgence. Let us not like prodigals throw away what cost our fathers their silver and gold, their ease, their safety, and their blood.

Would you know the price of our privileges; the price of our independence; the price of this happy day, so distinguished in the history of our country? In imagination then let us visit the streets of Lexington and Concord, crimsoned with the blood of the slain. There fathers and sons fell by their own doors, in view of their distressed,

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tressed, distracted families. Thence let us ascend  
 the heights of Charlestown; hear the artillery  
 roar; see the veteran troops of Europe advance;  
 see the town wrapt in flame; see your country-  
 men, your fathers, your brothers, falling on the  
 bloody hill. See the survivors, parched with  
 thirst, fainting with hunger, exhausted with fa-  
 tigue, attempting to escape across the beleaguered  
 Neck. In the flight see them faint, and fall,  
 and expire. See the wounded, forsaken, bleed-  
 ing, gasping and dying. The valiant Warren  
 falls; the friend, wounded by his side, hardly  
 escapes. Pass on to Rhode Island; there the bo-  
 dies of the slain cover the field of battle. Pro-  
 ceed to Fort Griswold; in the morning see the  
 enemy land; they advance; they surround the  
 courageous garrison; the daring Briton, and  
 more cruel refugee, rush forward, take the fort  
 by storm, and butcher every man they find.  
 Across the Thames the blazing city\* fills the  
 country with terror. Pass on through the smok-  
 ing ruins of Danbury, Fairfield and Norwalk;  
 cast your eyes across the Sound; behold your  
 fathers and friends attacked, pursued and driv-  
 en from Long Island by one of the most formida-  
 ble

\* New-London.

ble armies of the British empire. Visit the prisons of your captive brethren in New-York ; they fall like leaves of autumn. Approach not that dwelling of death, the Jersey prison-ship ; to this day the bones of your neighbors whiten the beaches of the adjacent island. In a word, cast your eyes from the St. Lawrence to the Savannah. The footsteps of desolation, groaning hospitals, fields of battle, scenes of blood and death, meet the eye from every quarter. The streets of Quebec, the hills of Bennington and Saratoga, the plains of Monmouth, Princeton, and Germantown, are loaded with the bodies of the slain. The waters of Champlain, the Hudson, the Delaware, and Brandywine, are red with American blood. Philadelphia, York, Charleston, and Savannah, feel all the terrors of siege and captivity.

SAY, ye shades of Montgomery and other heroes, who fell in the rage of battle ; say, venerable Warren, what is the value of our independence ? Fallen on the fatal hill, life gushing from thy wounds ; no friendly hand to stanch the crimson stream, to raise thy head from the gory turf, to administer a cordial, or to close thine eyes ; in that awful moment, fainting and dying, what would

would have been thine address to thy beloved country? “I die, my country, I die in defence  
 “ of your native privileges ; with my last breath  
 “ I entreat you to defend with your fathers’ va-  
 “ lor their sacred institutions ; sacrifice them not  
 “ to visionary systems of modern philosophers,  
 “ or foreign adventurers.”

SUCH is a faint view of the price our fathers gave for our inheritance. They fought ; they bled ; they died ; and shall they bleed and die in vain ? Rather let everlasting execrations fall on the man, who by flattery or force shall attempt to deprive you of your precious patrimony. Robbed of this, what would be the value of life to us, the heirs of such ancestors? Had they been slaves ; had they taught us the drudgery of slaves ; had we inherited stripes, and scars, and chains, we might have borne them in silent, sullen patience : but now would they be altogether intolerable. In *one* way, and only in *one* way, is it possible for us to lose this birthright, this high pre-eminence among the nations ; *by neglecting or abusing our right of suffrage.* Whenever God shall intend to destroy us, then will he give us up to this madness ; this will be the harbinger of our ruin.

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While we faithfully attend our elections ; while we elevate none to office but men of talents and integrity, the barriers of the ocean, the foundations of the everlasting hills, are not more immovable than our rights and privileges. These we shall not lose till we deserve to be slaves.

To justify these reflections, do you not hear a warning voice from the tombs of the ancient republics ? “ Our government is changed and destroyed ; its name is blotted from existence.” Geographers, historians, and political writers, have described a catalogue of republics ; but they are vanished ; their lamps are gone out ; they are no where found. The United States of America are the only remains of republican governments on the face of the globe. Does not this increase our responsibility ? Is there not a supplication in the gales from every climate and country ? “ Be faithful, Oh ye American people ; be faithful not only to yourselves, but be faithful to us ; keep alive the celestial fire to guide us in the work of breaking our chains ; preserve to us one example of republican liberty, that we may say to our children, There is a pattern of nation-

al reform ; there see what elevation and glory of character a nation of freemen may attain.”

BUT the day is military ; at the request of the Officers of this Regiment, I stand in this place. To you, fellow citizens, I beg leave to address myself. The name of soldier in this country conveys an impression of security and fraternal protection. In different states of society, and under different forms of government, the military profession is exceedingly various. Among savages a martial character commonly predominates. Every thing wears a hostile appearance. Every able man is a soldier. From childhood they are inured to hardships, taught all the stratagems and arts of their rude warfare. Their customs have generally a military spirit. Their business, their amusements, their ornaments, their honors, are martial. The same implements, which procure their food and clothing, assail their enemies. Many of their songs are war songs, their dances war dances ; their ornaments are terrible, and their honors the rewards of personal valor. Their national institutions breathe blood and destruction.

In civilized society, professions are multiplied and separate. War in most governments occupies only one class of the subjects. These have peculiar maxims, and manners, and characters, and laws. Martial law is a branch of jurisprudence. The military in some countries is so removed from other professions, as to be the instrument and agent of their oppression and slavery. It is the grand engine of despotism in the hands of usurpers and tyrants. Not so in our favored land. Our soldiers are really citizens; they are our neighbors, our brethren, ourselves. With a few legal exceptions, ye are all the sound and vigorous part of the Commonwealth. Ye have few appropriate laws. In your manners, your morals, your religion, you agree with the community. The contagious licentiousness of European armies has not been wafted across the Atlantic. One poisonous plant, however, more fatal than the upas of Java, has been transplanted from the military fields of Europe, and in some of the states it has taken deeproot; sent forth its branches over the hills; bidden defiance to the sword of the magistrate; while death walks under its shade: but not a shoot flourishes in New-England;

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land: *duelling is here almost unknown.* A few, very few instances disgrace the annals of these states.

WE trace the origin of this ferocious custom to Francis, king of France, \* who, in 1528, to vindicate himself from the reproaches of Charles, emperor of Germany, sent him a cartel of defiance, gave him the *lie in form*, challenged him to single combat, requiring him to name the time, and place, and weapons. Charles accepted the challenge; but after several messages, and sarcasms, all thoughts of the duel were laid aside. But the example of two such illustrious persons attracted attention, and produced a lamentable change in the manners of Europe. The custom of duels became common; and these contests of honor were destructive, like wars among the nations. So infinitely important are the examples of distinguished men. If wicked, like false beacons at the port of commerce, they decoy mortals upon the rocks of destruction; like the violated tree of knowledge in paradise, they cover the world with misery and death.

LITTLE did these royal madmen consider what dire calamities they were pulling on the human

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race;

\* Dr. Robertson.



race ; how many invaluable lives would be lost ; how many orphans, destitute and defenceless, how many widows, in all the anguish of frantic grief, would swell the catalogue of hopeless sufferers. Could they have seen the innumerable murders which have followed, the rivers of tears which have run down the face of sorrow, and heard the sighs and shrieks of ruined families ; would not their marble eyes have dissolved, their hearts of iron been broken by the prospect of undecipherable horror ?

PREVIOUSLY to this, however, in a more barbarous age, when the arts of reading and writing were little known, and evidence in courts obtained with difficulty, trial by judicial combat was established by law. This was different from duelling ; it was an appeal to Heaven of personal innocence. The victor was supposed to be acquitted by the judgment of God. It was a species of ordeal ; the same kind of evidence, as if the accused, to prove his innocence, had plunged his arm into boiling water, lifted a red hot iron, or walked barefoot over burning ploughshares.\*

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\* Robertson.

IN New-England, men have not learned in these barbarous methods to justify themselves from crimes. Here men disregard the injuries they receive, or appeal to the righteous laws of the land. This is the final resort; this terminates all controversy. The valiant sons of New-England have never supposed they owed their lives to a man merely because he had abused them. They have never found it a sufficient consolation for injuries received, to expose themselves to one infinitely greater. They have never so calculated loss and gain, as to imagine that throwing themselves on the point of their enemies' sword, or giving them leave to level the tube of death at their vitals, was a sufficient compensation for any outrage on their persons, their property, or good name. That custom, which places the blackest crime, and most spotless innocence, the best man and most graceless villain, precisely on the same ground, has never with us been thought just, or honorable, or decent. God forbids it; reason and conscience approve the divine law. Thou shalt not murder, is the law of God. Blood has a voice to rouse the heavens to anger. Will the formality of sending a paper, called a challenge, alter the nature of the action? Will the thoughtful, deliberate circumstances of consider-

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ing and determining on the measure, of selecting and agreeing with a second, of writing and sending the challenge, of appointing the time, and place, and weapons, and mode of the combat, of writing and signing and sealing a last will and testament; will all these, or any other circumstances of reflection, take away the malignity of malice aforethought, which is the essence of murder? What enchantment is in this process, which changes crime into innocence, and infamy into reputation? Is it the challenge, the naming of the time, and place, and instruments? Then may a highwayman, going forth to rob and murder, provide a challenge, present this to the traveller, appointing the present time and place for the onset, pierce him to the heart, and be called a brave man and a hero. Instead of a gallows, let him be elevated to some post of honor.

“ALL this is wrong,” it will perhaps be said, “but how shall we avoid the combat, when challenged? Our reputation for courage, our dignity of character, will be lost; boys in the street will point the finger of derision.”

THE speaker in his turn begs leave to inquire, how it is possible for a man of virtue, of courage, of humanity, or of reflection, to engage in a duel.

If he be a man having a shadow of *virtue*, will he not fear the great God, who has forbid murder, who has said that all murderers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone? If he be a man of courage, will he not despise the challenge of the wicked, and disdain the sneer of fools? Shall such a man as I flee from insult to the field of *blood* ?

If he be a man of humanity, will he not certainly consult with his family on this awful occasion? He is going to a scene of danger; he is rushing to single combat with his equal, and with equal weapons, or he violates the laws of honor. There is, therefore, an equal chance, that if one falls, he may be the man. See him then enter the apartment of his companion. His looks awaken terror. He tells her—but his tongue falters—he tells her, that he is going to engage in a duel; that in a few hours she may be a widow, and their children orphans. He charges her to be faithful in the education of their children; he charges them to be obedient to her; he supplicates a divine blessing on them; he gives them a kind embrace; he bids them a tender farewell; he goes———No, his own words have reproached himself. “How can I,” faith he,

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he, “ expect my widow to be faithful to our children, when I am voluntarily exposing myself to neglect them forever? How can I expect them to obey her, when I am bidding defiance to the laws of man? How can I expect God to hear my prayers, when I am trampling on one of his most sacred commands?” He trembles; he relents; is it possible for him to proceed? Suppose his fury returns, or that his high sense of honor rekindles his resolution; suppose he has such confidence in his own skill in directing the weapons of death, that he has no fear of falling; let him then anticipate the most successful issue of the event. Let him in imagination rush from the tears of his family; let him reach the appointed spot; let the seconds measure the ground, and place the combatants; let him raise the fatal instrument; calmly aim at the heart of his foe. He falls; he struggles; he is gone; he is covered with blood, and pale in death. Let him attend the seconds and surgeons with the body to its late dwelling. At the door he meets the shrieking, distracted widow; he hears the cries of the children and domestics. He hears their frantic reproaches, “ Restore my husband; restore our father; who will provide our support; he was the best of husbands, the best of fathers. Long should

we have been happy, had not this cruel murderer shed his blood." To the victor this last scene must remain ideal ; for before the bleeding body is conveyed from the fatal spot, he must fly ; fly from his victory, fly from his own dear family, fly from his native state. Notwithstanding the praise and honor anticipated by the duellist, public opinion is too correct, stern justice is too vigilant, to suffer him to remain in safety. To doubt this would show ignorance of public opinion in this part of the country. Voluntary banishment for life is the lightest punishment for the victorious duellist. Like Cain, he hides from the presence of God, and his former friends. Awful Justice, while she draws her sword against smaller crimes, would not suffer a wretch to live in impunity, covered with blood. Is it possible, then, for a man of reflection to proceed to single combat ?

WHILE we thus speak, is it not evident that the subjects we have discussed are deeply impressed on your hearts ? When have our shores been crimsoned with the blood of a duellist ? We have read of such events ; we have heard of such persons ; but we never saw their frightful visage. These marshalled companies of infantry,  
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that body of cavalry, this concourse of unarmed citizens, show your respect for anniversary celebrations. Your well known attention to the rights of suffrage, proves your strong attachment to Columbian independence. For their love of order, their obedience to law, their practice of morals, or their reverence for religion, it may be presumed, without flattery or arrogance, that no section of the continent is more distinguished.

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~~PRO~~CEED, my friends, in the path marked by the steps of your pious forefathers, with their daring valor defend the inheritance received from them ; support their civil and sacred institutions ; devoutly cherish them as ye do the blood which rolls through your hearts ; cultivate their heavenly virtues, and follow their meritorious examples ; then, arriving at the land of silence, where the confused noise of the warrior shall cease, and garments rolled in blood no more be seen, the Captain of our salvation will receive you as faithful soldiers, who, having fought a good fight and kept the faith, shall receive a crown of righteousness, and with legions of angels swell the chorus of immortal praise.